**John Pearce Diocesan Synod case study**

I heard that there were vacancies in Synod for lay representatives for the Deanery of Trigg Minor and Bodmin. This happened to coincide with my final retirement from work as a consultant child and adolescent psychiatrist. At the same time I was becoming progressively more concerned about the future of the Church and the Anglican Church in particular. My wife, Mary had become the churchwarden for St Julitta’s Church - Lanteglos by Camelford, which made me even more aware of dwindling congregations in many areas. I found myself questioning what the role of the Church might be in the future.

These were uncomfortable thoughts and they linked with the changes I had observed in children, families, schools and society in general during my 40-year career. When I first became a consultant, ADHD was very rare, school exclusions were hardly heard of and families mostly had two parents with one focusing on childcare. Nowadays, families have the complex and stressful task of juggling work, childcare, relationships and leisure.

The search for instant satisfaction, combined with a short attention span have become part of modern society and sadly a formal Anglican service lasting an hour with a 20 minute sermon on a Sunday does not fit well with the life of many families. Time is at a premium and there is little or no time left for religious worship. Nevertheless, I believe that people are just as ‘spiritual’ as they always were.

I decided that complaining about the rather static and bureaucratic role of the Church was unhelpful. So I was motivated to stand for election to the Synod partly by a desire to find out what was going on and partly with the hope that there was a future for the Church.

My first Synod meeting was a bit intimidating. I knew nobody and the formal setting of the council chamber was impressive. However, that soon changed. Everyone was friendly and the breakaway groups were helpful in getting to know people and also a forum where it was easy to express ideas and hear the views of others. These small groups make an important and positive contribution to the function of Synod.

The formality of the Council Chamber turned out to be a good way of managing the large number of people and even though many do not contribute, there are informal contacts and discussions that go on in the breaks. Perhaps the main benefit of the Synod for lay members is to get a better understanding of what the problems of the church are and what is being done to plan for the future.

It has been very reassuring the hear the phrase “Things must change” from Bishop Philip and many others. What was less clear is “How”? My own thought is that a single solution will not work for everyone and change always involves risk and requires imagination together with optimistic determination. Also important is having enough insight to recognise when a particular approach is not working!

I would certainly recommend any lay person on the electoral role of a Church in the Truro diocese to put themselves forward for election to the Synod. Although it is clear that most of the work and decision making goes on between the three meetings a year, it is helpful to be aware of what is happening within the Church and to be able to make a contribution to this - however small.