

Questions to candidates for General Synod House of Laity

Q1. Do you fully support the equality of women at all levels of ministry, including ordained and episcopal ministry?

Yes, I fully support women in ordained, episcopal and lay ministry, and will continue to do so.

Q2. In July the General Synod was asked to "affirm that all baptised, believing and faithful persons regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the Body of Christ" and that "recognise a legitimate range of theological perspectives, held in good conscience, across the Church of England, on the right ordering of committed, faithful, intimate same-sex relationships". If you were on Synod, did you vote in favour of this. If you were not on Synod, how would you have voted?

I was not on General Synod at the time mentioned above, but if I had been, there is no doubt that I would have voted in favour of this motion. I fully support my LGBTQ+ siblings in Christ and pray for a time in which they are welcomed, accepted and affirmed by the church without exceptions or provisos.

Q3. Parish share is intended to support all churches across the diocese. Has your church ever applied restrictions on who can benefit from receiving parish share, for example through making use of the Ephesians Fund to prevent your contribution supporting the majority of clergy in the diocese?

Both of the churches in the Benefice I serve as Reader pay their Parish Offer to the Diocese and do not divert funds in any way. By contributing in this way, we support all ministry across the whole diocese.

Q4. To what extent do you consider the decreasing number of stipendiary clergy and increasing lay-led congregations to be an issue that needs addressing across the Church of England?

I believe that if the number of stipendiary clergy is severely curtailed, the church risks the overworking and eventual burnout of its clergy, and the exploitation of its lay leaders. Lay ministry is a vital part of the life of the church, and as such it needs to be properly championed and funded, both in terms of robust training and the proper employment of such leaders as to make sure they are not themselves overstretched by maintaining a church community, employment and a family life. Priestly ministry is a distinct and vital part of the life of our Church, without which we would be distinctly poorer. Access to the sacramental ministry provided by priests and deacons is a central tenet of our Christian faith, and must not be compromised. It is vital that the church takes steps to remove barriers to pursuing vocations to ordained ministry, in order that

clergy numbers can be boosted. Such barriers are often experienced by people from working class backgrounds, people from minority ethnic backgrounds and those in same sex civil marriages.

Q5. Do you agree that the Church should commit fully to training and ordaining local leaders as self supporting priests?

Raising up local people to serve as priests in their local area is something the church should be fully committed to, but I think that to solely aim for self-supporting priests risks denying the vocations of those who cannot risk the financial outlay of supporting their training or of reducing the number of days/hours per week they work. This would disproportionately disadvantage parents, the young and those from working class backgrounds. Supporting stipendiary ministry is vital to the life of the church.

Q6. What do you consider to be the Church of England's priorities for the next 5 years?

- To continue to be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, to build up God's kingdom through the structures of the Church and to make the gospel known in word and action.
- Our shared response to the ongoing climate crisis
- To nurture and support the steady growth we have seen in our churches in recent years, and to support existing churches in their ministry and mission. The focus on creating new worshipping communities risks the existing church communities we have, and one should not be at the expense of another.
- The continuing discussion of equality at all levels within our church, regardless of any attribute or characteristic, including disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality.

Q7. Do you feel that the Bible's teaching on sexuality and marriage is still relevant for the Church in 2026?

Every passage of the Bible was written at a particular time and into a particular context, and so must be read and understood with those particular contexts in mind. There are also ways in which the particular nuance and meaning of the words in scripture are lost in translation. When read in the light of the Gospel, there are also passages we no longer consider relevant, for example when considering the types of food it is acceptable to eat or fabrics it is acceptable to wear. Many of the verses used in discussions on sexuality cannot simply be lifted from their particular context and applied to our own, especially ones used in discussions on homosexual relationships, as they were often describing abusive practices.

The Bible has a great deal to teach us about love, which is as relevant today as it was when it was first written, and I pray that all people who love one another deeply will know more of God's great love for them.

Q8. What are views in taking forward the Living in Love & Faith (LLF) process, which appears to have come to a natural ending?

Whilst the last synod has brought a formal end to the Living in Love and Faith process, the discussion and progression of LGBTQ+ rights in our churches is a process which itself has not ended, and the continuing discussion of the outcomes of LLF must be taken forward into the next synod. The LLF process resulted in the creation and commendation of the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF), which I welcome wholeheartedly. There are outstanding issues to be addressed by the Relationships, Sexuality and Gender Working Group in the upcoming quinquennium, including the use of PLF outside of existing services and evaluating whether clergy can be in same sex civil marriages. I support the use of PLF in situations clergy deem pastorally appropriate, and out of support for clergy wellbeing I would also support moves to allow clergy to marry a same sex partner. Of course, I recognise that there are strong differences of opinion within this discussion and I believe there is a way forward.

Q9. What personal qualities do you have that you feel are suitable for serving on General Synod for the next 5 years?

I believe I am an excellent candidate for General Synod because I am committed to seeing the church thrive and move forward in the strength of the Holy Spirit through prayerful discussion and discernment. I commit fully to participating as a member of General Synod and to the commitment of my time that will entail. I am organised and hardworking, and able to listen carefully and see both sides of a discussion, and to present alternative perspectives gently.