

Name of Candidate: Fiona Norris

Questions from the electorate for lay candidates
Are you optimistic about the future of the Church of England? Briefly state your three top reasons for your view.
Yes! I am totally optimistic about the future of the Church of England. - Firstly, I believe in an all-powerful God who can do more than we could ever ask or imagine, who longs that the world might know Him and the freedom, hope and purpose we have in Christ. - Secondly, God has chosen the church to be His hands and feet, His instrument sharing the good news about Jesus. The church is His creation - He loves and cherishes it, and He promises that the powers of death will not defeat it. - Finally, God has not left us to do it alone - Jesus promised that he will always be with us, to the very end of the age. God has given us his Holy Spirit to lead and guide us - our job is to listen and be faithful. I think we have every reason to be hopeful.
What are your views on gender and human sexuality? Do you think that the church of England should carry out same sex blessings? Do you think the church of England should change its teachings on marriage?
The last five years on General Synod have shown me how deeply complex these issues are. Faithful Christians and theologians, committed to the authority of Scripture, have reached differing conclusions. I cannot claim to be sure of the mind of Christ on these matters. However, step by step, we must continue to seek God's will through Scripture, prayer, listening and discernment. There are established constitutional processes for considering developments that have significant implications for the Church's doctrine. I support the use of the stringent Canon B2 process for considering standalone Prayers of Love and Faith services because of their potential doctrinal significance for the Church's understanding of marriage. The Canon B2 process provides thorough scrutiny, and the widest possible discernment and consent. It will demand patience, humility and grace but I believe this should be openly debated and decided by General Synod. I do not believe we need to fear making this journey together. Rather than seeking control or quick resolutions, I believe we can trust that God is not threatened by honest theological debate, prayerful reflection, and genuine search for truth and that He will lead and guide us through the process as we seek His will together.

What are your views on the church's decision to spend £100 million on "reparations" for historical slavery when there are over 50 million people currently held in slavery (UN figures) who could be helped instead?

There are countless worthy causes competing for the Church's resources, and faithful Christians will differ on where funding can achieve the greatest good. Although Project Spire did not require General Synod approval, it has been the subject of significant scrutiny within Synod and questions about the scale, prioritisation and governance of the programme are legitimate. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether a fuller synodical process would have been beneficial.

Nonetheless, it is also important to understand the context and I recognise the intentions behind Project Spire. The 2021 'From Lament to Action' report challenged the Church not simply to talk about racial justice but to demonstrate a willingness to act. Project Spire was intended as a practical response that was welcomed by the Racial Justice Commission.

Whether one believes £100 million is too much, too little, or directed to the wrong priorities, the deeper question is how we as the Church bear faithful witness to Christ. How we use our resources matters because it expresses our values, our repentance where necessary, and our commitment to acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly. I believe Synod is the right place for such questions to be debated openly.

Many of the debates in Synod have good arguments on both sides. How would you decide which way to vote?

I try to root myself in Scripture and seek God in prayer and fasting. I carry out further reading and research where possible, seek advice from experts, listen carefully to others and ask for the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and guide me. It has been wonderful on occasions to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit steering and guiding debates at General Synod and leading us to a conclusion. I trust he will continue to do so as we surrender to Him.

Do you see the current climate crisis as a key priority for the Church of England and why? How do you demonstrate your concern to care for God's creation in your church life?

Yes, I see the current climate crisis as a key priority for the Church of England. For me, it flows directly from Jesus' command to fully love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves. It is a matter of discipleship.

God created the world and all that is in it and all creation bears witness to His glory. It is simply not loving God to destroy what He has made, found to be very good and commissioned us to take care of.

Similarly, whilst we might be noticing hotter summers, it is our neighbours in developing countries who are suffering the greatest consequences. From the horror caused by the glacier collapse in Nepal to the growing swathes of the earth that are becoming unlivable, we need to demonstrate our love by taking action.

I seek to respond both through my everyday choices - how I travel, eat, dress etc - and in my church life. I have established a Creation Care team that helped to steward our church to an Eco Church Silver

Award, organised a number of church and community events including a litter film screenings and a litter pick, and have preached and spoken in Synod debates on creation care.

What is your perspective on 'Save the Parish'? Is it a viable manifesto when so many rural parishes have dwindling congregations?

I share Save the Parish's conviction that the parish system is one of the Church of England's greatest strengths. It is an extraordinary privilege and responsibility to care for the spiritual lives of every person in this country through the parish system, and local ministry should be properly resourced.

Save the Parish has played an important role in holding the Church Commissioners to account and keeping the importance of parish ministry at the centre of the debate. Questions remaining include how to assess parish need, prioritise support and fairly allocate resources.

At the same time, I do not believe the future of the parish system is simply a question of money or structures. Having a priest in every parish did not prevent the Church's numerical decline in previous generations. Resourcing is not enough on its own.

The question, therefore, is not only whether every parish can be preserved, but whether we are doing everything possible to help people grow as disciples, serve their communities and share the Christian faith in ways that connect today. Strong parishes remain vital to the Church's future, but they must be both sustainable and mission-focused.