

GENERAL SYNOD ELECTIONS 2026

Candidate Questions and Answers

Diocese of Derby

Responses are grouped by question. Within each question, candidates are listed alphabetically by first name. Responding to these questions is optional.

As part of the election process, voters have been invited to submit questions for candidates and candidates have been invited to respond.

The Parish Support Team is acting only as a neutral facilitator in collecting and circulating these questions and answers. The wording and content of each question and answer are the responsibility of the individual voter who submitted it and the candidate who responded. These do not indicate endorsement by, or represent the views of, the Parish Support Team or the Diocese.

LAITY

Ministry of women

Question 1

Currently, parish churches are under no obligation to declare on their websites whether they accept the full ministry of women. Should this be changed? *Sonya Dobson*

Emily Brailsford

I feel that we should be open and transparent in our messaging across all of our churches to ensure that those who come to worship know what to expect. If someone does not feel able to accept the ministry of women, openness on a church's website would help a person to decide if they would like to worship there or not. I would like to state that I fully accept and support the full ministry of women.

John Payne

To me, 1 Corinthians 1:10 offers a vision of where we need to get to on any points of disagreement on church tradition and practice: "I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.". So, the question for me is – would putting statements on the issue of accepting the full ministry of women on websites help in the journey towards Paul's ideal or not? To me (as someone who unreservedly accepts and supports the full ministry of women) I am not sure that a bald statement on a website would help that journey. Change of heart and mind is more likely to occur through individual conversations, careful listening, step-by-step discussion and thoughtful reflection rather than banner headlines which could too easily simply state a group position, and close down discussion

Kat Alldread

Yes. I believe churches should be transparent in presenting their views and should provide clear communication regarding their theological positions.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

Jesus said let your yes be yes and your no be no. I feel I must be honest about who I am and what I stand for.

People voting in these elections, and people weighing up if a church is safe and comfortable for them, have a right to know what we stand for.

We can all use words like welcoming, or inclusive; but if we do not explicitly state that we support women priests/bishops; and support the full access to a range of roles/leadership/participation by partnered LGBTQ+ folk, then people may quite legitimately conclude that we do not.

I would support a move to require churches to set this out on their website.

I am a Reader (Licensed Lay Minister). I have been incredibly pleased to minister with women priests and bishops, at our church and in other places. Women are a huge part of the creation of God. Our ministry should reflect this.

Our church is a member of the Inclusive Church Network. We do not merely fully accept their ministry; we welcome women's ordained ministry at all levels.

Peter Kelsey

I am pleased that the vast majority of parishes accept the full ministry of women and I think that is what the public expect. I therefore think that those parishes that do NOT accept the full ministry of women should publish this on their website and also on A Church Near You.

Rachel Bond

I understand why people might want to know a parish church's position on the ministry of women, particularly if they are already a Christian looking for a church. However, I am not convinced that every parish should be required to make a formal declaration on its website.

For someone who does not yet know Jesus, there may be far more important questions such as; will I be welcomed? Where do I go? Is there parking? What happens when I arrive? Is there a dress code? Do I need to know anything? Can I just come and see? Simple things like knowing there is free tea and coffee can make a huge difference.

We should also be careful not to assume we know why God is bringing someone to a particular church. They may arrive with no understanding of our theological debates and simply be looking for somewhere they can encounter Jesus.

I would favour churches being welcoming and clear about what people can expect, but I would be cautious about making declarations that risk defining churches by what potentially divides us rather than by our shared calling to make Jesus known.

Richard Lindop

I see no reason to mandate what parishes put on their websites regarding their theological traditions and practices.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

There are so many administrative requirements for parishes that I am reluctant to add this to the list of what they must do. I think that in the cases where the churches have women priests it is clear that they do accept this. Where the incumbent is male, I think that it's best for people to try out the church so they can get a feeling for where the church stands on this matter.

Ministry of women

Question 2

Does the church you regularly worship in fully accept the ministry of women as priests and bishops? *Judie Fogarty*

Emily Brailsford

Absolutely, we have an entirely female ministry team at the church where I worship

John Payne

Yes, it does. The Church I worship in is a member of the organisation, 'Inclusive Church', whose aims I support. We regularly welcome women priests – and of course Archdeacons and Bishops!!!

Kat Alldread

Yes. The church where I regularly worship and where I am on the PCC was among the very first churches to embrace women's ministry in the Diocese, and since then we have always had women priests on the ministry team.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I am a Reader (Licensed Lay Minister). I have been delighted to minister with women priests and bishops, at our church and in other places. Women are a huge part of the creation of God. Our ministry should reflect this.

Our church is a member of the Inclusive Church Network. We do not merely fully accept their ministry; we welcome women's ordained ministry at all levels.

Peter Kelsey

Absolutely. We have a woman Priest-in-Charge and the two LLMs in our benefice are both women. Both our churchwardens are women, as is our Archdeacon.

Rachel Bond

Yes. My church has women in leadership and accepts women serving as priests and bishops. Two of the three we have sent, since revitalisation, for ordination are women. I am very grateful for the women who lead, serve and minister among us.

At the same time, I want to be careful not to misrepresent those who disagree. I have brothers and sisters in Christ who hold a different position because they believe Scripture leads them there. I respect their desire to be faithful to the Bible, even though I come to a different conclusion.

I hope we can be a Church where we are able to disagree honestly on matters of theology without losing our love for one another. We need conviction, but we also need humility and grace.

Ultimately, I want to see a Church that is much more concerned with helping people encounter Jesus, become his disciples and see their lives transformed by the gospel. That is what I long for in my own parish and beyond.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

Yes - both our vicar and our associate vicar are women and we accept the authority of the female bishop of Derby.

Living in Love and Faith / Prayers of Love and Faith

Question 3

As members of the General Synod, if you were called upon to vote on changing the marriage canon to enable equal marriage for the clergy and for same sex relationships to be celebrated in church, which way would you vote and what would your reasoning be? *Sophie McKenna*

If a motion was presented for a change in the law to permit same sex marriage in the Church of England, would you support it? *Richard Marshall*

Emily Brailsford

I personally would support a motion to permit same sex marriage within the Church of England performed only by priests who felt comfortable to do so. I would not expect any one to do something which went against their beliefs. I feel sad that this is a continued debate within the church and society. I believe that ALL are loved by God with no caveats and we as the body of Christ should be instrumental in showing that love. I feel that currently, we are not doing the best we can in showing that love.

John Payne

I would vote in favour of a motion enabling “equal marriage for the clergy andsame sex relationships to be celebrated in church”. My thinking uses the traditional image of Anglican theology as being like a three-legged stool – the legs being Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, each leg of equal length. The application of Reason to the issue of same sex marriage looks to me like this.....Across many Church traditions, marriage is seen as a pledged union based on godly principles — a reflection of God’s faithful love for the Church. The deepest meaning of marriage is not biological coming together, but pledged faithfulness. Qualities traditionally associated with marriage, such as fidelity, mutual love, and lifelong commitment, can be present in same sex relationships. If marriage reflects God’s covenant with humanity, then any couple capable of such faithful love can participate in its spiritual reality. The Church has historically revised doctrines when deeper reflection on Scripture, tradition, and reason arising from human experience reveals new insights (e.g., slavery is the obvious one but you could also cite usury, and remarriage after divorce). Scripture’s overarching moral emphases are for justice, mercy, faithfulness, love - values which can be embodied in same sex marriages.

Kat Aildread

Yes- I would support such a motion. I disagree with the Church's current position which discriminates against LGBT+ people, and I think the Church should be enabled to fully celebrate loving, committed relationships.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I really love the marriage covenant which I believe reflects the relationship between God and God’s bride, who is made up from all genders.

Marriage is too beautiful to exclude people from because of their gender or sexuality.

I would support LGBTQ+ priests being allowed to marry in a registry office, which currently they are not.

Celibacy is also a beautiful covenant between those who choose it and God. But celibacy is something to which few people are genuinely called. It is cruel and controlling to insist that LGBTQ+ people stay celibate.

I would also support a move to LGBTQ+ marriage in church, but I think this may still take a long time to achieve.

That said, I recognise that this is a matter of conscience. Our tradition for a long time has been for priests not to conduct weddings for LGBTQ+ folk. If a vicar had an issue personally, I would be comfortable for them to signpost a couple to a priest who was happy to hold the service.

Peter Kelsey

I don't believe that any member of General Synod should be elected based on a predetermined voting pledge. We should go into Synod with our own views but a mind that is open enough to be persuaded by the speeches and the debate, that is the purpose of Synod.

I like to listen to people and a very good friend, who is a gay priest, is of the opinion that same sex marriages should not be allowed in church. I respect his opinion but I am still open to hearing the debate.

Rachel Bond

I know this is deeply personal and not simply abstract theology. I seek to listen carefully and pastorally to those who disagree with me. Loving people and being faithful to Scripture are not competing things.

I believe every person is made in the image of God and should be treated with dignity, kindness and compassion. Jesus gives us a vision of marriage as the lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, and this is part of the Church's received faith and Church of England doctrine.

There is a difference between identity, orientation and action and I have enormous admiration for gay Christians who, because of their understanding of Scripture, choose to remain single and faithfully follow Jesus. They are a minority within a minority, and I believe they deserve much greater support and encouragement from the Church as they seek to live holy lives. Their humility and faithfulness can be a powerful witness to us all.

I want a Church where people are genuinely welcomed, deeply loved and helped to follow Jesus faithfully.

Richard Lindop

I will have to respond to each motion as it comes up: it is unclear what the working group will propose in the end. However, when it comes to future moves towards standalone blessing services and same-sex marriage, I understand that the damage caused by the last rush to implement it as "experimental prayers which did not fundamentally change the doctrine of the church of England" left all sides unhappy and feeling betrayed. This needs to be addressed before any further difficult motions are brought forward. Personally, I am not currently persuaded that the case has been made that same-sex marriage is a biblical and Christian response to the manifold challenges that our LGBTQ+ family and friends face. I hold to an orthodox, biblical

understanding of marriage and human sexuality, rooted in Scripture and the historic teaching of the Church of England. I will therefore vote according to these theological convictions on future motions from the Relationships, Sexuality and Gender Working Group. As any Christian who knows they are not yet perfect or perfectly in line with God's mind must do, I reserve the right to be shown from Scripture (with reason and tradition supporting) that I am mistaken.

Stephen Wall

I do not accept same sex marriages

Sue Cavill

I am happy with the Church of England's current position with regard to same sex marriage, but I am open to discussion and debate on this matter. My reasoning is that this has been an extremely divisive matter and I believe unity in the church is a crucial witness for which Jesus prayed.

Question 4

Do you support the use of Prayers of Love and Faith liturgy for the blessing of people in a same sex relationship? *Ali Marsh-Davies*

Emily Brailsford

Yes, absolutely. I would however, as previously mentioned, not expect a priest who is not happy to use the Prayers of Love and Faith liturgy and the blessing of people in same sex relationships to do so.

John Payne

Yes, as you can see from the answer to Q 4 I do support the use of these prayers. In addition to points made in the previous question response, it seems to me that excluding same sex couples risks undermining our Church's witness to God's justice and compassion, while offering the full response to same sex as to heterosexual couples is likely to strengthen the Church's credibility and pastoral care (conversely being seen to be apparently unjust or discriminatory is unhelpful to that mission. And a further point I've seen argued somewhere is that, if LGBTQ+ Christians demonstrate faithfulness, service, and desire for holy matrimonial union and if the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5) evident in same sex couples provide evidence that their relationships can be morally and spiritually good, then the Church must discern the Spirit's work in real lives, not only in inherited categories. If same sex couples bear the fruits of the Spirit, then the Church must ask whether God is blessing these unions already,

Kat Alldread

Yes

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I am aware of people across the Diocese who have been surprised that the Church of England did not marry LGBTQ+ people, nor even bless their civil marriage afterwards. The Church of England is slow to catch up with what English people feel is loving and just. The prayers of Love and Faith have been hard won. I am incredibly pleased that our vicar has agreed to use them. I support this.

Peter Kelsey

I do personally but I wouldn't impose my personal view on a Priest or any congregation who had prayed and decided that they did not want to use these prayers.

Rachel Bond

As somebody who believes God's love is for everyone, His blessing should be offered to all people. However, that does not mean we can bless all circumstances.

PLF pleases no one. Those who are more progressive theologically have been angered that they do not go far enough, those who hold to Church of England doctrine on marriage, feel that they have gone too far.

I am dedicated to the unity of the Global Anglican Communion and I am deeply concerned by the significant fractures PLF have made across the World, particularly at a time when the Church of England claims it is becoming more aware of issues of ethnicity, power, culture and racism.

The method by which these prayers came about have been deeply divisive, and have not gone through the proper legal processes.

Richard Lindop

The church should always be an inclusive, diverse place that welcomes everyone, regardless of race, gender or sexual orientation, to hear the gospel, with the opportunity to hear Jesus' call to repent and believe, receive his love and grace, and be transformed by the Holy Spirit. I hold the orthodox and traditional view that Scripture teaches that marriage is only between a man and a woman, and therefore I consider that it is not appropriate to use PLF in the Church.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

Yes - we should be able to bless all people.

Question 5

In July, Synod voted on whether “all baptised, believing and faithful persons regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the Body of Christ” and to “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 present, did you vote in favour of this? If you weren’t, how would you have voted? *Hannah Hawkins*

Emily Brailsford

I am heartbroken that the Church of England has become so divided on this issue. As a parent of teenagers, I know that it makes us look out of touch with the society of today. My personal view is that committed, faithful and intimate same sex relationships of Christians, should be welcomed and supported. Should I be elected to General Synod I would hope to understand the views of the laity within the Diocese of Derby to inform the way I vote.

John Payne

I have not been a member of the General Synod previously so was not present at the vote in July. I would have voted for the motion, as did a majority of the House of Laity. I might have added in debate that support for an inclusive approach, such as recognising a “range of theological perspectives” must also take into account, identify and act upon any practices within the Church of England that continue to exclude and discriminate against people on the grounds of sexuality or gender

Kat Alldread

I was a member of the General Synod, and I voted in favour of this.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

General Synod has been very divided over this issue. It is hard to agree a form of words, which respects conscience, does not tear the body apart, or is so weak and toothless that it brings no change. Helen King’s original motion tried to do this but regrettably failed.

I do not know how I would have voted on the amended motion, which had elements that I really did not like. I do not think its legitimate for heterosexual people to declare that LGBTQ+ people can never be partnered. It is not loving. Neither is it loving to reject people who hold those views opposite to mine as not being Christians.

The whole Living in Love and Faith process started from a place of repentance and the desire to usher in a radical inclusion of LGBT+ folk and others who have been excluded. I think we have been trying to “maintain” a unity that is already lost. We need a fresh approach recognising Jesus in each other and allowing God to lead the people, without so much control exercised by the institution. The House of Bishops needs a shake-up.

Peter Kelsey

In July this year a private members’ motion asked Synod “to affirm that a committed, faithful, intimate same-sex relationship can be entirely comparable with Christian discipleship”, GS2455. I was very happy to vote for this motion which passed in the Houses of Clergy and Laity but failed because the House of Bishops voted against it.

There was great disappointment from across Synod that the Bishops stopped this motion from passing.

Rachel Bond

As I understand it, the key issue regarding the Private Members Motion brought before Synod in July 2026 is in relation to “recognising a legitimate range of perspectives.”

The motion quoted from the 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.10, however, the rest of this resolution clearly outlines current Church of England doctrine on marriage and therefore it would have been wrong to vote for the King motion, which contradicted Lambeth 1.10 without going through the proper legal channels including the need for a two thirds majority vote to change Church doctrine.

The Church cannot state a perspective is legitimate, if it directly contradicts its official doctrine.

Even if a person agreed with the proposed motion, this was not the right avenue for this vote.

Richard Lindop

I was not a member of the last synod, so did not vote on this. As I did not hear the arguments behind the detailed wording of the motion, I cannot say how I would have voted at that time. However, I am committed to the Church as an inclusive and diverse body welcoming everyone to come, hear the gospel, repent and believe, to be redeemed by God’s grace and transformed by the Holy Spirit. I therefore am supportive of the first part of the motion. I also recognise that there are a range of theological perspectives, held in good conscience, on the recognition of same-sex relationships, but I am unclear what is meant by “ordering of same-sex relationships” and whether support for the motion implies formal acceptance of these. I cannot therefore say which way I would have voted without hearing and understanding the arguments. However, I hold to an orthodox, biblical understanding of marriage and human sexuality, rooted in Scripture and the historic teaching of the Church of England, and would not support a motion that undermined or set this aside.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

I voted in favour.

Question 6

Do you share the traditional and orthodox view that sanctified Christian marriage can only be between a man and a woman: as held by our brothers and sisters in the world Roman Catholic, Orthodox and African Anglican Churches. *Mike Pindar*

Emily Brailsford

As the Church of England we have a different outlook to the churches you have listed. I personally do not agree with the view you have described. I believe that in standing for General Synod I should be honest, open and clear about my views and opinions and not hide behind convoluted and vague statements.

John Payne

Thank you for your question, Mike. I regret to say that I do not share this view, for reasons given in the questions above. As you will see from my election address, I have worshipped in churches in Africa and South Asia which do 'share the traditional and orthodox view' and I know and have witnessed the sadness and bewilderment some of them feel at different views expressed in parts of the Anglican Communion on these issues, which is also of course a sadness and bewilderment shared by some in the Church of England. The whole issue must be handled in a way that is respectful and where possible accommodating, as I have indicated in another responses.

Kat Alldread

No. I would support a change in the Church of England to allow marriages to be celebrated between people of the same sex. It is important to realise that no such motion proposing to change the doctrine of marriage will be presented during the next term of the General Synod, and any such motion would require a two thirds majority in all three houses, which would be impossible at present.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I believe that we have not heard from the majority of Christians in the churches you mentioned. Women are often silenced or ignored. LGBTQ+ people certainly are.

When only a few loud heterosexual male voices are amplified, how everyone feels is difficult to know. This same practice also applies to the translation, editing and interpreting of the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus said we should get back to the basics of the law which are to love God and love our neighbours as ourselves. I really wish we would honour Christ in each of us instead of trying to impose tradition as if it were more important than where our loving Holy Spirit is leading. We could get back to the good news of all that Jesus has done and is doing to redeem the world.

Peter Kelsey

I do share that orthodox view but, if a debate was to be held in Synod regarding marriage, I would listen to both sides before making a decision how to vote.

Rachel Bond

I recognise that Christians today sincerely disagree about how Scripture should be understood on these questions, and I want to treat those who disagree with me with respect. But I do not believe

we should allow fear of being unpopular to prevent us from holding faithfully to what we believe God has revealed.

I believe that Christian marriage is the lifelong covenant between a man and a woman, and that this is the teaching we receive from Scripture and the historic Christian Church.

For me, this is not primarily about being “traditional” or resisting change. It is about what I believe God has revealed about his purposes for men, women, marriage, family and human flourishing.

At the same time, I want to be clear that believing this must never become an excuse for treating LGBTQI+ people badly. Every person is made in God's image, and every person should encounter the welcome, dignity, compassion and truth of Jesus Christ in his Church.

I believe the Church should be able to hold together biblical conviction and genuine love. Jesus calls all of us to transformation, and that call is good news, not bad news.

Richard Lindop

As someone who believes God loves all people, I want our churches to be open and welcoming to all so that we can proclaim the inclusive call of Jesus to everyone that we might have faith and respond with repentance. Within that context, I believe that the traditional and orthodox view of Christian marriage is only between a man and a woman, as taught by Scripture and enshrined in the historic doctrines and teachings of the Church of England, which I uphold.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

At the moment I do - but as stated above I am open to debate and discussion about this very important matter which has caused so much hurt

Question 7

Irrespective of their own views around LLF, will candidates ensure that they represent the broad church that is the Diocese of Derby and reflect the views of the majority of Parishes?

Mark Titterton

Emily Brailsford

I am unsure how we would be able to reliably establish the views of all of the parishes within the diocese but if we can, then I would do my utmost to represent those views.

John Payne

My understanding is that a member of the House of Laity of the Church of England General Synod is not a delegate. They are elected to vote according to their conscience, not as instructed by their diocese, parish, or electorate. Nevertheless, it obviously makes sense for any General Synod laity member to have a clear perspective on the views expressed on a range of issues across the Diocese of Derby, and to reflect in prayer on how such views ought to be factored into the way they might vote and speak in debates. How I might go about getting that perspective is explained in my response to Question 9 below. As explained in responses to other questions, I am a supporter of the perspectives of LLF – see responses to questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 above – while recognising that if we are to talk about ‘inclusion’, that needs to extend to everyone, not just those we agree with, and that we need to ensure that all voices, whether agreeing or disagreeing, are represented and respected in discussion.

Kat Alldread

Absolutely. One of the reasons that I love the Church of England is because it is a broad Church with space for people from a spectrum of traditions and viewpoints. I know and understand what local parish churches mean to the communities that they serve, and I want the Church to be one that is fully inclusive of all people.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

As I understand it, I am technically not elected to represent people, but rather people could choose to elect me to be myself on Synod, as presented truthfully in my election address and other communications like this one.

I stand for a less rigid and controlling church that nurtures and encourages the individuals that we meet to find and express their own views and fulfil their own ministry. We are called to be mini-Jesus folk and thus present the good news of all that He has done and is doing to redeem the world.

It is important to pray, to listen to others properly and to speak honestly and kindly when called to do so. I would take this approach if elected.

Peter Kelsey

Our church in the Diocese is a broad church and we should celebrate this. When national church carried out consultations with the members of Diocesan Synod I was surprised that LLF was not the dominant topic of discussion in most Parishes that we think it is. The effort and resources used to split Christians, with strongly and honestly held but opposing views on LLF would, in my opinion, be better spent growing our Christian community and maintaining our broad church.

Rachel Bond

Absolutely. If I am elected to General Synod, I would see it as a privilege and a responsibility to represent the whole Diocese of Derby, not simply people who already agree with me.

I have stood because I feel called to serve the Church, and I want to listen carefully to people across the diocese, including those who hold different theological convictions from my own. I would want parishes to know that their experience, concerns and hopes matter.

At the same time, representing the diocese does not mean pretending I have no convictions of my own. I believe Synod needs people who will listen carefully, speak honestly and then vote according to conscience and conviction.

I am particularly committed to supporting clergy in fulfilling their ordination vows to “believe the doctrine of the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it, and in your ministry will you expound and teach it” while recognising the breadth of our Anglican family and the need for gracious disagreement.

My hope is to be someone who can build bridges without compromising conviction. So, listening well, speaking with grace and working for the good of Jesus’ Church.

Richard Lindop

As a member of Deanery and Diocesan synods, I will report on discussions and decisions made at General Synod and will listen carefully colleagues in the diocese and deanery in order to be able to represent their views both on the key issues being discussed and on the issues that are uppermost for them (which may not be the same!). Where I possibly can, therefore, unless on those rare moments of personal conscience, I will be doing my very best to fairly represent the interests and concerns of my colleagues across the diocese, rather than any one particular group, based on what I know from those meetings and consultations. Ultimately, however, I will need to vote according to my conscience and convictions, but I want those decisions to be informed by prayer, Scripture, the wider Church, and the experiences and perspectives of people across our diocese.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

As I wrote in my statement, I believe that it is very important that all voices, including the voices of those in parishes, are heard and whilst on General Synod in the past five years I always tried to listen to and take into account the voices of those who contacted me. I want to continue to promote better listening by the Church of England leadership.

Engagement with members of deanery/diocesan synod

Question 8

How do you plan to engage with the members of deanery/diocesan synods who you are representing? *Alison Henshaw*

Emily Brailsford

I am on a number of different committees within the diocese as well as being the Diocesan President of Mothers' Union. I am also an Honorary Lay Canon at the Cathedral and I truly love to connect with people. I am VERY happy for people to contact me, approach me, meet with me and I will actively try to reach out to deaneries should I be voted on to General Synod to ensure I am gaining as much information as possible about what matters to the people of the Diocese of Derby

John Payne

As indicated in my response to Question 8, I do not see myself as a delegate but of course engaging and communication - generally keeping in touch – with the members of the deanery and diocesan synods, and ensuring I understand the range of perspectives on important issues would be very important throughout the Synod term.

As someone who hasn't been a Synod member before I would certainly want to take advice from those who have been, particularly those from the Derby Diocese, on what forms of engagement have proved to be the most effective. Possible means of engagement could include:

- attending deanery synods, diocesan synods, or parish meetings to explain Synod decisions, gather views, and answer questions.;
- periodic updates sent by email summarising Synod debates, votes, and upcoming issues
- consultation before major debates to understand local opinion
- general correspondence with the electorate on concerns and questions

Kat Alldread

I think it's important that General Synod members report back to deanery synods and Diocesan Synod following each group of sessions. As a General Synod member, I have produced those reports, and I would continue to do so. I am also happy to attend deanery synods when invited to engage further with people at a local level. Over the past two terms that I have served on General Synod, I have often received email enquiries from people in parishes with particular questions and concerns about matters being addressed by Synod. I welcome such enquiries, because it provides an opportunity to engage directly with people about issues that matter to them and have an impact in their local context. I would continue to welcome that engagement.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I am presently a member of Derby City Deanery Synod and the Diocesan Synod. I would give reports to these when it is my turn. I would listen to people on the synods with care and respect. I would answer questions honestly. I would be open to approaches at other times also, having shared my personal contact details.

Peter Kelsey

As Diocesan Lay Chair my stated goal is to improve communications and increase Diocesan Synod's input into decision making.

Communication should flow from Parishes, to Deaneries, to the Diocese and on to General Synod and back again – in my view that is side to side communication, not up and down. I have also asked all Deanery Lay Chairs if they would agree for the General Synod and Diocesan Synod reports (not minutes) to be circulated to all PCC Secretaries. I would also like to instigate a meeting of all Deanery Lay Chairs, much as the Area Deans meet.

I am also part of our Deanery Leadership Team and our Deanery minutes and action points now go to all PCCs and PTOs, along with General Synod and Diocesan Synod reports, regardless of whether the PCC has a Deanery rep.

Rachel Bond

I have served on deanery synod, so I know something of the importance of listening to what is happening in our parishes and deaneries. If elected, I would want to build on that rather than simply communicate with people when a difficult vote is coming up.

I would make myself as approachable and available as possible and would value opportunities to listen to clergy and lay people across the diocese. I want to hear not only from those who agree with me, but also from those who don't. I don't think representation means assuming that everyone I represent shares my views.

I would seek to understand the concerns, hopes and experiences of our parishes and take those seriously when preparing for General Synod. I would also communicate clearly about what is coming to Synod and, afterwards, about what has been decided if appropriate.

I particularly want to listen to parishes serving communities that can sometimes feel overlooked by the wider Church. The parish is where I have encountered the transforming power of Jesus, and where I have seen that gospel make a real difference in people's lives.

I want to represent people faithfully, and that starts with listening.

Richard Lindop

I will report to Deanery and Diocesan synods on discussions and decisions made at General Synod and will listen carefully colleagues in the diocese and deanery in order to be able to represent their views both on the key issues being discussed and on the issues that are uppermost for them (which may not be the same!). Where I possibly can, therefore, unless on those rare moments of personal conscience, I will be doing my very best to fairly represent the interests and concerns of my colleagues across the diocese, rather than any one particular group, based on what I know from those meetings and consultations. Ultimately, however, I will need to vote according to my conscience and convictions, but I want those decisions to be informed by prayer, Scripture, the wider Church, and the experiences and perspectives of people across our diocese.

Stephen Wall

Attend meetings and conferences

Sue Cavill

During the past five years I have been diligent in attending the meetings of my Deanery Synod (South East Derbyshire Deanery) and Diocesan Synod and have served on the Deanery Synod Leadership Team. I have regularly reported General Synod meetings to the Deanery Synod, and I have also taken my turn with other General Synod reps to write reports for Diocesan Synod and take questions as required. In my reports I have tried to show how the decisions of General Synod may impact at parish level in particular. I would plan to continue this engagement.

Climate

Question 9

In what ways would you encourage synod to respond practically to the climate emergency? How can synod help clergy and laity in the parish have a prophetic voice for the times we live in? *Margaret Roberts*

Emily Brailsford

I feel that this is another area in which we are 'putting off' younger members of society. There is much more that could be done in this area and should I be voted on to General Synod I would actively engage with any work that is carried out in this area.

John Payne

I would work on the following, among many other options

- Make creation care a fundamental part of clergy education (mandatory environmental theology and ethics modules in IME1/IME2)
- Preaching and liturgical training for climate and biodiversity loss-related pastoral/prophetic ministry – relating how climate change/biodiversity loss are symptoms of a deeper problem in how we organise our consumption-driven society
- Require national bodies to deliver a simple “Net Zero Parish Toolkit”, and strengthen relationship with EcoChurch; step-by-step energy audit, heating decision tree, template PCC resolutions and model parish environmental policy
- National procurement frameworks for heat pumps, insulation, solar, and biodiversity projects
- Strengthening the Church’s public voice by: mandating an annual “State of Creation” report to Parliament/media/dioceses; issue theological statements during climate events (COP meetings, extreme weather); equip bishops and clergy with media briefings
- Use Church land prophetically by: prioritising low-productivity farmland for rewilding/biodiversity; support tenant farmers with transition finance and access to new environmental income streams
- Environmental impact assessments for all major church decisions.
- Synod can expand: seasonal preaching packs (Advent: hope; Lent: repentance; Easter: renewal); pastoral guidance on climate grief, eco-anxiety, and community resilience; prophetic liturgies for local climate events (flooding, drought, biodiversity loss).

Kat Aildread

As a member of General Synod, I have consistently voted in favour of the Church taking meaningful steps to engage with and address the climate emergency. I think it is essential that the Church, at all levels from the local to the national, speaks out about the urgency of caring for God's creation and takes steps to actively put those words into practice. The Church can and should be seen as a leader in responding to the climate emergency- it is the right thing to do to care for creation, and it is missionally critical, because how the Church responds speaks volumes. If the Church is to have any public credibility, it must boldly & prophetically lead in both its words and actions on care for the planet and its people.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

In ministry, I am a Reader (Licensed Lay Minister) and do sometimes preach about things our people can do themselves to reduce our carbon footprint, buy less, waste less and recycle more.

Personally, our family has one hybrid vehicle. We have spent my pension lump sum on insulating and rendering our home, with a view to getting a heat pump when our next boiler is needed. I have a veg box delivered fortnightly from a local farm.

Not having been a member of General Synod before, I am not sure what options Synod has to respond to the climate emergency, but I would be pleased to find out about this issue and happy to talk personally to people who are well informed on this issue. I would like to support practical measures that are possible when they come before Synod.

Peter Kelsey

The whole of society should be responding to the climate emergency. In my work life we regularly win awards for recycling (including saving 6.5 million plastic bottles from the oceans), we've moved away from petrol and diesel cars to EVs and hybrids, replaced all lighting with LEDs and cut paper usage to a fraction of what it was before and therefore cut our carbon footprint significantly – I would like to see the church do similar things.

Looking at the reports it is the church schools that have the biggest carbon footprint and it is not reducing as quickly as we would like it to. Schools obviously need support to achieve these reductions.

Rachel Bond

I believe caring for creation is part of following Jesus. I have seen this in very ordinary ways in my own church. One lad in our church came to know Jesus and, as his life began to change, he stopped dropping litter. He began to see the world differently because he was learning to love the God who made it. That might seem small, but I think it says something important about Christian discipleship.

Of course, people who don't follow Jesus can also care about creation! But I do believe that as we encounter Jesus, he changes our hearts and teaches us to love what he loves. Creation is God's gift and we are called to steward it rather than simply consume it.

I would encourage Synod to help parishes put this into practice, caring well for church buildings, reducing waste and energy use where we can, encouraging practical stewardship, and sharing resources and good ideas.

I also want the Church to speak prophetically about our responsibility to those most affected by environmental change and to future generations.

Creation care is not separate from mission. It is one of the ways transformed lives can reflect the love of our Creator.

Richard Lindop

We have to recognise the science of climate change in the context of our God-given role as stewards of his creation. It is clear that man-made climate change is having a significant impact

on the planet and we all feel its effects. I would encourage Synod to provide briefing information to parishes on the scientific and theological background so that we are better prepared to engage with our communities. We then need to explore practical ways in which we can demonstrate our responsible stewardship as Christians, both personally and corporately, so that we have the right to speak prophetically.

Stephen Wall

Climate change is here and we are the cause and need to reduce the influences causing the change

Sue Cavill

In the past five years I have been secretary of the General Synod Environment Group (GSEG), organising fringe meetings and encouraging the 100+ members of the GSEG to engage with agenda items that related to the climate emergency and to ask questions about it. I was pleased to be able to take part in the vote which led to the Church Commissioners disinvesting in fossil fuels.

Latterly, I have been the General Synod representative on the Church of England's Environment Working Group, which oversees the Church of England's environmental activities, including the Net Zero campaign. At meetings of that group there are regular discussions about the Net Zero campaign and I am able to help keep this on Synod's agenda.

As we go forward into the next quinquennium I hope to have the opportunity to continue to make a case in Synod for the importance of addressing the climate emergency as part of our Christian stewardship, including our responsibility for climate justice. I hope to continue ensuring that this work is communicated effectively to dioceses and parishes to encourage them in this prophetic task.

Rural churches

Question 10

Derby Diocese has many rural churches – churches that struggle with some aspects of their church life- like:

- Finding and supporting their churchwarden(s)
- Finding key members to support the work of their PCC (like Secretary, Treasurer, PSO)
- Finding the resources to pay their Common Fund contribution as well as paying for the upkeep and maintenance of their church building

These time and energy consuming aspects of church life can have a negative impact upon the time and enthusiasm of rural church clergy and their church members to live out the love of Christ in both themselves and in their local community.

How does each candidate think that they might influence and encourage General Synod to develop a strategy for rural Parishes – a strategy that will support rural churches in growing God's Kingdom and making Christ known in rural Areas? *Di Fretwell*

Emily Brailsford

I have previously been a Chaplain to the Young Farmers within Derbyshire and worked for Rural Action Derbyshire for 8 years. I live rurally and worship in a rural church. I have also, for the last 15 years, been involved in voluntary organisations such as Mothers Union and my own network of support groups for parents of children with additional needs, therefore I have a very good understanding of volunteer management and recruitment along with the numerous challenges faced by rural communities. . The joys and also the challenges of living rurally is something I have spoken about at a national level in my work life and I would be VERY keen to support a strategy for rural parishes, bring valuable insight about rural living and worshipping in a rural church

John Payne

Hello, Di. As I read this question, it is less about giving my views on what are the issues which would need to be tackled to achieve change in a General Synod strategy for small rural parishes as about explaining how I would go about influencing Synod members to feel they needed one. I have not been a GS member before so some of what follows may be unrealistic! I think influencing is likely to involve

- Finding out what has happened hitherto, and why any previous initiatives haven't worked (eg there's a CofE document "How Village Churches Thrive")
- Identifying what might be the vision for and purpose of such a strategy
- Facts and figures about rural churches of relevance
- Getting the messages right – talking to people who have the knowledge and know what is practical – in the diocese and in the GS
- Identifying informal influencers — those one naturally goes to for advice.
- Building coalitions with other groups with shared interest in this issue within and beyond the House of Laity
- Possibly talk to sympathetic journalists – get some radio or TV articles featuring the need for fresh thinking on rural churches
- Above all, not trying to do all the work myself!!

Kat Alldread

This is an important missional priority that the Synod takes seriously. The landmark report Released for Mission: Growing the Rural Church (GS Misc 1092) came to Synod in 2015, highlighting rural churches' roles in community life. Since then, the Church of England has published Learning from Creative Thinking and Planning for Rural Mission and Growth, a resource offering practical examples of ways that rural churches can actively engage in mission. I agree that it would be good for Diocesan Synod to revisit a focus on rural churches and their specific challenges and priorities as well as their mission, whilst being mindful that many of the challenges named that are being faced by rural churches are challenges faced by urban and suburban churches as well.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I agree with you that these issues drain the life and enthusiasm out of us. This is the case in my own church and in others which I have supported in ministry. I do not know what is fully possible, as I am not informed about the detail on this yet.

I would vote for measures which put forward such ideas as:

- simplifying and splitting the role of warden/pcc member/treasurer into smaller demands which could be shared amongst more people.
- Introducing/improving handbooks, training, and advice guides to put them into simple language
- encourage the election of entirely new people from the wider community into the roles!

Peter Kelsey

I am involved with Save the Parish and RIGGS, rural interest group on general synod. Both these organisations are key to saving rural church. I think the major element that negatively impacts on rural clergy is having too many parishes. Many of our rural clergy are overstretched and feel unsupported. The policy of allocating clergy based on population numbers is deeply flawed; it should be based on need.

So, having more clergy with less parishes would change rural ministry to one of delight and growth as the Going Deeper report in 2016 confirms.

Rachel Bond

I have huge respect for the people who keep our rural parish churches going. Churchwardens, treasurers, PCC members and others carry enormous responsibility, and we should not take that faithful service for granted.

I am also concerned about the pressure on rural clergy. In many places, one priest is responsible for a large number of churches across several communities. If a vicar is constantly travelling between churches, dealing with buildings, governance and administration, when do they have the time and energy to build relationships, equip people and help a church grow?

I would want General Synod to listen carefully to rural parishes and develop a strategy that reduces unnecessary bureaucracy, provides practical support with buildings and finance, and invests in leadership so that mission does not depend on one overstretched priest.

My own church is on an estate, so I know that context matters. We need to ask what faithful, fruitful ministry looks like in each community and equip local people to do it.

Our goal should not simply be to keep buildings open, but to see people in rural communities encounter Jesus, become his disciples and see their churches flourish.

Richard Lindop

I am conscious of the pressures on rural churches (not unique to Derby!) and know the huge effort that goes into keeping churches with smaller congregations open and viable. This puts strain on clergy and laity alike. "Save the Parish" proposes to divert monies from the centre to the parishes, which is commendable, but a new operating strategy should go with this, to look at how the pressure can be taken off overstretched clergy and laity, to perhaps provide more benefice-wide or deanery-wide support, for instance. Representing Derby diocese, I would engage proactively with those seeking to develop such a strategy.

Stephen Wall

I am a member of a rural church with a small congregation. I feel that we should be helped and assisted by General Synod

Sue Cavill

I am a member of Save the Parish and support their objectives for the next five years. In their manifesto, Save the Parish state they would like to restore Church Commissioners' funds to their founding purpose: stipendiary parish ministry. They say: 'As active participants in the major national funding review now underway, Save the Parish will fight to ensure that any new distribution formula directs money to the parishes that need it most, without centrally imposed strategies, and guaranteeing that dioceses are sustainably resourced to keep priests in parishes.' Whilst not specifically targeting rural parishes, rather all parishes, I believe that Save the Parish's approach will benefit rural parishes. If re-elected I will continue to be an active member of the group and where possible to speak in favour of its proposals in chamber.

A good way to encourage General Synod to develop a strategy for rural Parishes would be to pass a motion in favour of this at our Diocesan Synod. This could then go forward as a potential item for the General Synod agenda. If elected I'd be happy to have a discussion with Di Fretwell about how to go about this.

Church rules

Question 11

Some existing church rules can hinder churches from adapting their church building for the use of people rather than Heritage. How do candidates think that they can influence General Synod to amend or remove existing church rules and systems that are not helpful for listed church members who wish to open up their building for Community activities as well as for worship services? *Di Fretwell*

Emily Brailsford

Whilst I do not have lots of experience of adapting church buildings, what I do have experience of is speaking out and ensuring that the voices of those I represent is heard. I can promise that should I be voted on to General Synod, as I have mentioned previously, I would aim to engage with the congregations within the diocese to find out what are the challenges they are facing and to speak out about this at Synod

John Payne

Again, Di, this seems to be asking about how I would influence people rather than what the issues are, so my response would be along the same lines as the previous question 11. As I understand it the main problems are the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011; the way the faculty system works – often lengthy and risk averse, and restrictions on leases of parts of churches still in use. I believe Synod has already approved proposals for a new Measure (2023–2025), now at Revision Committee stage. I also understand there is a draft Pastoral (Amendment) Measure (GS 1524X) which proposes allowing consistory courts to authorise leases of parts of churches that remain open for worship.

Kat Alldread

There is an ongoing project of simplification that is part of the General Synod's remit. I wholeheartedly support this work. As the DAC officer in the Diocese and as a PCC member, I recognise on a daily basis the pressure placed on church officers and volunteers by necessary bureaucracy. I do think it's important to understand, however, that the Church's Faculty system exists through the ecclesiastical exemption to Listed Building Consent; Faculty Jurisdiction allows church courts to take both heritage bodies' views and the church's stated need to make changes to buildings for the furtherance of mission and ministry into account- were it not for that system, churches would have to make applications to secular authorities instead. In the Diocese of Derby around three quarters of the church buildings are listed (with 65 at Grade I which designates them as among the 2.5% most significant listed historic buildings nationally)- I strongly believe that the churches' care for their buildings is a gift of service of the Church for the whole country.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

Heritage and community access are both important. I would support ways to make things easier to make church buildings accessible and welcoming, which did not spoil the buildings. I do not have expertise in this area, but would be pleased to listen to anyone's views and to read up on any options when a vote presented itself in Synod.

Peter Kelsey

There is a good movement giving advice of how to achieve this in place and we heard at the Diocesan Lay Conference on Saturday of some churches having Post Offices or village shops. All these bring community into church, which can only be good and should continue to grow.

Rachel Bond

I love our church buildings and the heritage they represent, but they were built to serve people and the mission of the Church. Our buildings should be places full of life, prayer, worship, welcome and service to their communities.

I know from my own church how frustrating it can be when we want to make changes to enable ministry and community use, but the faculty process makes this difficult. I don't think the answer is to ignore our heritage, but I do think we need to hold heritage and mission together.

I would want to encourage General Synod to look at whether our systems and processes are genuinely helping churches fulfil their mission. Those involved in advising on church buildings, need to understand not only the historic significance of a building but also the ministry and mission taking place within it and the needs of the community around it.

Where churches are proposing responsible changes, there should be a priority towards enabling mission, with proportionate safeguards for important heritage.

Our buildings should not simply be preserved as monuments to a Christian past. They should be places where people can encounter Jesus and where the Church can serve its community today.

Richard Lindop

I would need more concrete examples to be able to respond fully, but would be happy to engage where possible on these issues, always bearing in mind that any community use of a church building should be in keeping with Christian traditions and values.

Stephen Wall

It is important to alter the internal layout of a church to provide facilities for children and community use. The restrictions should be lifted to enable a greater use of the building which is God's house and I am sure he would welcome the changes.

Sue Cavill

Once again, Save the Parish, which I support, has talked about rules and systems in its manifesto. It says: 'The church would collapse without the hard work of our laity. It should be celebrated, with gratitude, and made as easy as possible. We must simplify the faculty process, dramatically

reduce compliance, make clear the difference between statutory demands and diocesan initiatives.' The motivation here is about reducing the burden on volunteers, but such simplification should also make the flexible use of church buildings more straightforward and I shall support Save the Parish with this.

In addition, as I said in answer to the previous question, one way of influencing General Synod to spend time on this would be to pass a motion at Diocesan Synod which could then be sent to

General Synod as a suggested item. I would be happy to speak in favour of such a motion and again, if elected I'd be happy to have a discussion with Di Fretwell about this.

Self-supporting ministers

Question 12

Many parishes and benefices, nationally, rely to a large extent on self-supporting ministers, either licensed or holding permission to officiate. Frequently SSMs hold the fort during vacancy, for lengthy periods. Yet their numbers are seldom counted in statistics and they tend to be treated as supernumerary, at clergy conferences, other forums and in press coverage. How can this be addressed? *David Legh*

Emily Brailsford

I speak out about the role of Licensed Lay Ministers (Readers) and Self Supporting Ministers and their role within the church at every opportunity I have. I am on the diocesan strategy, business committee and Bishops Council and speak out about the roles of LLM's and SSM's and the value of their roles within the church. I would work hard to ensure that moving forward more consideration was given to these roles and the valuable part they play in the Church.

John Payne

The CofE's clergy profile increasingly will be majority non -stipendiary, whether SSMs or PTO. Any failure to integrate SSMs fully into overall resourcing both unfair and it doesn't make sense strategically. Your question actually indicates some of the areas which need to change to address the problem. Better counting is the first step - mandatory diocesan reporting of SSM roles, including PTO clergy; annual publication of SSM deployment; integration of SSM data into Statistics for Mission, not just Ministry Statistics. Also, the need to recognise SSMs as a distinct vocation, not "helpers" – a cultural reframing. This could also include affirmation of SSM vocations publicly in bishops' teaching, diocesan strategy documents, and clergy conferences, and promoting SSM ministry as a legitimate pathway to senior roles (rural dean, area dean, associate archdeacon, cathedral roles). There's also the need to ensure inclusion of SSMs in decision-making and structures: this could include guaranteed representation of SSMs on: diocesan synods, Bishop's Council etc; ensuring SSMs are invited to clergy conferences with equal status. There's also changing the public narrative: change how the Church talks about ministry – messages about 'clergy numbers are falling', ignoring the thousands of SSMs and PTO clergy who sustain parish life.

Kat Aildread

The Synod has frequently focused on the Church's growing dependence on SSM, PTO and House for Duty ministry. All national statistic presented to Synod incorporate these numbers. Recent debates on broader funding frameworks ie theological training pathways and national funding distributions have explicitly recognised the importance of different models of non stipendiary ministry. The recent Diocesan Synod motion on financial sustainability brought by Liverpool diocese prompted engagement with the Archbishops' Council and the Triennium Funding Working Group regarding fairer resource allocation expressly engages with the growing reliance on non-stipendiary, house-for-duty, and voluntary roles as dioceses face financial constraints.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I do not think we get this right. Our church is still very status oriented and hierarchical. This is demoralising for the people who give their time and their very life to our service but can feel like they are not respected and valued.

I do not know what the answer is though. If you include everyone in a conference then it becomes less intimate, and people get less chance to speak and be heard. A survey of ministers who do not take a stipend would yield some suggestions. I hope I will be better informed if elected to Synod.

I really enjoyed the Diocesan Lay Conference recently perhaps this could be expanded to include all of us who work without pay.

Peter Kelsey

We need to celebrate our self-supporting ministers. They contribute hugely to our Diocese and to our church nationally. As a Deanery we now invite all PTOs to attend our Synods, although the rules are that they cannot all vote. They at least know that we value them and want to involve them.

I believe that there has been an improvement in the Diocese recently as to how we treat our PTOs but it hasn't gone far enough yet. PTOs are a vital part of our ministry team and many Parish Clergy would be even more stretched without them. In 2021 I asked the Diocese for clergy numbers and the change over the previous 4 years – PTO numbers had declined 19% in 4 years! I have asked for updated numbers but haven't been given them.

We have done surveys on DBF staff and incumbent Clergy in the Diocese, which is positive, now we need to do one for PTOs and focus on their wellbeing.

Rachel Bond

I think we need to recognise SSMs for what they are: people who are called by God and are doing real ministry.

I know the Church counts SSMs in its ministry statistics, the latest is on the Church of England website, published in May 26. But I also think the question points to something real which is that SSMs can perhaps sometimes feel like they are treated as an addition to the “main” clergy, rather than as fully ordained ministers who are often carrying significant responsibility.

If someone is preaching, leading worship, taking funerals, visiting the sick, praying with people and caring for a church, they are not “extra”. This is especially true when a church is in vacancy and an SSM is carrying significant responsibility for a long period of time.

I would want Synod to keep listening to SSMs, make sure they are properly supported and included, and ensure their contribution is visible when we talk about ministry across the Church.

God calls people to ministry in different ways. I want us to value and equip people according to their calling and gifts, rather than measuring the value of their ministry simply by whether they receive a stipend.

Richard Lindop

I agree that SSMs (like Readers/LLMs) can play an important role in enabling services to be held across parishes and benefices. As a Reader, I have served through three interregnums in my parish in the last 30 years, so I have first hand experience. Due recognition should be given to all in teaching/leadership/pastoral/organisational roles, and I see no reason why SSMs should not be recognised appropriately – in a similar category to curates, perhaps.

Stephen Wall

Not an easy one to address. However they should be recognised as being the same as the priest, vicar or rectory.

Sue Cavill

SSMs bring a huge amount to the life of our church and it is a mystery why their numbers are seldom counted in statistics and they are often treated as supernumerary. This could certainly be addressed in dioceses by ensuring they are included in conferences and other forums. At national level, once again, as I have said in answer to earlier questions, this could be raised at Diocesan Synod level (or even at Deanery Synod level to start with, then progressing to Diocesan Synod level) and then presented for potential inclusion on a General Synod agenda.

I think this is particularly important when in so many dioceses now there are very few stipendiary clergy and there is a great dependency on SSMs. Once again, if re-elected I would be happy to discuss this with David Legh.

Church plants

Question 13

Do you believe that the pendulum has swung too far in resourcing church plants and eye-catching examples of fresh expressions to the detriment of the traditional parochial model?

David Legh

Emily Brailsford

I think there is value in church plants, especially within the city. What we do need to consider is that what we are doing at the moment is not working, we are not growing congregations at the rate needed for survival of many churches therefore we do need to look at different ways of doing things. I think there needs to be greater understanding of the difference between urban and rural settings and what works for one may not work for the other. A blanket policy may not always be suitable for church growth

John Payne

Hello, David – to answer this requires delving into the figures. Due to the shortage of time available in answering all these questions, in this case I have used AI for information, and have not had the time to verify the figures in any way – so they may be wrong. To quote AI - “Across recent years, national church-planting and Fresh Expressions spending typically falls between: £20m–£40m per year directly on planting, revitalisation, and Fresh Expressions, and £60m–£90m per year if including broader mission projects that create new worshipping communities (e.g., youth ministry plants, chaplaincy-based plants, estate-based Fresh Expressions). The Church of England’s total expenditure (national institutions + dioceses + parishes) is approximately: £1.2bn–£1.3bn per year ((This figure is drawn from annual reports of the Church Commissioners, Archbishops’ Council, diocesan accounts, and aggregated parish finance data.)” Thus Fresh Expressions/Church Planting might take up between 3% to 5% of the C of E’s budget. Whether this is too high a proportion as against other demands on the budget I would need more time to determine than I have got at present to analyse.....

Kat Alldread

The need to review how national funding strategies support the broadest possible range of models of local mission and ministry has been a growing feature of questions at General Synod. I certainly favour a greater degree of scrutiny as to what succeeds and at what cost to other models of sustainable ministry.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I am a both/and person on this. I really support the parish as the heartbeat of our Church, to meet local needs and build local community. It needs more cash, which I would support in Synod votes if asked.

I also love fresh expressions if they are from the people of Christ for the people of Christ. The way of funding fresh expressions presently is not fit for purpose and can lead to a top-down imposition from bodies with their own agenda.

If more money were directed to parishes from the Commissioners, instead of having to jump through hoops that other people decide, parishes could direct this into fresh expressions of their own relevant to their local context.

Peter Kelsey

Yes! Applying for grants from central church is so complicated that Dioceses are having to employ extra administrators to put together complex reports to tick all the boxes required. This is a total waste of money. The Dioceses know what they need to spend money on locally to grow church but that doesn't satisfy national church.

I applaud church plants and fresh expressions but not at the expense of traditional local ministry.

More clergy are resigning than retiring nationally. This is mostly because they are overworked and undervalued. This needs to change and change quickly.

Rachel Bond

The Church of England seeks to be a Christian presence in every community, the parish model is one of the ways we seek to do this and many Church plants seek to revitalise Parish Churches.

St Werburgh's Derby has helped to revitalise St Francis Mackworth and St Edmund's Allenton & Shelton Lock, which both had faithful, but small congregations. They are both now flourishing, not as 'eye catching examples' but as local parish churches with young, diverse congregations serving their local communities. St Philip's Chaddesden is starting its journey of revitalisation with a joint team from St Francis and St Werburgh's and we are praying for similar.

I don't want to replace the parish. I want to see the parish renewed, reaching its community, making disciples and making Jesus known and church planting is one way of doing this.

Richard Lindop

In some areas, church plants have provided a huge impetus in sharing the gospel and welcoming people as new believers into the church. They have often been able to attract those who find more traditional churches off-putting, and I welcome that. However, they are mainly city or suburban and do not reach into the villages and rural areas. Nevertheless, they have lessons for us all in presenting the gospel in a contemporary and relevant way for every generation, so we can work together to share Christ's love for those around us.

Stephen Wall

The church should move with the times and encompass new ideas to encourage additional worshipers.

Sue Cavill

I support Save the Parish, and the first commitment in their manifesto is: 'Restore Church Commissioners' funds to their founding purpose - stipendiary parish ministry.' They say: 'The one single practical change that would transform the life and future of our church is to restore our historic endowment to its proper priority: the parish (thereby also restoring diocesan finances as well). This isn't to argue against any form of grant funding, but that the priority must return to its original purpose.'

I believe that many of the projects that have been funded through grants have resulted in wonderful outcomes - people coming to faith in Christ and churches revitalised. But it's very important to have a network of parishes throughout the country, there to minister to the local flock even if few of those regularly attend church. Parish churches are a natural basis for mission and they need to be resourced appropriately.

Save the Parish

Question 14

Do you support the aims of ‘Save the Parish’ and that the priority should be the funding of buildings, clergy training and stipends above everything else? *Mike Pindar*

John Payne

I am aware of the ‘Save the Parish’ organisation and in general whole-heartedly support a lot of its objectives. I agree in principle with the 6 Commitments the organisation gives in its 2026 General Manifesto for the new Synod. You say, Mike, that the things you mention for funding are ‘above everything else’ – that causes me some concern. There are issues which are very important and are best handled (because of expertise) at diocesan level or centrally – safeguarding, church schools, the Church’s commitment to ‘net zero’ and being a prophetic voice with regard to climate change and biodiversity loss, for instance. But, yes, I believe there should be a positive preference for funding of buildings, clergy training and stipends in any debate about funding priorities and decisions, and that such funding is very important indeed, to quote STP, “to sustain a thriving, cradle to grave, parish system with well-trained clergy providing regular worship, pastoral care, and sacraments, fully embedded in and serving their local communities”

Kat Alldread

As a member of the PCC at my parish church, I thoroughly support the parochial model and value the ministry of my parish priest and indeed all the clergy and church officers I support in my job as a Diocesan officer. I do not support the stated aims of Save the Parish, which I do not think adequately grasp the issues of viability for the urban and rural church.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I largely do; I hope to get into the detail more if I am elected. I support the Parish as the heartbeat of our church, and it does need more cash. Parish funding should not consume all the money, but a good part of it. I am also a supporter of initiatives like Spire, since we are also part of a world-wide fellowship, and must address racial justice.

Peter Kelsey

I strongly support the aims of Save the Parish as I say in my election address.

For me the aims are to get the right amount of funding from the Church Commissions to the Dioceses for them to afford enough well trained Clergy to grow church.

Acting on the Save the Parish initiative, in June 2025 the Diocesan Synod agenda said:

“As a result, the following motion will be proposed by Peter Kelsey, member of Carsington Deanery Synod, Chair of the House of Laity and member of General Synod:

“That this Synod:

(i) call upon the Church Commissioners and Archbishops Council to undertake everything necessary to effect a redistribution of financial resources directly to Diocesan Stipend Funds to reflect the value of contributions made by Diocesan Boards of Finance to the Church of England Funded Pension Scheme since it was established by the settlement of 1997 (£2.6 billion)”

The income from £2.6 billion is £100m per annum – that is enough for 1,650 extra clergy nationally – an average of 40 EXTRA clergy per diocese.

There is important work to do in the next few years to make this a reality and I need to be part of that initiative.

Rachel Bond

I understand and support much of what sits behind Save the Parish; properly resourced parish ministry, well-trained and supported clergy, and a commitment to serving communities rather than simply managing decline.

I am cautious about saying that buildings, clergy training and stipends should come “above everything else”. The thing that must come above everything else is making Christ known and seeing people become disciples of Jesus. Buildings, clergy and training are incredibly important, but they are means to that end.

I want to see our parishes properly resourced so that clergy have the time to pray, preach, pastor, evangelise and equip the whole people of God. I also want us to be willing to try things that bring new people into the life of the Church and, where appropriate, bring fresh life to existing parishes. We also seriously need to address the huge issue of the average age of stipendiary clergy and that people are not being trained in numbers to replace them.

I don't want to save the parish simply to preserve what we have. I want to see parish churches become places where people encounter Jesus and where the gospel takes root in their communities.

Richard Lindop

I broadly support the aims of “Save the Parish” – the church in the community has always been the working model of the Church of England. In particular, I believe that we need high quality theological training for ordinands to equip them as pastor-teachers rather than administrators, and I heartily agree with the need to provide clergy with care and support. Our first priority should be proclaiming the good news of new life in Jesus to a needy world, and we should be working out the most effective ways of doing this in our cities, towns and villages (different approaches in different places). However, I have not had the opportunity to understand the way the Church holds, manages and distributes funds from the Church Commissioners so it is difficult to be definitive about how funding should be managed.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

Yes, I support the aims of 'Save the Parish'.

Funding for parishes

Question 15

Do candidates consider that the Church Commissioners and Archbishops Council should fund Parishes to greater level in terms of centrally allocated funding? *Mark Titterton*

Emily Brailsford

As mentioned previously, I believe that there needs to be more understanding of the difference between rural and urban settings and that a blanket policy and blanket funding will not necessarily work. I would welcome listening and learning exercises to ensure that there is understanding of what parishes in these different settings really need.

John Payne

Please see the answer to question 15, Mark. Yes, I agree that these bodies should fund Parishes to a greater level. The traditional parish model depends on:

- Local presence – i.e. clergy and lay capacity
- Local buildings – i.e. sustainable infrastructure
- Local trust – i.e. community engagement
- Local resilience - i.e. environmental and financial sustainability

If any one of these collapses, the parish system, the bedrock of the Church of England, becomes unviable. More funding is needed in all these areas

Kat Alldread

Yes. If we wish anything like the current model of parochial ministry and mission to be maintained, with parishes adequately resourced and a sustainable pension model, then a radical solution needs to be found. The current financial burden placed on DBFs is unsustainable.

Louisa J Wass-Griffiths

I do think that Parishes should get more money from the central pot. I will support this if elected.

Peter Kelsey

Yes!

The Church Commissions now sit on £11.6 billion. In 2025 they only allocated 2.4% of this, whereas their assets have been growing at 9.6% pa over the preceding 30 years. They have not been sharing enough of their wealth with the Dioceses!

In 2025 Save the Parish put forward a motion to change that and increase the amount that the Church Commissioners should pay out and for an extra £100m per annum to go to Dioceses to spend on Parish Clergy. That would pay for an average of 40 extra clergy per Diocese. This motion was approved by a huge number of Dioceses and put pressure onto the Church Commissions to change what they were doing.

It partially worked in that the Church Commissioners suddenly decided to increase their spending by 36% - but the extra £100m pa that the Church Commissioners suddenly found they could spend hasn't gone direct to Parishes to fund clergy, it is still going on trendy projects.

I want to be re-elected to General Synod to help influence the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners' direction of spending.

Rachel Bond

There is a strong case for releasing central funding to support parish ministry, particularly where local giving cannot realistically meet the cost of ministry. A parish serving a deprived community should not be disadvantaged simply because there is less money locally.

But I also think funding should follow vision. Dioceses need to be clear about where God is calling them, where there are opportunities for mission and growth, and where investment could make a real difference.

I don't think central funding should simply be about keeping existing structures going. It should enable mission; supporting clergy and lay ministry, planting and revitalising churches, reaching communities that are currently under served, and helping people encounter Jesus.

I also believe we need to recover a greater confidence in God's provision. We should be wise stewards, make responsible plans and seek every appropriate source of funding, but ultimately our hope is not in funding formulas or institutions. I have seen God provide in ways we could not have planned for, and I believe we should be willing to pray boldly and trust him.

Richard Lindop

I have not yet had the opportunity to understand the way the Church holds, manages and distributes funds from the Church Commissioners, and its legal obligations in so doing, so it is difficult to be definitive about this. However, given the limited funds available to many dioceses and parishes, and the resultant challenges in funding parish ministry, I consider that there should be a move towards more funding for parishes, while ensuring that there are sufficient reserves for critical liabilities such as pensions.

Stephen Wall

Yes

Sue Cavill

Yes, I do consider that they should and if re-elected I will work towards this.