

General Synod Election Address

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Nominated by

Venerable Mike Gilbertson Archdeacon of Chester

Seconded by

Revd Canon Christine Broad, Rector of Woodchurch, Dean of Women in Ministry Diocese of Chester and Chaplain for the Mothers Union in the Diocese of Chester



My thanks to Mike and Christine for their support. The General Synod elects by single transferable vote. If you are intending to vote for me, I would be very pleased if you would put me high on your list.

Who am I?

I have been Archdeacon of Macclesfield for the last ten years. Before that I served as Vicar of Middlewich (Chester Diocese) and The Tas Valley Churches (Norwich Diocese). My curacy was in suburban London (Southwark Diocese). I am a Simeon Trustee and a member of Broken Rites (whose campaign for justice for divorced clergy spouses I intend to promote, if elected).

I am married to Sue and we have three sons who are all creating their own futures.

Outside of Church I am a regular theatre goer, especially to the Royal Exchange in Manchester; I love any sort of sport (now sadly mostly watching rather than participating) and enjoy breaks in our motorhome.

Why am I standing?

I was on General Synod from 2011-2016 and, as is the case for many first timers, found the whole experience a bit bewildering. I now want to get back there and play my part in shaping the Church that I deeply love.

My theological understanding of God has developed throughout my life and since completing my MA in 2018, I have discovered a new depth to the grace of God, which I'm still exploring. I think the Church needs to take that journey deep into God's grace and affirm with Paul that 'nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:39).

Being Archdeacon gives you a very privileged perspective on the pressures being faced in the parish. I talk to a breadth of clergy and laity with different priorities who have deepened my understanding of the complexities of leading a broad Church and I think this makes me experienced enough to find unity in diversity; and the Church needs to find unity.

Where do I stand on the big issues?

Living in Love and Faith – Primarily I want to ensure our conversation is open, honest and generous and I will seek to walk the way of unity to try to find a way for those who disagree with any Synodical decision to be able to stay within the Church of England. I personally intend to support the agenda of inclusion. I can't theologically square any approach which suggests that the grace of God has limits and I find myself unconvinced that committed same sex relationships should be categorized as sinful. I also fear for our Church and its mission if we become associated with exclusion. My image of Jesus is of one who embraced all people and built bridges with those whom the people of faith rejected.

Mission and Evangelism – As Chair of the Diocesan Outreach Committee I am working hard to encourage mission in our Diocese. I have been deeply influenced by the [Grace Report](#) and I really want to make sure that Synod takes deeper note of the links that the report helpfully makes between social action, discipleship and mission. As Chair of Transforming Lives Together I am thrilled at the way Churches around the Diocese are putting social action at the heart of discipleship and mission. I believe this should be the principle missional model for the Church of England.

Environment – In March I proposed to Diocesan Synod that Chester should register as an Eco Diocese. I am delighted that parishes are registering for Eco Church and that the impetus is there to meet the challenging target of Net Zero Carbon 2030. I intend to work within Synod to see continued progress.

Safeguarding – I am involved in the Diocesan response to the safeguarding challenge and a member of the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel. I am fully committed to the programme of culture change needed to deliver safeguarding at every level in the Church. However, I am also anxious that the Church of England is realistic about what can be achieved and will ask questions about how initiatives can be resourced and delivered at a local level.

Racial Justice – I was interim Chair of the Diocesan Race and Ethnicity Forum and remain a member of the forum and sharing the lead on projects like the Global Images of Christ at the Cathedral. I am promoting the roll out of unconscious bias training and actively working to promote racial justice in our Diocese and wider Church. I welcome the [Lament to Action](#) report and consider the last Synod was mistaken not to resource a key recommendation of that report to fund Racial Justice Officers in each Diocese.

Well-being – As Archdeacon I am very aware of the exhaustion and burn out that has become a feature of life amongst clergy and laity during this awful time of pandemic. I hope I have demonstrated compassion and care to those who are struggling and it is my intention that the efforts to recover as a Church don't simply assume that the scars of exhaustion are not there.

Simplification – My role as Archdeacon can be frustrated by bureaucracy. The Church has begun a good work in 'Simplification', but it must be intensified to ensure we have a Church that works efficiently. For example, as Chair of the Diocesan Closed Churches Committee, I want to see what can be done to simplify the disposal of closed churches. I also have concerns about the often confusing 'Table of Parochial Fees' and consider some charges woefully inadequate for hard pressed village Churches seeking to maintain costly churchyards.

Confidence – Above all, I find myself wanting to promote a Church with a renewed confidence in the Gospel, in prayer and in its structures. It is my belief that I can make a real and genuine contribution to the future and I would be honoured to receive your vote.