Diocese of Oxford
General Synod Casual Vacancy Elections 2024

Questions to Candidates

Voters were given the opportunity to pose questions which might be put to the candidates, relating to any matters on which they believed a representative of the diocese on General Synod might wish to express a view.

Several suggestions and suggested themes were received, and I have selected Four, as set out below.

I am now inviting all candidates (clergy and lay) to consider the questions and, if they wish, to submit written responses. No candidate is obliged to provide answers to any or all of these, but any written responses any candidate wishes to make will then be posted on the diocesan website.

Please note that if a candidate does not provide any answers, the relevant part of the website will be marked "none provided" and if a candidate chooses not to answer every question, the words "no answer provided" will be inserted for that particular question.

The website will also make clear that this is entirely optional. It is an additional opportunity for you to engage with voters if you wish to do so. I reserve the right to remove any response which might reasonably be considered offensive or prejudicial (though I do not expect that I shall need to do so).

A word limit has been set for your replies of ***120 words per question***. Additional words will be cut from the final submission but you could, of course, give a shorter answer.

Please return your completed form to doliver@wslaw.co.uk and copied to sleader@wslaw.co.uk, by **5pm on Tuesday 14 May 2024**. Your submissions will be posted on the Diocesan website, with your Election Address and Video Presentation, on Thursday 16 May 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Darren Oliver
Presiding Officer for General Synod Election
9 May 2024

Name of Candidate (please enter name in full)	**Athos Ritsperis**

Questions and Replies

Question 1:	What are you views on the 'Future of Church Safeguarding Report' by Professor Alexis Jay released in February 2024?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	I agree with the recommendations of the report. The Church should be seeking to adopt best practice, and the establishment of two independent Charities, to deliver and assure safeguarding, is a positive step towards this.

Question 2:	What is your position on 'Living in Love and Faith' and on the inclusivity of LGBTQ+ people in the Church?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	I think the Living in Love in Faith material was very helpful in reflecting on the various perspectives on this issue. With regards to inclusivity, I believe we all fall short of God's perfect standard and so everyone should be accepted unconditionally in the Church, but acceptance does not necessarily imply affirmation. Personally I believe that marriage between a man and a woman is God's ideal plan for mankind. I understand this is not a position shared by all, and I am of course open to hearing and reflecting on the perspective of others.

Question 3:	Noting the Five Guiding Principles in the House of Bishop's 2014 Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (under which the diocesan bishop can make arrangements for pastoral and sacramental provision for churches who cannot accept the ministry of bishops and priest who are women), would you support similar arrangements being made for clergy and churches on matters arising from 'Living in Love and Faith'?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	I am open to reviewing, discussing, and exploring any options that maintain the unity of the Church whilst at the same time allowing individuals to hold true to their convictions.

Question 4:	Bearing in mind the Diocesan Synod's March 2024 resolution endorsing the need to significantly increase our engagement with young people, families and schools, how would your membership of General Synod help with this?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	Reflecting on my personal experience, it was our teenage children who compelled us to join St Mary's when we moved to Chipping Norton as there was a vibrant and active Youth group there. The key is to be intentional; the Church leadership had invested a lot of thought, planning, and prayer in developing the Youth ministry, which bore fruit.