

Jason Dobb's Answers to Questions to candidates for General Synod House of Laity

Q1. My own church has two female Licensed Lay Ministers and employs a female Community Pastor; all play their full part in our church's ministry. So yes, I personally fully support the equality of women at all levels of ministry. I recognise and respect that others hold different views; I accept the importance of the Five Guiding Principles, and seek to promote the mutual flourishing of conscientious supporters and conscientious opponents of woman's ordination. I would like to see the wider church continue to care for and nurture these differing convictions.

Q2. I recognise and lament the distress and pain that has been felt by many holding very different views on the question of sexuality over many years. However, as observed by the General Secretary of the Archbishops' Council, the motion before General Synod was "open to different interpretations as words within it are not fully defined." As such, if it had passed, Synod (and the wider church) could have been left in a situation where agreement had been reached – but deeply-held conflicts would remain over the meaning of that agreement. I am concerned that this would not have moved matters forward in a positive way. I conclude that I would not therefore have voted for it had I been a member of General Synod at the time.

Q3. My own church does not currently cover its costs of ministry, so please may I acknowledge and express my gratitude for the continued subsidy from the diocese and wider church that this represents? Giving is an essential part of discipleship, and I recognise that the deeply-held convictions of individuals and their churches can result in difficulties for some in donating funds that may be spent in ways to which, in all good conscience, they do not feel that they can contribute. Mechanisms like the Ephesian Fund permit such people and churches to continue to give generously without giving rise to such difficulties; indeed, many churches have seen an *increase* in giving as a result of using the Ephesian Fund. My own church has decided to donate its parish share via the Ephesian Fund; since my church is a net recipient of diocesan subsidy, our parish share may be seen as simply reducing this level of subsidy.

Q4. I am concerned at the negative self-reinforcing cycle that may be seen in our diocese and nation, with limitations on both finances and candidates meaning that fewer and fewer clergy are leading larger and larger numbers of churches, and this in turn decreasing the available finance and making vocation to the clergy less attractive to potential ordinands. On the other hand, I rejoice to see lay leaders encouraged to step forward, and thank all who serve in this way. I'm sorry, I do not have the answers to reverse this cycle, but I shall be open to listen to and assess proposals coming to General Synod if I am elected.

Q5. Self-supporting priests may be a way of increasing the numbers of available clergy (if suitable ordinands may be found), but their other employment may constrain them geographically and limit how much of their time can be devoted to their ministry. So yes, I do agree that the training and ordination of self-supporting priests may be appropriate for some (but not all) churches and situations. I would like to see the national church taking positive steps to give guidance, order and encouragement to this process.

Q6. I think the Church of England should first seek to discern Jesus' priorities. I would expect the following to be considered:

- How to make the best use of our finances, buildings and people to further God's kingdom
- Promotion of mission in each community, to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples
- Offering this and future generations a distinctive and better way of living
- As heavier and heavier burdens fall on lay leaders and especially clergy, ensuring that appropriate care and support arrangements are in place.
- Improved structures, processes and governance of Safeguarding.

Q7. I feel that the Bible's teaching on sexuality and marriage is a positive and distinctive element of the practice of the faith of the Church of England. It bears witness to our eternal future as a church as the 'Bride of Christ', and can be seen to have had a positive effect upon society over many centuries. Anglican theology is founded upon scripture, mediated by tradition and informed by reason. Whilst I will always seek to listen respectfully to other views, I see all three of these as continuing to point towards the church's teaching celebrating sexuality solely within Christian marriage. Our churches however should positively welcome everyone whilst seeking to grow our obedience and discipleship.

Q8. I recognise and lament the distress and pain suffered by many as a result of the LLF process. Whilst the General Synod motion in February formally brought LLF to a close, work in this area will continue via the Relationships, Sexuality and Gender Working Group and the Relationships, Sexuality and Gender Pastoral Consultative Group. I am pleased to see this focus upon pastoral care, and look to these two groups to identify ways that are consistent with the church's teaching on sexuality and marriage (see my answer to question 7) for the Church of England to unite to welcome, include, nurture and disciple all people regardless of background.

Q9. I would offer you my commitment and dedication to pray, study and research as many matters brought to Synod as I can, and promote two-way communication between the diocese and General Synod. Having stepped back from full-time work, I can give this more of my time. I think I can discern how different elements relate together; my experience as an engineer has taught me to see how interrelationships between components work, and to devise & contribute to solutions. I suggest that such a systemic approach would be useful to General Synod. I believe I have the determination to see things through to a conclusion, whilst seeking to include other people and opinions.

Jason Dobb, September 2026