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## **JO STOBART**

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Standing for the  
**House of Clergy of General Synod**

**Nominated by** Steve Tilley  
*Area Dean, Portishead Deanery*

**Seconded by** Joy Hawes  
*Ministry Support Priest, Axbridge Deanery*



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## **ABOUT ME**

I'm currently serving my first incumbency as Vicar of Ilminster and Whitelackington in South Somerset. I'm married to Ian, a vet who is about to start training as a Reader, and I have three grown-up sons - two of whom graduated this summer.

I've lived in the West Country since 2006 and, although a Londoner by birth, Somerset feels like home. I'm hoping to complete my MA in Theology this year. Learning and thinking matter to me. I'm an idealist and a dreamer but rooted in the real world too.

Before ordination I studied medieval history to postgraduate level, trained as a primary school teacher, and set up and ran Southwark Cathedral's Education Centre, working with a team of amazing volunteers. I then took 10 years out of paid employment to be at home full-time with my sons. I returned to paid work in 2008, working as chaplain for the Kings of Wessex Academy (then School) in Cheddar. After studying full-time for ministry at Sarum College, which I juggled with working as a Teaching Assistant and an intern at Congresbury and Banwell churches, I was ordained deacon in 2016. I served my title in the Yatton Moor Benefice. We moved here in September 2019.

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## **ABOUT MY FAITH**

I don't come from a Christian family but, though I came to faith through an Assemblies of God Pentecostal church and worshipped at Baptist churches whilst at university, I went to Sunday School in our local Anglican church in Isleworth and since leaving university I have worshipped in a wide range of Anglican traditions. I love the diversity of our denomination and the sense of being part of something bigger. For all its faults, I am deeply committed to the Church of England and want to be part of helping this church I love find its way in the twenty-first century and beyond. In my time in the Diocese I have served on the DBE, am a current member of Diocesan Synod, the DBE's Youth and Children's Committee and begin training as a BAP adviser this Autumn.

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## ABOUT THE ISSUES FACING SYNOD

I hope that as a clergy representative for this Diocese I would not only listen well but also speak up and represent you on these issues:

**Climate change.** Care of creation must be at the top of our agenda, but as someone who has watched the struggles of a lay volunteer trying to sort out a green replacement for our aging gas boiler, the Church of England needs to put some money (and expertise) where its mouth is.

**Inclusion.** Our Benefice will be offering LLF in the Autumn and I've just preached a sermon series on the Pastoral Principles. I realise that the next five years of Synod will face difficult questions on issues around gender and same-sex relationships. If we can, I want to find a way for these questions not to split the church, whilst at the same time genuinely hearing the voices of those who have felt unloved and rejected by the Church of England. The recent vote by the Methodist Conference – and most especially the way in which this happened – gives me a real sense of what might be possible for us too.

**Ministry.** Like every Diocese, here in Bath & Wells we are struggling to find ways to respond to the financial challenges which the pandemic has accelerated. I'm excited by the possibilities of all that a 'mixed ecology of church' entails, but alongside that I want to see strong advocacy for the traditional outreach and service of the parish church. The ministry offered through baptisms, weddings and funerals is an extraordinary privilege and opportunity, and I doubt our Benefice is unique in being the driving force behind the local food bank. Parish ministry remains at the heart of what we do. Our faithful, ordinary members need to be given renewed confidence to keep on keeping on – at the same time as reaching out in new ways to our communities. Money is going to be tight, and we need to address challenges around church buildings and stipendiary ministry. I hope we can develop local solutions that set communities free to fund ministry creatively. I'm not interested in surviving for the sake of it. Jesus' parables so often talk about feasts, banquets, celebrations – as churches we need to live out our faith joyfully. I hope too that we can do some serious thinking around lay and ordained ministry, for example some rigorous theology around presidency at the Eucharist. I want lay ministry to be valued in its own right, not just as a financial exigency.

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**If you have any questions** you'd like to ask me, please feel free to get in touch via my email.

Please do consider giving me your first or second choice vote in the forthcoming elections. I will represent our diocese to the very best of my ability.

Thank you.

*Jo Stobart*