

John Stather

Vicar of Goldenhill & Tunstall

Stoke-on-Trent

Proposer:

Adrian Stone, *Vicar of Trentham*

Secunder:

Janet Arnold, *Vicar of Newchapel*

Why me?

I had not considered standing for General Synod, until my arm was gently twisted by colleagues and friends, and after a time of prayerful reflection I have decided to stand. Having served on Diocesan Synod both here and in Chelmsford I feel that I would be able to use my varied experiences of 17 years of ordained parish ministry, as a police chaplain and a school governor to represent clergy across the diocese at a national level.

About me

I am a Yorkshireman and now adopted 'Stokie', having served my first incumbency in The Potteries since 2008. Both those from Stoke-on-Trent and Yorkshire are plain speaking and are not afraid of saying how things are, whether that's what folk want to hear or not.

I also have a good sense of humour and at 42 years old I am still considered a 'youngish' member of the clergy. I have over 25 years of parish ministry ahead of me and am now the longest standing serving member of our deanery.

For the last 4 years I have been an active member of a local NHS project to help promote digital healthcare and inclusion and to minimise social isolation. During recent COVID-19 lockdowns this project has proved invaluable and helped many people through the provision of 'Alexa' enabled video devices allowing them to keep in touch with others.

I am married with 3 children and enjoy holidays in Anglesey and Cornwall, pottering in the garden, cooking, and collecting antiques/objets d'art.

What are some of the issues that I feel are important?

- ❖ **Moving on from COVID-19** Many mistakes were made by politicians and even bishops, especially the latter, in not allowing clergy to enter churches to pray or livestream worship during the first lockdown. Many of us have now picked up virtual congregations and it's important that we build on this in a dual economy of in person/online worship. Streamed worship continues to be helpful for the housebound and those who may struggle to attend worship due to work commitments. There are also many financial issues to address, especially due to lost revenue from hiring of halls, fewer fundraising events etc.



❖ **Love & Faith** The next sessions of Synod will of course be looking further at Living in Love and Faith. It is important the church is a place where all can be welcomed, even if there are distinct theological issues involved. I believe that there should be no change to the canonical definition of Christian marriage as being between a man and a woman.

❖ **Ministry Matters** The established parish system must be at the heart of any new vision and strategy on mission and ministry. As a member of General Synod, I would seek to uphold the parochial system from the context of being an incumbent in a parish with high levels of deprivation, here on the northern edge of the diocese, with thirteen years' experience of parish ministry in Stoke-on-Trent. Under any plans to revise the Mission & Pastoral Measure, it will be important that the rights of parishioners and clergy are not overlooked by diocesan and/or deanery plans without proper opportunities to comment. I also wish to preserve sacramental assurance that episcopal ordination is required for presiding at the Eucharist. Lay ministry is very important in the life of the Church but has a distinct non-sacramental role and we should not depart from the teaching of the wider Church on this matter. Safeguarding is of vital importance - the Church must not be a place where abuse is perpetrated. The 'seal of the confessional' needs to be preserved as it can be a pastoral support for survivors - and ensuring them a 'safe space' is an integral part of this work.

❖ **Clergy Wellbeing** It is fundamental that we value our clergy and support them, and many found lockdown difficult. We had a much-increased workload, had to get to grip with new technologies, a higher number of funerals and trying to keep on top of ever-changing guidance, risk assessments, financial problems etc. I will stand up for parish clergy who at times feel ever further away from the central structures and bureaucracy of the CofE. I also think that the CDM process needs work, and the new proposed Clergy Conduct Measure may help to address this.

Thank you for reading - I do hope that you will consider lending me your support, voting for me with a high preference vote.

Please pray for me and all those standing.

With every blessing,



John Stather

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