

## General Synod Elections House of Clergy Candidate: The Ven Fiona Gibson

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*Nomination proposed by The Ven Derek  
Chedzey, Archdeacon of Hereford*

*Nomination seconded by The Revd Ruth  
Hulse, Team Rector, West Hereford Team*

### Why General Synod? Why now? Why me?

Simply put, I love the Church of England, and think that we all need to play our part in the ongoing discussions and debates. Obviously I don't have huge amounts of spare time (which of us does?) but I think I have enough to give the time to read, pray, attend, and contribute in a way which is helpful.

Before moving to Hereford Diocese earlier in 2021, I served in St Albans Diocese, first in a curacy in a large urban church and then as vicar of three small rural parishes, which means I can bring both perspectives to bear on the issues facing our Church in the coming years. I filled a casual vacancy on General Synod in St Albans in 2019 and was able to participate in debates around poverty and governance, so I have some experience of General Synod, and I have experiences and skills which could be useful in representing our Diocese in the national context, as well as contributing to wider national debates.

I firmly believe that the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ is, as it has always been, relevant and life-giving to all – women, men, and children – from every background.



I am committed to the spiritual and numerical growth of local churches in traditional and new forms as the most powerful tool for the transformation of our nation as we declare and live out the gospel.

Labels are seldom helpful, but if asked I would describe myself as a 'generous classic evangelical'.

Classic and evangelical because of my commitment to the prime authority of Scripture in all matters of faith, life, and doctrine.

Generous because my friends and colleagues whom I love and respect in the Lord come from a wide range of traditions and varying perspectives and I am always keen to learn from them. I would love the Church to live that radical and costly combination of grace and truth that Christ himself modelled as we learn what that means in the 21st century.

I should be very grateful for your prayerful consideration of my candidacy and, if possible, for your first preference vote in the election. Please feel free to contact me if you'd like to discuss any aspect of my election address. Thank you.

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#### Overview

##### Currently

Archdeacon of Ludlow (April 2021-present)

Studying towards PhD in theology. My thesis is on the subject of acedia (sloth) and its modern manifestations. (2014-present)

##### Previously

Vicar of the Benefice of Cople, Moggerhanger, and Willington; St Albans Diocese (2014-2021)

Voluntary chaplaincy work in Bedford with vulnerable women and children, and for local hospital (2011-2021)

Curate, Christ Church Bedford; St Albans Diocese (2011-2014)

Ordinand, Oak Hill College (2007-2011)

##### Pre-ordination

Lay Children's Minister; London Diocese, Edmonton Area (2002-2007)

At home full time with young children (2001-2002)

Primary School Teacher, with whole-school responsibility for Literacy and Special Educational Needs (1993-2001; initially full time, then part time after birth of first child)

#### Diocesan Responsibilities

##### Currently

Bishop's Staff, Bishop's Council, Clergy Wellbeing Group, Diocesan Board of Education, Diocese of Hereford Education Trust, Ludlow Archdeaconry Mission & Pastoral Committee, Diocesan Synod,

Finance Committee, DAC, Strategic Projects Management Board, Intergenerational Mission Project Board, Safeguarding Working Group, Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral.

#### Other Responsibilities in the Wider Church

##### Currently

Vice-Chair, The Junia Network (national group for female evangelical Anglican clergy)

Member, The Transformations Steering Group (national cross-tradition group, inaugurated by then-Archbishop Rowan Williams, working on issues and policies that affect female clergy)

Member of Council of Reference of CPAS

Trustee, Shropshire Historic Churches Trust

##### Previously

Proctor in Convocation representing St Albans Diocese in General Synod (2019-2021 – elected to fill casual vacancy created by colleague moving to another diocese)

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### Areas of Interest/Focus

#### Rural Ministry

Before I became vicar of three rural parishes (in St Albans Diocese) I had no experience of rural life or ministry. That incumbency, and my subsequent move to the most rural diocese in the Church of England, have shown me how vibrant and vital rural ministry can be.

With around 66% of Anglican parishes being rural (2015 figures) it is important to include rural ministry in all thinking and planning about mission and church growth, especially postpandemic, and yet the vast majority of those on Synod and in national Church leadership have no experience of rural life and ministry.

I am committed to working with others to explore what effective rural ministry and mission means in the coming decades, and to ensuring that the rural perspective is heard in conversations and debates and, if elected, would want to explore forming a cross-diocese rural strategy alliance of clergy and laity on Synod.

#### Wellbeing & Mental Health

None of us is untouched by mental illness, whether that be our own, or that of someone we love, or work with. I believe the Church needs to be at the forefront of ending the stigma still often associated with mental ill-health, and of demonstrating how to welcome and care for those who experience mental illness.

I am also interested in exploring how the Church can promote good mental health among clergy and fulfil the terms of the clergy covenant.

#### Mission, Evangelism & Discipleship

Archbishop Justin Welby has said that, "The best decision that anyone can ever make, at any time, in any place, is to follow Jesus Christ." I'm sure we all agree with that. He has made evangelism one of his three priorities for his time as Archbishop of Canterbury, and I believe it must be one of our top priorities as Christians and as clergy, and for Synod.

I'm committed to helping to equip all Christians to speak confidently of their faith, to (re-)inspiring in them a confidence that the gospel speaks into all the challenges we face as individuals and as a society changed by the pandemic, and to nurturing those who are new to the faith into whole-hearted whole-life discipleship.

This includes equipping children and young people in churches and church schools and academies to live for God in an everchanging world in their generation, which takes imagination and a willingness to listen to and learn from children and young people, as well as to their culture, while at the same time helping them see how the unchanging truths of God and God's word apply in their generation.

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### Human Identity, Sexuality, and Marriage

For many, how we respond as a Church to society's changing understanding and experience of human identity, sexuality, and marriage will be the defining issue of this Synod Quinquennium. I think it's vital that constructive conversations continue to show how Christian faith helps all of us, whatever our relationship status, to glorify God in our identity and sexuality as with everything else in our lives.

I view marriage as a unique human relationship, a lifelong commitment between a man and woman. However, I am totally committed to ongoing dialogue with, and learning from, Christian siblings with different viewpoints, and I regularly challenge myself to address the question:

'What if I'm wrong?'

I was privileged to be part of the group from my previous Diocese which participated in the Shared Conversations. I also believe that we need to widen our discussions to include what it means to be human and in life-giving relationships of all kinds, not just marriage and a 'nuclear' family, and how we can provide genuine and deep community within the Church so that all may flourish.

### Climate Change

The environment, justice, and faith should belong together as core parts of our Christian responsibility and, following the Synod vote in 2020 to work towards carbon net zero across the Church of England by 2030, I would want to work hard to ensure that Synod continues to promote climate stewardship, again bringing the rural perspective as those who are hands-on custodians of the land. This will be even more important as we emerge from the pandemic.