



### **Election Address: Casual Vacancy for General Synod**

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Dear Colleague,

I am standing for election to General Synod because I have a passion, commitment, and a strong belief in the value and importance of good synodical governance in the Church of England, and the pressing need to hear the voices of those actively engaged in pastoral ministry both inside and outside our church communities as General Synod debates issues which matter not only to those within our churches, but increasingly, to those beyond them as well.

In addition to being an active member of deanery synods in both Oxford and Canterbury dioceses (where I served my curacy after completing priestly formation at Ripon College Cuddesdon), I have attended various sessions of the General Synod as a visitor, and most recently, served as a volunteer chaplain at the last two sessions of the Synod held in London. It was here that I saw its work at first hand and was encouraged by many to consider standing for General Synod myself. Having prayed about it, and discussed it with trusted friends, I would like to offer myself as one of your two representatives in this by-election and promise with God's help, that I will serve you tirelessly if elected, as a wholly inclusive, committed, and fully engaged member of the Synod not only on those issues which I am deeply passionate about, but every issue affecting parish life and ministry in all of its complexity.

As a member of WATCH, and one of the national steering committee members of EQUAL: The Campaign for Equal Marriage in the Church of England, I care deeply about eradicating the causes of inequality and injustice which continue to dog the Church of England, and so often makes us unrepresentative of the communities we are called to represent and to serve, and impedes the Church's mission and ministry to everyone in our nation.

As someone who grew up gay with an Irish Roman-Catholic father on a Midlands council estate at the height of the troubles in northern-Ireland, I have some experience of the many prejudices which afflict so many in our society, and wholeheartedly subscribe to Inclusive Church's statement of belief which celebrates and affirms every person as a beloved child of God to fully embraces the voices of women, LGBTQI+ people, and all those discriminated against on the

basis of disability, economic status, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, and neurodiversity in addition to their sexuality.

I have participated in some of the discussions concerning the future of LLF at Lambeth Palace, and fervently believe that it is possible to provide a generous orthodoxy to those seeking same sex marriage and/or blessings in the Church of England whilst protecting the consciences of those opposed to these changes without tearing the Church apart, or burdening it with yet more parallel structures which, as our experience in relation to women's ministry in the past clearly demonstrates, do not work, and simply perpetuate institutional discrimination which damages the Church both pastorally and missionally.

As a former nurse, I am passionate about the interface between faith, health, and wellbeing, including the ethics of end of life care, mental health, and the health impact of rural and urban poverty, loneliness in the elderly, and in my own parish context, the diminution of vital public services for the elderly, children, young adults, lone parents, and the working poor which are essential to the health of our communities, and where the national Church could, and should, be speaking out much more powerfully. I am also aware of the economic strains experienced by retired clergy and believe that there must be a better way to provide security and dignity in retirement than those currently being consulted upon. I am a strong advocate for proposals to introduce better and more effective safeguards against the bullying of hard-pressed clergy by lay officials and church members in the parish context whilst recognising that we need clergy disciplinary measures which are transparent, fair, and reduce the many months of worry often encountered by those against whom they are frequently weaponised.

Like many, I believe it essential that we implement the Jay Review on safeguarding as quickly as possible – and in full – to remove the postcode lottery which currently exists both within and across different dioceses, and I believe as well, that the first call on the Church Commissioner's funds should be the maintenance of parish ministry which is best served by giving communities and lay ministers the clergy they need to support them, rather than squander millions on grandiose projects which are often unpiloted and incapable of being scaled up or transferred to most parish settings. The best 'Generous Giving Advisors' are the clergy themselves, when they are given the time, the support, and the resources needed to pray, to minister, and to serve their communities as they would wish without being pulled in different directions or driven by the imperative to focus on parish share over and above the needs of their parishioners.

My whole life's experience as a Christian, a former short-term mission worker, and in the last few years as a priest, is that God will provide the increase when we put our faith in the Gospel of Christ, which is a Gospel of grace and love, and act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God in all that we do. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to ask more and thank you for your consideration.