

Christopher Johnson

Standing for the House of Clergy of General Synod

Nominated by: The Revd Anthony Lees Smith
Area Dean, City Deanery.

Seconded by: The Revd Canon Karen Rooms
*Canon Residentiary of Leicester, Diocesan Women's Ministry
Enabler.*

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Basically, I'm standing because I think it's important for a variety of voices to be heard in Synod and I believe that I'm in a position to represent a good variety across the clerical spectrum of the diocese.

Whilst I might naturally be labelled as 'liberal catholic' and 'inclusive', I'm very conscious of the diversity of the Diocese of Leicester, along with the Church of England more widely. First and foremost, I identify myself as a **parish priest**. Having ministered in both town and country, I have a good awareness of the issues that can face parish clergy from day to day and am **always mindful of the lot of the parish priest** when I have opportunity to contribute to wider discussions.

I'm also very aware that the next quinquennium in General Synod will present some key issues for discussion and decision and I feel that it is my turn to step up to the plate at an institutional level. (I've laid out some of my thoughts on these issues overleaf).

I have been connected with the Church of England since birth and, as the son of a retired priest with PTO, I experienced a lot of its breadth as I grew up along with being aware of the important role retired clergy play in the day-to-day life of the CofE.

It was the drama of the liturgy and its music that captivated my imagination and sustained me as I came to know God more fully and to wrestle with faith intellectually as well as emotionally and spiritually. These dimensions are still as much a key part of my faith today as they were when I embraced the Christian faith for myself as a teenager. Encouraging people to grow in faith, to engage with their **spiritual and intellectual** experiences and to use them to further their relationship with God, has been a key intent of my ministry thus far.

Some of my **clerical experience and responsibility** to date:

- * Ordained Deacon in 2013 & Priest in 2014.
- * Served my curacy in 7 rural parishes in Herefordshire, including nearly a year 'in charge' during a vacancy.
- * 'Associate Vicar' within the Wigston Benefice since 2016.
- * Assistant Area Dean of Gartree.
- * Vice-chair of the DAC.
- * Training incumbent.
- * Placement supervisor for those exploring vocations to ordained ministry.
- * I lead the curate training session on 'How to preside at the Eucharist'.
- * Member of the House of Clergy of Diocesan Synod, as at the next quinquennium.
- * Member of the *Young Priest Theologian Network*.

About me... for those who like to know these things, I'm: married; a Supported Lodgings provider for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children; musical; a lover of cricket and theatre; someone who loves new experiences and challenges; and, chiefly, the obedient butler to Ivor - an ageing but wilful springer-beagle cross. Increasingly, I'm keen to stand up for and give a voice to those less able to do so for themselves - or, better still, help them to make their own voices heard.

National Issues

Vision & Strategy for the future

In parish life, I seek to maintain and develop the catholic tradition of the Benefice, whilst finding new ways to share the Christian faith & the Gospel and to encourage people in their relationship with God. It's essential that we don't throw out the baby with the bath water. The sacraments need to be at the heart of our engagement as a church and its order and tradition is not something that can be disposed of lightly, even if they need to be interpreted in a new light. Ordained ministry is not an optional extra, nor is it some historical embarrassment that we just have to put up with as a church. This not to the detriment of lay ministry - by no means! At national level, we need to recall the catholic as well as the reformed element of the church and make sure that is reflected in our strategy and vision for the future. Whatever a 'mixed economy' might look like, if the church is to retain a useful voice in public life, it needs to be grounded in the wider needs of the parish not just of a congregation.

Inclusion

I am happy to subscribe to Inclusive Church's statement, "I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health or sexuality" and am glad to be supported by them in this election.

Our voice to speak on important matters as a church is often overshadowed by the perceived hypocrisy of our standpoints on matters of human relationships and other aspects of inclusion - this is to the detriment of our prophetic voice within society and amongst individuals. If we truly wish to deal with the real 'key limiting factors' within the Church then we need to move on from our ongoing obsession with sexual morality. Added to this, the Church has denied itself the ministry of some wonderful people simply because they have had to make the invidious choice between marriage or licenced ministry & ordination. This is not only a loss to the ministry of the Church as a whole, but reflects poorly on our call to follow Christ, who came that we might have life in all its fullness.

Simplification

As a TV character once plaintively put it, "Rules control the fun!" In all seriousness, there is a balance to be struck between maintaining what is good and important in church order whilst allowing the freedom necessary for the church to grow and thrive in its many different contexts. I'm not afraid to call out and draw attention to frustrating or thwarting rules and regulations (something I've sought to bring to bear in my DAC role where possible) especially when outdated or cumbersome legislation can make the work of the local church even more challenging. I'm all for finding ways to make these things less constrictive, whilst maintaining a sense of the identity of the church as a whole and fulfilling our legal and moral obligations. This is likely to be tested, for example, by the environmental agenda where we need to make sure that the plans for Net-Zero by 2030 are assisted rather than impeded by legislation.

Clergy Wellbeing & Clergy Discipline

These are obviously going to be 'hot topics' over the next five years. I'm very aware of the uncertainty that many clergy colleagues are feeling at the present time along with the increasing pressures and stresses of the role. I always seek to support them where I can and I would follow the development of new procedures closely to make sure that they are suitable for the task.

Finally... thank you for taking the time to read this and please remember to vote by 8th October.

As voting is by 'single transferable vote', I would be delighted and hugely grateful if you felt able to offer me your **1st preference vote**. However, even if I'm not your first choice candidate, it would still make a huge difference to my prospects of election if you would offer me your **2nd preference vote**. You're very welcome to contact me to discuss any of the matters above if that would be helpful.