

**Diocese of Oxford
General Synod Elections 2021**

Questions to Candidates

Name of Candidate (please enter name in full)	Professor Helen King
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Questions and Replies

Question 1:	How do you think General Synod can promote engagement with the recommendations of the <i>From Lament to Action</i> report published in April this year?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	The report proposed actions to challenge our shameful institutional racism, covering participation, governance, training, education and young people. But Synod rejected the recommendation of full-time Racial Justice Officers for each diocese, due to cost. As it is unwilling to take the route the report suggested, Synod needs to find some way to embed the report in every diocese, and to challenge the 6-monthly progress reports from the new Racial Justice Commission, if the work of this Commission does not seem to be moving quickly. I would also like to see the Church of England sharing the stories of some of our UKME/GMH members, both positive and negative accounts, so that everyone is aware of what the problems currently are.

Question 2:	What are your views on the place of the parish in the Church of England, bearing in mind concerns raised by the ‘Save the Parish’ campaign, concerns about availability of resources for the rural church and opportunities for new mission initiatives outside the usual parochial structure?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	I love Giles Fraser’s recent definition of parishes as “small, semi-independent pockets of half-organised goodness”. The parish is a wonderful way of staying open to all who are seeking God, and in both rural and urban areas its buildings can be central to the local community. I worry about the shift of funding from the parishes to the centre; the proliferation of central roles – most notoriously, Sheffield Dioceses’ “Associate Archdeacon-Transition Enablers” – at the expense of parish priests. Sheffield is also having locally trained and commissioned “Focal Ministers”. I worry about the safeguarding implications of these initiatives. I think that parishes best know their people and we should release and respect their creativity rather than imposing models on them.

Question 3:	If a motion was presented for a change in the law to permit same sex
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	marriage in the Church of England, would you support it and, in any event, what outcomes would you like to see from the <i>Living in Love and Faith</i> conversations?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	Yes, I support same sex marriage and appreciate that this will require a revision of canon law (canon B30). I hope that the time is now right for such a motion, but I would need to see it before deciding how to vote, including whether safeguards are included for clergy who feel unable to preside at such marriages. I hope LLF will make church members aware of the injustice of the present situation in which LGBTQI+ people are not treated equally; they cannot have their committed, legal relationships marked in church and are prevented from using their gifts in lay and ordained ministry. I hope we can soon stop talking about sexuality and simply welcome all people on equal terms!

Question 4:	Would you support any further proposals for ‘Church of England’ financial resources to disinvest from fossil fuel industries and what other actions do you think could be taken in the Church of England in order to promote the Fifth Mark of Mission?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	Yes. In 2018 Synod asked the ‘National Investing Bodies’ to disinvest from fossil fuel companies not aligned with the goal of the Paris Agreement by 2023. In 2020, however, evidence emerged from <i>DeSmog</i> that, while central bodies were taking action, dioceses had £17.8 million invested in fossil fuel companies, Oxford having the highest investment of all. A problem here will be the current financial situation and the need to maximise income. I think we have lagged behind the European and World Council of Churches on the theme “Justice, peace and the integrity of creation” for many years now, and behind; I am hopeful, though, that the increased focus on ‘Creation Season’ brings this Mark of Mission home to us all.