



# Prudence Dailey

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## The Parish Church: The heart of the Church of England

I firmly believe that Parish Churches are the beating heart of the Church of England, and its primary 'engines of mission'. Through direct personal contact with local clergy and congregations, the message of Christ's Gospel is brought to the people and the love of God reaches out into the community every day. This is where the real work of the Church is done: not by committees, Synods, and advisors, whether at National or Diocesan level.

Many clergy and congregations are increasingly struggling to meet Parish Share demands, with nothing left to support their work locally. While central resources and energy are put into new initiatives, the daily round of parochial ministry is squeezed. Meanwhile, in 2016, this Diocese moved its administration to a new corporate office building, because the previous premises were too small to support the expanded staff team (now numbering over 150 people).

The Church of England must avoid managerialism and excessive centralization. I will work for a Church that prioritizes Parish ministry, enabling Parishes to keep more of their own resources and freeing them for mission within their own local context. Any money made available through the Strategic Development Fund should be for the Parishes, and not to finance Diocesan schemes.

Our church buildings, too, are a precious inheritance. Whilst there are occasionally circumstances in which a Parish Church needs to close, I will oppose revisions to the Mission & Pastoral Measure that would make it more difficult to object to closures.



*I worship at St Michael at the North Gate in central Oxford (where I was previously a Churchwarden). I am currently in my second term as Lay Chairman of the Oxford Deanery—probably one of the most theologically diverse in the Church of England.*

*It has been my privilege to serve you as a member of General Synod since 2000, since when I have attended every meeting, speaking frequently in debates on a range of subjects, and seeking to bring a distinctive and independent voice. I believe that the Synod is at its best when it values integrity over conformism, and thoughtfulness over emotionalism. I would describe my churchmanship as central and traditionally Anglican—a position which is greatly underrepresented on the General Synod.*

*I am on the committee of the new Save the Parish Network. Last year I stepped down as Chairman of the Prayer Book Society after 14 years.*

*I am a graduate of Merton College, Oxford, and have previously worked as an administrator in the NHS, and in IT.*

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## Mission in an increasingly secular context

As the wider culture becomes more secular and religious observance decreases across the Western world, the Church of England is facing the spiritual and financial consequences of aging and declining congregations.

Now more than ever we need to take seriously Christ's Great Commission to go out and make disciples, as well as nurturing the discipleship of existing worshippers—spiritual growth matters as much as numerical growth. We must be willing to reach out to people of all ages in new ways, and learn from 'success stories' across all Church traditions. At the same time, we need to avoid any temptation towards forever seeking novelty in preference to tradition.

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## **Challenging secular society**

I want to see a Church of England that is unafraid both to engage with the wider culture, and to challenge it. We live in an age when the Christian faith is regarded with increasing incomprehension and sometimes hostility. This can lead to pressures on the Church to accommodate itself to secular mores, in the belief that this will make us appear more relevant or acceptable.

The Church has not always understood the rapidly changing society in which we now live, and I believe we can do better. At the same time, we are called not to be ‘conformed to this world’, but to challenge the secular culture with a coherent and authentic presentation of a Gospel that renews and transforms lives.

I support the right of individuals to manifest their faith, such as by wearing a cross or praying in public or at work. As Christians, we should always express our faith sensitively—but should not be forced to hide it.

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## **Defending persecuted Christians overseas**

Whatever challenges Christians in this country may sometimes face, they are as nothing compared with the daily oppression endured by Christians in many parts of the globe. Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world: I want to see a Church of England that is bold in their defence.

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## **Upholding Biblical truth on life, death, sex and marriage**

I will continue to support the sanctity of life from conception to natural death. The Church of England has rightly been clear in its opposition to assisted suicide. Although motivated by compassion for the terminally ill, doctor-assisted suicide would (as seen in other countries where it has been introduced) help to undermine the culture of the sanctity of life, and lead to many vulnerable elderly people choosing death in order to avoid ‘being a burden’ on their families.

I support the Church’s current teaching on marriage and sexuality, but I regret the way in which debate has so often appeared to focus almost exclusively on LGBT issues, overlooking the wider questions of brokenness around sex and relationships in our sex-obsessed society. We are continually bombarded through the media with explicit words and images which are spiritually, emotionally, and socially destructive, while children are increasingly born into unstable family circumstances. In our different ways, we are all broken, all loved by God and all welcome.

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## **Women bishops and the ‘Five Guiding Principles’**

Now that women bishops are an established part of the life of the Church of England, it is important that the new Synod continue to honour the settlement that was reached to enable this to become a reality while providing for those who could not accept this development. I remain committed to the gracious outworking of the House of Bishops’ Five Guiding Principles to enable all to flourish.

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## **The Book of Common Prayer**

The Book of Common Prayer (BCP) remains the official doctrinal standard of the Church of England, and has shaped the theology and spirituality of Anglicanism for over 450 years. Through its timeless beauty, generations of Anglicans have been nurtured in their faith and helped to glimpse the holiness of Almighty God. Having loved the BCP since childhood, I want as many people as possible—including young people and newcomers to the Church—to have an opportunity to come to know and love it also. To that end, I am committed to promoting the continued use of the BCP within the ‘mixed ecology’ of worship.

***My prayer is for a Church of England that is confident and flourishing.  
If you share my concerns, please support me with your first or a high preference vote.***