



Christopher Townsend

Dear Elector

It is a privilege to have this opportunity to write to you as a candidate to represent our Diocese in the House of Laity of General Synod.

In the next few years, General Synod will play a crucial role in making decisions which will have a major impact on the future of the Church of England. I hope you will conclude that I have the commitment, outlook, and experience, to enable me faithfully to represent the Diocese of Ely and to contribute to General Synod with informed judgement.

Please, as you discern for whom to cast your vote, telephone me or email me if you have any questions for me. I would be honoured to receive your 1st preference vote or, failing that, the highest preference that you are able to give to me.

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with All Saints

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Yours in Christ

Christopher

My story

My faith journey: I went to Sunday School and later, as a teenager, committed my life to Jesus Christ. My faith in its early years was nurtured by Church of England churches in an 'ordinary' suburban parish (Pyrford), a university town (Cambridge), and a multi-ethnic urban parish (Tooting).

Committed to our church: Since returning to Cambridge, my wife Kate and I have worshipped at St. Andrew the Great in Cambridge for nearly 30 years. During this time, I have helped to lead our youth work and our ministry among international families. More recently, I have served on the PCC for 6 years and on Diocesan Synod for 3 years.

Links with a rural parish: It has been a privilege to build links with the parish church in Terrington St. Clement, near King's Lynn, through visits and a charitable trust which supports its ministry. Over time, this has afforded me some insight into the challenges and opportunities of rural ministry.

Family: Kate and I are deeply grateful to God that, despite our parenting mishaps, our grown-up children, James, Susannah, and Elizabeth, are in the kindness of God all walking in the faith and our son is a church youth worker.

My experience

Law: Until my retirement three years ago, I was a partner in a leading national law firm, Mills & Reeve. Working for businesses, universities, and charities, I led the team advising on tax and employee share incentives. Within the firm, I championed our 'pro bono' practice which provided free legal advice to selected charities and not-for-profit community groups.

The application of the Christian faith to contemporary issues: I serve as a trustee of The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion and chair the editorial group for *Cambridge Papers*. Recent papers, accessible [here](#), have considered the hidden costs of the digital revolution, how Christian memory should reflect on historic injustices, the housing crisis, and reimagining church buildings.

Theological study: following retirement, I completed an MPhil in New Testament and Early Christianity at the University of Cambridge.

Issues facing the General Synod 2021-26

The next General Synod will play an essential part in addressing several vital issues. These include:

- **Vision and strategy:** the Archbishop of York has called us to become a church which is “simpler, humbler, bolder”. Recent proposals for lay leadership of 10,000 new churches have – understandably! – prompted a high-profile campaign to ‘Save the Parish’. I believe we need to maintain ‘a Christian presence in every community’ and be entrepreneurial in mission. However, more needs to be done to focus resources on frontline ministry and to consult those at the grass roots expected to provide the time, effort, and money to ‘keep the show on the road’ and implement new strategies. If it is proposed that hard-pressed lay people are to do more, and lead a ‘myriad’ of new initiatives, let’s get lay people into the conversation!
- **Living in Love and Faith (LLF):** having engaged with the LLF resources, and participated in the LLF course, I look forward to further dialogue. While I hold the catholic and reformed view of Scripture’s teaching on marriage and believe that, properly understood, it is good news for all - including my LGBT+ friends - the LLF process is showing us the need to hear, really hear, diverse stories and views as we seek to build a church which better reflects the love of Christ.
- **Life after ‘lockdown’:** the stresses, financial and emotional, produced by the pandemic call for a well-judged, and pastorally supportive, build-back strategy, and in my view questions regarding the provision of holy communion in both kinds need to be revisited.

Climate change, safeguarding, affordable housing, racism, clergy discipline, and much besides, will all – rightly – require further attention. However, I long to see General Synod devote more of its time and attention to the distinctive mission and unique calling of the church and more of its effort supporting the grass roots ministry of local churches.

The General Synod is, like Parliament, a body which passes new legislation. My professional life involved analysing the potential impact of proposed new laws in my field. This background equips me to contribute to the process of reviewing draft legislation, proposing improvements, and ironing out unintended consequences. Beyond that, I believe that my experience of the commercial world, involvement in lay ministry in the life of a local church, and membership of Diocesan Synod, will all enable me to make a constructive contribution to General Synod in its role in addressing the breadth of issues which face the Church of England.

My Christian perspective

I believe that one’s faith should permeate and shape all aspects of life – home, work, leisure, and church. I hold orthodox views, rooted in the witness of Scripture, and my spiritual life has been nurtured within the evangelical tradition.

However, I recognise that all of us are limited by our history, context, and human frailty, and so would aim as a member of General Synod to be persistent in listening to differing views and to draw on the insights available from others. My goal will be to reach well-informed judgments on sometimes complex issues and always to work with respect and generosity towards those with whom, ultimately, I may disagree.

In all this, I will endeavour to uphold our faith as expressed in the catholic creeds and Anglican formularies. I hope and pray that at all times I will be able, with St. Paul, to say: *‘I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...’*. (Romans 1v 16).

My commitment to you

In seeking election as a lay representative for Ely on General Synod, I would like to make the following commitments to you:

- I will devote **time and effort** to fulfil my obligations faithfully, prayerfully, and knowledgeably
- I will be **available** to you by phone, email or, where practicable, in person to answer questions and receive input
- I will provide a **personal report** on proceedings after each meeting of General Synod to the lay chair of each deanery.

Thank you again for considering my candidacy.