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CANDIDATE ELECTION ADDRESS

I have recently been appointed Vicar of St Denys Church, Evington, having served for the past three years as a Curate in Knighton Benefice. These have been the most fantastic three years of my life. I could never have imagined what being a priest would truly be like.

Day to day, I have witnessed the wonderful variety of our Knighton church community, and the splendid blessings that come from working alongside people. The joy of leading others in prayer at (bus stops, parks, market) and helping them experience God's love afresh in their lives. I have loved accompanying people on their faith journeys, knowing that each one of us is beautifully and wonderfully made by God.

I have also treasured the pastoral moments that each new day brings from baptisms, marriages, supporting the bereaved, and standing alongside people at the most memorable stages of their lives. Each of these moments has deepened my conviction that ministry is, above all, about walking faithfully alongside people, wherever they find themselves.

As a member of the Diocesan Synod, I have gained real insight into how our diocese relates to, and supports, the parishes within it. Like how decisions taken centrally are felt, for better or worse, in the life of ordinary congregations. That experience has given me a grounded understanding of Synodical governance, and a genuine appetite to bring a parish-rooted, pastorally minded voice to the wider body of the church.

I am standing for election to the General Synod because I believe the Church of England is at its best when it truly reflects the whole body of Christ, every background, every culture, every ability, every story of how people have come to faith. I want to bring my own experience, and the experiences of those I minister alongside, into the heart of our national conversations.

If elected to the General Synod, my focus will be to champion an accessible and inclusive church. Once where we first recognise that everyone is God's creation, then who we become before anything else about who we are. God welcomes all, and our scriptures and culture should reflect that welcome fully, in policy, procedure as well as in spirit.

- The well-being of clergy and lay people with disabilities, recognising that our needs differ according to individual context, and that a one-size-fits-all approach to support will always leave people behind.
- Building confidence, across the Church and wider society, so that life is made easier at every stage from traveling on the buses, to feeling a genuine sense of belonging in places of worship, schools and event places. Personally, access signifies acceptance.
- Helping the church recognise and avoid imposing further barriers on disabled people, whether consciously or unconsciously, through the buildings we use, the services we plan, and the language we choose.
- Supporting migrants and refugees within our congregations, communities and ensuring the Church is equipped to walk with people through the particular pain and stress of settling in a foreign country.
- Strengthening safeguarding by taking seriously how unaddressed microaggressions and everyday exclusion can, overtime, grow into more serious safeguarding concerns.

These priorities are deeply personal to me. I bring to this work my lived experience as a disabled African migrant, and I know the difference it makes when a Church community sees each person fully, not only through the lens of their needs but who they are before who they become. Inclusion, understood in this way, lies in the heart of my ministry.

I believe the General synod works best when it listens to a wide range of voices. Voices which, together, add beauty and depth to its work and witness. Diversity of experience is not a distraction from good governance rather it is what makes good governance possible.

It would be a great privilege, with your support, to serve and represent our diocese at the General Synod, and bring a voice shaped by parish ministry, disability, and the migrant and refugee experience into the life of the wider Church. Thank you as you pray for me through this process.

Chizoro Cecilia Adjadje

St Mary's Church, Knighton.