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2026 General Synod Election Address

Proposed: Revd Manda Featherstone

Seconded: Revd Dr Sam Gibson

About Me

I was born in South East London into a dual-cultural household: my father came from an East End family, and my mother from a Dutch immigrant family settled in New Zealand. At school, I fell in love with BCP Choral Evensong – a love I hope to pass on to my own daughters, who now sing in Birmingham Cathedral Girls' Choir.

Since 2008 I have served in six dioceses and eight parishes, from village benefices to city-centre churches. My ministry has included children's work, Bible studies, choirs and music, homeless projects, and supporting the Anglican Church of St George's Baghdad. In 2023 I completed a doctorate in theology and ministry, researching how traditionalist Anglo-Catholic priests understood mission and navigated change in the Church of England.

Since 2022 I have served as Curate-in-Charge, and now Priest-in-Charge, of Christ Church Summerfield, where I have led a revitalisation plant. I currently serve on Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council, as well as teaching in theological education and diocesan training. Recently, I brought a motion to Diocesan Synod on vexatious and frivolous complaints, contributing to the development of a new policy. I am also on the council of reference for a lay-led church in Blackpool. Serving in North Edgbaston has deepened my conviction that the Church of England is at its best when national and diocesan structures support the mission of local churches, rather than the other way around.

Why am I standing for General Synod?

I love the Church of England and believe it has a profound gift to offer our nation: the hope of Jesus. We need a Church confident in the Gospel, committed to making Jesus known in every community. My experience of local ministry has also shown me that churches flourish when they are properly resourced. I want to contribute to a General Synod that serves local churches well, particularly those working in communities with the greatest need. I also want to help build a culture of trust and respect, where we can disagree well, listen carefully and work together for the sake of the Gospel.

Supporting local ministry

- The **parish system is a gift** of the Church of England: a Christian presence in every community in the nation. I have seen the difference a healthy, outward-looking local church can make, particularly in places where there are few other sources of hope or stability.
- We need to support clergy and lay leaders with the buildings, theological education and financial resources they need. The national Church has a responsibility to steward its resources wisely and transparently, and to ensure that they serve mission rather than structures for their own sake. This includes investing strategically in the **buildings and parsonages** needed for sustainable parish ministry.
- We also need greater national support for ministry in the poorest communities. My own parish is in an area of urban deprivation, and I have seen both the challenges and the extraordinary opportunities for mission that exist there. The distribution of resources between dioceses

remains deeply unequal, while too many of our poorest communities are having their parish churches closed or stipends withdrawn. I want to see **resources better aligned with need**, with communities with the greatest challenges not left with the least capacity for mission.

A confident and healthier Church

- I want to see a Church confident in the Gospel, rooted in prayer and worship, **committed to the parish**, and serious about evangelism and social justice.
- I also believe that how we disagree matters. In a polarised culture, the Church has an opportunity to model **Christ-like disagreement**. The Church of England is a broad Church. That can be difficult, but it is also one of our great strengths. We should be able to hold strong convictions without treating those who disagree with us as enemies.
- I am transparent about my own theological convictions. I support the requirement for the Canon B2 process to be followed for any changes to the Church's doctrine of marriage as outlined in Canon B30: a lifelong union between one man and one woman. At the same time, I believe the Church should be a place of **radical welcome**, where every person is treated with dignity as someone made in the image of God. This commitment to inclusion underpins my membership of the Birmingham Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship, and the Junia Network (a group supporting ordained evangelical women across a range of theological perspectives)
- My own experience has taught me that theological conviction and **generous listening** are not opposites. My doctoral research examined how the Church reached settlements around the entry of women to the episcopacy, giving me an appreciation of the importance of finding legislative approaches for people with deeply held differences to remain part of one Church.

What would I bring?

- I would bring experience of serving in a culturally diverse and deprived parish, of working across theological differences, and of contributing within diocesan structures. I hope I would also bring curiosity, generosity, good humour and a **willingness to listen**.
- I am passionate about seeing local churches flourish, I would seek to be a thoughtful and constructive voice on General Synod: speaking clearly, listening carefully, and remembering that Synod exists to serve the **whole Church**.
- The Church of England has something profoundly precious to offer our nation: a gospel of hope. I want to help build a Church whose structures **support local ministry**, strengthen the poorest communities, and enable us to share that hope with confidence and generosity.

What my colleagues say...

Revd Manda Featherstone, *"I know Katie as a prayerful person. She is someone who engages deeply with issues and is open to hearing from others. She has an ability to speak truth to power. Katie is passionate about the church and seeing God's kingdom come both at a local and national level."*

Revd Dr Sam Gibson, *"I share much in common with Katie. She believes passionately in grassroots ministry and evangelism, and her work on clergy wellbeing is timely and important for us all. Where Katie and I have different views, I've experienced first-hand her active listening and good disagreement, while remaining committed to working together for the good of the church."*

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please do contact me if you have any questions. I would be grateful if you would consider giving me either your first or highest available preference vote.

With thanks, Katie.