

House of Laity General Synod Election Address: Laura Mitchell

Hi, I'm Laura, married to James (a Chemistry teacher) and mother to Hope (8) and Esther (6). To summarise myself, I'm a charismatic, community loving, estate living, local missionary disciple. The Lord captured my heart early in my life for which I am so grateful and has been the defining feature of my life for as long as I can remember. I long that all people may come to know Him and the 'wonders of his love'. I am especially passionate about reaching out to young people and the vulnerable and marginalised. Oh, and I love gardening... especially community gardening! Turning forgotten wastelands into beautiful flourishing gardens and helping people connect with creation and the Creator seems very up God's street to me.

I was born into a non-church going family, but when I was about 6, we moved house and started going to the local CofE church. I love people, community and God and so I loved church. I started to understand more deeply about God's love in my teenage years as I struggled with an eating disorder and had an experience of healing that convinced me I was known by and mattered to God. I grew in understanding in my sixth form years as I was fortunate enough to have good Christian friends and a small bible study group at school.

Before university I had a gap year with YWAM which introduced me to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in a new way. I studied medicine at Cambridge and there joined a church plant. I have always had an evangelist's heart and used to love coming up with creative new ideas of how we could connect with people and introduce them to the Lord and to church. After university I moved to Stamford with my junior doctor training. As a family we now go to **Christchurch**, a local estate church, where we are part of a missional community living out the "mixed ecology" of the wider church. In 2021 I became a ministry assistant for outreach there, starting a pop-up cafe, a community garden and an internationals / refugee outreach.

I am now the Children, Youth and Families minister at Christchurch. We don't have a great number of children there which means a large part of my work is building bridges with the local schools and finding ways to connect with and support the local community. I fully support the national church agenda to be a church of "missionary disciples" and am experienced in living and training others in this, and I am actively engaged in trying to help us be "younger and more diverse." For example, I have been running an outreach in the local estate secondary school connecting with struggling teenagers through gardening and recently started a lunchtime club there in collaboration with another church to follow up on this work and give the young people an opportunity to explore more about the Christian faith.

Professionally, I worked as a Specialty Doctor in hospice palliative medicine for over a decade and loved it. My medical work gave me a brilliant foundation in learning to really listen to people, seeking to understand first, plus advanced communication, collaboration and applied ethics skills as well as a helpful framework for accountability, governance and safeguarding. Palliative medicine in particular has given me unique insight and understanding of the complex issues surrounding death, dying and the desire to no longer live in times of suffering, plus practical experience of supporting the families of those dying.

I am keen to bring my passion for outreach and the younger generation, especially those with neurodiversity, my desire for collaborative working, my understanding of safeguarding and accountability structures, my experience of discipleship and applied ethics, particularly in supporting those who are dying (or want to die) to serve the Lord on the General Synod at 'such a time as this'. **Please vote for me as your preferred candidate in the House of Laity.**