

**Ven Dr Catherine Sourbut Groves, Archdeacon of Lindisfarne,**  
**nominated by Ven Rachel Wood; seconded by Rev Canon Rob Saner-Haigh**  
**Election Address for General Synod 2021**



***A voice for the North East***

I have a passion to be a voice in the national church on issues specific to the North East. We have been more adversely affected by Covid, more impacted by changing economic trends, and more left behind by shifts in demography than other regions. Yet our churches and wider communities are full of people of resilience, ingenuity, creativity, hospitality and faith. Parish is at the heart of who we are and, with increasingly mission-minded approaches, the parish system is working for those among whom we live

through a myriad of resourceful initiatives. Materially, we are one of the less well-endowed dioceses; spiritually we are robust and rooted, creative and optimistic, faithful and warm, with much to teach the wider church. As Archdeacon I have a strong overview of the diversity of context in our dioceses. I prioritise listening well, praying much and thinking strategically. As we enter the new Synod with a looming Vacancy in See, it is essential that the voice of the Diocese is represented on Synod and the voice of Synod on Bishop's staff.

***A voice for Rural Church***

The Rural Strand of Growing Church Bringing Hope includes a number of creative expressions of collaboration: our Heritage Lottery funded 'Rural Churches for Everyone' project, our Core Collaborative Initiatives, and our exploration of additional uses of churches through initiatives such as the Festival Church model and heritage and pilgrimage projects. I am deeply committed to working with our exceptional rural churches as they develop vision for a sustainable future in every parish. 'Families' of mission-minded parishes, exhibiting collaboration across parish boundaries and between clergy and laity, are at the heart of our vision for the rural church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and I will speak on Synod for the vital and central role of rural and deep rural churches in our nation's life and well-being.

***A voice for Mission***

Isaiah 43 gives us a core message for our times: 'Behold I am doing a new thing. See it springs up; do you not perceive it?' Since taking up office, I have been deeply involved in discussions over our 'Next Steps' Transformations Agenda, seeking to find new ways of being church together in our changing times. We do not need to be a different kind of Christian, or leave behind our cherished traditions. We need to be open to God's spirit, as ever we were. Since Jesus ascended, we his followers have sought to discover how to faithfully live out his teaching for our own generations and contexts. At our core we seek to be Jesus shaped – and we will remain healthy in a changing world by meeting people where they are at, so I will be exhorting Synod to be outward facing and mission minded.

### ***A voice for People living in Socio-Economic Disadvantage***

Our Gospel imperative to prioritise those in greatest need is key. I endorse movements such as the National Estate Churches Network, ministry to asylum seekers, Foodbank provision and debt advice services, and I was active in this ministry in my former post. I applaud the Archbishops' report on housing and its recognition of the need for affordable, sustainable, safe housing. I will speak on Synod for those ministering in challenging parishes where lack of financial and equipped human resource can be an obstacle to mission, and whose ministry tends to be underrepresented on synods and other influential committees.

### ***A voice for Inclusion and the Promotion of Diversity***

The church has travelled a journey on the road towards gender equality but has much more to do in terms of other aspects of diversity and inclusion. For the safety and health of our communities we need to promote better understanding on race, gender, disability and sexuality. *Living in Love and Faith* and *From Lament to Action* must be more than paper exercises. I have experienced and witnessed the damage caused by exclusion. We cannot be the church God dreams of until all God's children are offered dignity and equal access at all levels. I will be a voice promoting inclusion and diversity.

### ***A voice for Safeguarding***

We must challenge to its core the culture of deference and the long-standing networks that hinder proper recognition and reporting of unsafe behaviour. As an archdeacon I work with our Diocesan Safeguarding team on PCR2, in Core Groups and with clergy as issues arise. I work with parishes to promote safe church for everyone, helping them to make safeguarding policies work on the ground. On Synod I will be an ally for survivors and an advocate of learning from the past and for doing all we can to make all our places of worship safe spaces for honesty and healing.

### ***A voice for Ecological Sustainability***

Our number one global priority must be reducing to Net Carbon Zero. I will speak for all measures to bring this about, and will work at the heart of our diocese to honour our recognition of the climate crisis and our commitment to reach Net Carbon Zero, through DAC, Housing and Glebe and other committees.

### ***A voice for Clergy Well-Being***

'Unprecedented' is an over-used word, yet it does convey the depth of the challenges we face as Christian leaders, still living with high levels of uncertainty as well as the ongoing, low-level trauma we have lived with: not being able to say goodbye in a normal way to departed loved ones, missing life events, being isolated from loved ones, whilst still maintaining our pastoral care and strategic leadership of our flocks. The national conversation in social and press media leaves clergy feeling under-valued. I will speak for the uniqueness of clergy and the need to prioritise clergy well-being in our changing church.

*Please do get in touch if you would like to ask any questions:*

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