



Election address for General Synod elections 2026

House of Laity

Helen Aberdeen

Video [here](#)

About me

I live in Bristol with my husband, David. We have 2 children and 2 grandchildren whom we see regularly; they bless us, rejuvenate us and exhaust us in equal measure! I was brought up in the Presbyterian church in Northern Ireland with a 'cultural' Christianity from which I drifted away in my mid-teens. **I came back to a deeper faith in Christ while at Bristol University**, and began attending Christ Church, Clifton. My time at university gave me many opportunities, opportunities, particularly during my year abroad, to encounter a range of other traditions including Catholic, Baptist and ecumenical. Following **a career in secondary language teaching, I worked for 15 years as a senior lecturer in education at Bristol University**, where I was subject lead on the modern languages PGCE course, and Director of the school of education's education policy and research service. The latter role required me to read and summarise education and research documents for our subscribers – something which I feel may well be of value were I to serve on general synod! I retired from paid employment a year ago. Since retirement I have enjoyed having a bit more time for the things which energise me – keeping fit, having rich conversations with friends, keeping up with my languages and spending more time with my grandchildren.

Ministry

I began pursuing a call to Lay Ministry in 2019 and **was licensed in 2022**. Since then, I have served in my church, **St Matthews in Cotham**. I love its **diversity** in terms of age, social class, and neurodiversity. I am a member of the staff team, preaching, leading services, and helping with pastoral, prayer and outreach ministry. Retirement has opened up further opportunities to serve the wider church. I am involved in the Lay Ministry and clergy discernment process, both at Diocesan and at national level as a **Bishop's Advisor**. I have, to date, served on 2 Stage 2 national panels. Both the training and my experience to date have given me a sound knowledge and appreciation of the rigor and professionalism of the discernment process. It is a joy to discuss vocation with prospective ordinands and Lay Ministers. I also **tutor on the Diocesan Lay Ministry Formation** course and **mentor potential candidates for Lay Ministry**. As stated below, this role has given me a heart for the development of Lay Ministry.

What matters to me

There are three things which are currently on my heart. The first is the **persecuted church**. I welcome the synod's recent introduction of a day of prayer for the persecuted church, but I would like it to go further in terms of standing alongside brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering for his name. I have recently got to know and become friends with refugees from Iran whose courage and ongoing joy in knowing Christ in the midst of hardship has deeply impacted me. My second passion is **evangelism**. One of the Church of England's 5 marks of mission is to

‘Proclaim the good news of the kingdom’. I am keenly aware that there is a harvest out there in our society – and an unchurched generation which is spiritually hungry. I believe that the church needs to disciple and equip its members to respond to that hunger. I welcome the church’s recent initiatives such as pioneer ministry and fresh expressions and am encouraged by evidence of a ‘quiet revival’ in the church. Thirdly, as a Lay Minister, and someone who is now involved in the recruitment and training of Lay Ministers, I have a deep appreciation of the importance of **Lay Ministry** in the Church of England. I am encouraged by the way, in recent years, this ministry has been recognized and supported by post licensing training. I have a heart to promote the further development of Lay Ministry within the church and to seek ways to encourage and support the calling of those who may wish to embark upon it.

Contested issues

One cannot fail to be aware of the **different theological positions currently represented within the Church of England, particularly around contested issues of human sexuality**. I feel that I should be transparent in this address about where I stand. As what may be called an evangelical (although I dislike labels), **I affirm the church’s teaching on marriage and sexuality as laid out in Canon B30. However, I am committed to welcoming all people in our churches, no matter what their sexuality or gender**. I am also committed to engaging in courageous and courteous debate. I long for a fulfilment of Jesus’s prayer in John 17, that ‘all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you’. I hope that the proposed Pastoral Consultative Group will enable us to continue listening to each other. We need to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us – being disciples of Jesus.

Synod

Why do I want to sit with around 473 people in a large hall for up to five days, debating church policies, measures, and initiatives? Firstly, because it gives me **the opportunity use my professional and church experience** to serve a church to which, in spite of its imperfections and challenges, I am deeply committed. The Church of England is still a great institution which shares the gospel in word and deed across our country in around 12,500 parishes – no one is beyond its reach. It is built on centuries of rich tradition which have produced beautiful liturgy and a broad theology. For these reasons and more, it has always been my ‘faith home’.

Secondly, **Synod matters**. It is one of the main ways in which God works through his church. It undertakes the challenge of engaging with society and modelling authentic and ethical ways of living. It takes hold of and wrestles with thorny issues of theology and of how the church can witness to a post Christian society. It produces vast numbers of reports and resources which equip the church to better serve. I have, in preparing this address, listened to its discussions on a wide range of topics. I have seen that Synod members are called to work hard, and I have the heart to join the work, using my God given gifts and professional and church experience. As electors, ***my commitment to you is that I would take the role of Synod seriously, preparing myself properly for meetings and engaging wholeheartedly in discussions. I also commit to making myself accessible and informed, prepared to answer any Synod related questions which you may have.*** I would be grateful if you would consider giving me your first preference vote as I stand for election.

For more information, you can contact me at: helen.aberdeen.ha@gmail.com