

Mark Wallace

**Vicar of St Mary of Bethany Woking and Area Dean of Woking
General Synod candidate statement**

Over twenty years in ministry I have nurtured a reputation for hard work and self-awareness, an ability to find creative solutions to the many challenges of ministry, a willingness to grasp nettles and never to take myself too seriously. I try to combine clarity in my faith and doctrine with an openness to others, and I hold various posts where it does not pay to be partisan. I have a naturally optimistic ‘can-do’ personality and I am impossible to shock. I think these are all things which our new General Synod rep will need.

As a fifteen-year veteran of Guildford Diocese, I hope I am well placed to represent our clergy on General Synod. I have twice been appointed as Area Dean, demonstrating that I am regarded as a safe pair of hands and bringing me into regular discussions with colleagues and senior staff. From this vantage point I have promoted pastoral care of the clergy, something which I am passionate about, and on which I think the national church has much work to do. In Woking Deanery, I brought together a group which helped raise the funding to continue the Bishop’s Mission Order in Sheerwater, demonstrating our deanery’s shared commitment to our town’s neediest neighbourhood. As the current Moderator of Churches Together in Woking, I have ensured that church leaders are fully involved in conversations with Woking Borough Council during their current funding crisis. In all of these roles I have represented my colleagues in wider conversations without fear or favour.

I served as Diocesan Advocate for Living in Love and Faith, working with national and local teams to roll out the course effectively. Together we ensured that Guildford Diocese achieved one of the highest levels of engagement with LLF nationally. This cut across the various potential dividing lines, helping to bring people together and listen to each other well. I did this without being heavy-handed about my own views. I continue to believe that good conversations are possible on the most challenging issues, if everyone shares openly, listens carefully and seeks to move forward responsibly. General Synod needs to chart a course through very tricky waters over these next few years, and I hope to make a positive contribution with a mature, sensible and considered approach. I think Guildford’s experience as a fairly unpartisan diocese where clergy value each other across our traditions has a lot to offer others.

As an IME tutor I have been part of the journey of new curates within the Diocese. I have sought to bring a voice of wisdom and experience to them; in turn I have gained a great deal from their energy and fresh insights. I have been impressed with the calibre and diversity of people entering ministry. I am committed to the Church’s five guiding principles on women’s ministry and have really enjoyed working with women at all levels, including my most recent Associate Vicar and Curate. As a middle class, middle-aged white man, increasingly I understand my role as a champion for those with less privileged voices in our society.

Previously to my current role I served as Vicar of Lightwater (2012–17), where I was also Area Dean of Surrey Heath (2016–17) and completed my curacy at Christ Church Guildford with St Martha-on-the-Hill (2008–12).