

GENERAL SYNOD ELECTION 2026

NIGEL ORCHARD



Serving the Parish — Strengthening the Church

In recent years my understanding of the Church in Cumbria has been deepened significantly through experience on Deanery and Diocesan Synods, Bishop's Council, parish and cathedral life. That experience has strengthened one conviction:

The wider structures of the Church are at their best when they support and strengthen parish life, enabling local churches to flourish in mission and ministry. Christian leadership is, at heart, servant leadership.

Supporting the parish

The Church is one body, but the parish remains where most people encounter it: through worship, schools, baptisms, weddings and funerals, music, community activity and pastoral care.

Cumbria has much to teach the wider Church about partnership between parish, deanery and diocese. But dioceses covering large, deeply rural areas face particular challenges. Small congregations scattered across large distances should not simply be measured against models developed for towns and cities. They may be maintaining a vital Christian presence in communities where few other institutions remain.

I want General Synod and the central Church to listen more closely to that experience and to enable local churches to exercise greater responsibility for their own mission and ministry.

Practical service

My involvement in church and community life is deliberately practical. As a parish councillor I have challenged United Utilities over sewage overflow and the police over church break-ins and fly-tipping. Within the Church I have negotiated improved commercial arrangements for church property, worked on energy costs and initiated discussion about a Church Energy Centre through which expertise could be shared between parishes.

For three years I have run a youth brass group, teaching young people to read music and perform

together. I organise concerts and additional musical services at Lanercost Priory, play the organ for weddings and funerals around Cumbria and help churches keep their pipe organs working.

The common thread to my involvement is simple: identify what could be better, listen to those involved and work constructively towards a practical solution. That is the approach I would bring to General Synod.

Worship and the next generation

I want the national Church to value and sustain its great tradition of classical church music alongside contemporary worship. I am developing the idea of a Diocesan Choir and Diocesan Organist to support parishes and develop musicians. General Synod has a legitimate interest in the wider question: what inheritance are we passing to the next generation? Our musical tradition, church buildings and links with schools are major assets for mission. Once musical skills and traditions disappear from a parish, they are difficult to rebuild. National policy and diocesan priorities should help local churches nurture them rather than inadvertently hasten their loss.

Faithful disagreement

General Synod must address issues on which faithful Christians profoundly disagree. Living in Love and Faith has demonstrated how difficult this can become. I would like to help find a way through the present intransigence. We should be able to argue our positions faithfully and robustly while treating each other with compassion, courtesy and respect. A genuinely broad Church must make room for conscientious disagreement.

Representation and communication

If elected, I would regard communication as an important part of the role. I would keep in regular contact with Deanery and Diocesan Synods, explain significant matters coming before General Synod and actively seek views before important debates and decisions. Representation should mean more than attending meetings and voting. It means being accessible, listening and ensuring that my contribution to Synod is informed by the experience of the Church across Cumbria.

About me

I am married to Nina, a parish priest, and we have three adult children. My professional background is in engineering, technology and business, including founding and running my own company. I have spent much of my working life solving problems, negotiating agreements and bringing people with different interests together.

I would bring that independent and practical approach to General Synod: prepared to listen, question and challenge, but always looking for constructive solutions.

Above all, I would argue for a Church in which authority is understood as service:

General Synod serving the wider Church.

Dioceses serving their deaneries and parishes.

Parishes serving their communities.

And Christ being our ultimate Servant Leader.

I would be honoured to have your support.