



My name is **Gaynor Halls**, and I am standing for General Synod because I believe the Church must listen more closely to the lived experience of its people, especially those in rural communities, disabled people, and those who depend upon strong, compassionate parish ministry. I currently serve as Churchwarden, Parish Safeguarding Officer, and PCC secretary for the Parish of Wellspring Villages, part of the Swindon Deanery, our parish is the furthest East of the Diocese of Bristol. I am a wife, mother of three adult children and grandmother to three teenagers.

I was baptised in the Church in Wales and later confirmed in my thirty's. My faith was strengthened by the wise support and guidance of significant people in my life and has been nurtured by many traditions within the Anglican Communion, from liberal catholic through to evangelical, all of which have helped me to be the person I am now.

I now live and worship in a rural parish that has recently undergone significant reorganisation, after a prolonged interregnum, which resulted in me leading a service when there was no minister to attend. This has given me first-hand experience not only of the challenges facing our churches and clergy, but also of the opportunities that arise when local faith communities are trusted, encouraged, and properly supported.

I am especially concerned about the growing pressures placed upon parish priests. In rural areas, financial constraints too often lead to the amalgamation of benefices and parishes. While change can sometimes be necessary, it must never come at the expense of clergy wellbeing, pastoral care, or the ability of local churches to remain visible, accessible, and rooted in their communities.

Having been actively involved in our parish's transition from two benefices into one parish, I have seen the dedication, resilience, and faithfulness of our clergy at close hand. I have also seen our smallest church grow, proving that local congregations can flourish when they are nurtured, resourced, and given confidence for mission.

Our rector currently serves in a half-time post, yet the hours, responsibilities, and pastoral demands far exceed what many would imagine. This is not sustainable. If we value clergy, we must ensure that they are properly supported, protected from unreasonable expectations, and given the resources they need to serve with joy, health, and faithfulness.

I would advocate for greater investment in parish-based roles and ministries, so that churches can respond to local need rather than relying primarily on mergers as a way of reducing costs. The Church needs sustainable solutions that strengthen both clergy and congregations, particularly in rural and under-resourced dioceses where the parish church remains a vital sign of God's presence.

This commitment is rooted in the Church of England's Five Marks of Mission: to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom; to teach, baptise and nurture new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to transform unjust structures, challenge violence and pursue peace and reconciliation; and to safeguard the integrity of creation. For me, these are not abstract principles, but a practical call to support parish churches as places where faith is

shared, people are nurtured, need is met with compassion, injustice is challenged, and God's creation is cherished.

I am in my third year of studying History at Open University and have an understanding of the importance of using the past to positively influence the future, with at least one of our churches, having links to the Slave Trade, I will be joining the seminar on September 23rd regarding, this and will be very interested in the next steps now the audit is completed. I do not believe in the destruction of memorials, but in teaching the negative implications of the past to influence rational thinking for the future.

As a member of General Synod, I would bring a grounded and practical perspective: as someone living with disability, as someone shaped by rural church life, and as someone who has experienced parish reorganisation from within. I would speak for clergy wellbeing, stronger local ministry, and churches that are able to welcome, serve, and grow in the communities to which God has called them.

Before joining my local church, I volunteered at another church in the Swindon Deanery, situated in one of the most socially deprived areas. During that time, I helped to run breakfast and lunch clubs, as well as a craft group. This experience taught me that God's ministry does not take place only on a Sunday morning. It is present when someone walks through the church door and becomes part of the church community. It is also present when we take the time simply to listen, which can be one of the most meaningful gifts we offer on life's journey.

I agree with the published objectives of Save The Parish.

Finally, I fully support the aim for carbon net zero, but at a pace that is sustainable. We have four churches in our parish, one is currently net zero, with heated pew pads and no further heating, this was after the gas heating was decommissioned due to being unsafe. PCC are currently working through Eco church for all our churches, so will follow all the advice that is given. Hopefully, this will allow for the natural ending of gas and oil in our churches as the boilers become less efficient with age.

I ask for your support so that I may bring these concerns, experiences, and convictions to General Synod. Our Church is strongest when clergy are cared for, local communities are heard, and every person is valued as part of the Body of Christ.