

# **GENERAL SYNOD**

## **Clergy Casual Vacancy**

**REVD STEPHEN JONES**  
**Rector of Staveley and Barrow Hill**  
**ELECTION ADDRESS**

Dear Colleagues,

My reason for standing for General Synod is quickly stated.

Along with many other clergy, I am uneasy at the way in which the parish ministry of the Church is being pushed aside in favour of initiatives from central authorities.

The parish is the heart of all that the Church of England does best. Uniquely among the churches of Britain, we have deep roots in our communities. Even among those who never come to worship with us, our parish church is their parish church. We have privileged access to those who live around our churches, and an expectation that we are there to be of service to them. This is highly localised; it is not any other church which is their church, but this one alone. They are unmoved by Deanery initiatives, and sceptical about initiatives from outside, such as big deaneries and church plants. Our people expect their church to be active about their business, and it is by modelling Christian care that we help them begin their journeys in the faith. Maybe the London-centred leadership has forgotten what real local communities are like – here in Derbyshire we have much to teach them.

The great spiritual revivals of the Church of England – the Evangelical movement recalling our nation to depth and seriousness in religion, Anglo-Catholicism bringing a splendid vision of heaven towards the most disadvantaged, Social Action in the 1930s, all of these grew out of the heroic faith lived out by priests in their parishes. None of it originated from the national church hierarchy – indeed, all too often, the powers that be tried to suppress these revivals.

I stand in this election for the faithful parish priests in their churches and congregations. I want to use my voice to challenge the diverting of the church's resources away from the parishes. I want on your behalf to question the usefulness of the layers of administration and bureaucracy, in such things as Safeguarding. I would like to voice your reservations about turning the leadership of the church into Management – if you happened to see the advertisement for the new Cathedral Dean, you might like me have raised an eyebrow at them looking for an Entrepreneur and Broker. I would like to recall the confidence of the Church of England to the parish system, get us better resourced, and let us alone to grow the Kingdom in our communities.

Oh, and about me? I have 35 years experience in widely varied areas of ministry, and am still passionate about mission. In our parish we are prioritising work with children and families, and as a Mountain Leader I am working with schools and Duke of Edinburgh's Award groups, giving to our communities and finding their response warm and generous. I come from the Catholic tradition, but if elected my commitment will be to the flourishing of parishes of all traditions.

Let's get back to the real work of the Church of England. To quote a finer orator than myself:

**GIVE US THE TOOLS AND WE WILL FINISH THE JOB.**