



Ven Dr Adrian Youings

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Election Statement for General Synod 2026

Standing to represent clergy across the Diocese of Bristol — with a commitment to parish ministry, clergy wellbeing and frontline mission.

Personal background

I have been the Interim Minister for Swindon Deanery since January 2026, working with parishes in vacancy on strategic and leadership direction. I am married to Fran, vicar of Lydiard Millicent on the edge of Swindon, and am an elected member of Bristol Diocesan Synod.

Before moving to Bristol Diocese, I served in Dorking, South Croydon and Trull with Angersleigh, near Taunton. I raised up ordinands, trained curates, planted a new congregation, led two major building projects and served as Area Dean and on diocesan bodies including Bishop's Council and the Crown Nominations Committee.

I then served for seven years as Archdeacon of Bath, including chairing the Common Fund Committee, before becoming Head of Engagement for the Christian charity, Care for the Family.

Why am I standing for General Synod?

I now serve in Swindon. With most of our representatives coming from the Bristol end of the Diocese, I would help ensure that the eastern end is represented on General Synod, and that the experience of clergy and parishes here is part of national conversations about mission, ministry, finance and clergy wellbeing.

I have served on General Synod for the last Quinquennium as a representative for Bath and Wells. My most significant contribution has been helping to bring about substantial improvement in clergy pensions.

As chair of the steering group of the Clergy Pension Action Group, a grassroots movement representing more than 2,100 clergy, I helped campaign to address pension injustices. Working with the Archbishops' Council and Pensions Board, this led to a Private Member's Motion, brought by myself and James Blandford-Baker, which passed unanimously last year.

That has restored clergy pensions to a more just level, putting right the injustices of the last 15 years of reductions in clergy pensions. Alongside an increase in the national minimum stipend, it will now make a very significant difference to what clergy receive in retirement. I have already had the joy of talking to a number of clergy who have retired in recent weeks, for whom the pension improvements have been transformative in the way they feel about entering retirement.

There remain, however, other serious injustices in clergy retirement provision, particularly around housing. Our Private Member's Motion also called for a review of retirement provision, again approved unanimously. The review process was slow in getting started, and we have worked hard behind the scenes to keep the pressure on to ensure momentum is not lost. One reason I am standing again is to ensure we keep that pressure on, and that the recommendations of that review are turned into even more concrete changes that will mean genuine fairness and dignity for all clergy in retirement.

Beyond pensions and clergy wellbeing, my deeper conviction is that God has entrusted the local church with sharing his love and purposes, revealed in Jesus Christ, with our communities. Though parish ministry is changing, the local church must remain central to Synod's decision-making.

I want to help shape a Church of England that releases and resources parishes, chaplaincies and schools, enables planting and pioneering, and encourages Christians to live out their faith in daily life. Biblically shaped frontline ministry and mission are therefore my priorities.

We face significant challenges: diocesan deficits, falling ordinations, high levels of retirements, changing patterns of parish ministry, burdensome church buildings and the urgent question of how national resources can better support frontline mission. These issues need to be faced honestly and with courage. I do worry that too much decision-making about the use of our limited funding is now being determined from national church institutions – it feels like a 'we know best' attitude. I believe that parishes, working in close partnership with their diocesan support services, are often better placed to know how to use the money in a way that is missionally effective, whilst being supported with nationally gathered evidence.

Ultimately, I believe Synod needs to discover a renewed confidence in the biblical gospel, trusting that with God "nothing is impossible". Rather than being dragged down by lack, I long for us to believe that God can still work abundantly through his church. The gospel still has power to change lives.

I would be grateful for your support and for your vote as I seek to represent clergy across the Diocese of Bristol on General Synod.

Nominated by:

Rev Trudi Wigley: Rector of Dorcan Church, Swindon; Chair of House of Clergy

Rev Joel Sales: Vicar of Pattern Church, Swindon