

I am standing for General Synod because I believe representation should work in **both directions**.

Those elected should carry the concerns, experience and questions of parishes and deaneries into Synod, but should also report back on what Synod is doing and why. If elected, I would aim to be accessible, to listen carefully, and to keep in touch.

My starting point on difficult questions is **Scripture**. As 2 Timothy 3:16–17 reminds us, Scripture is given so that the person of God may be equipped for every good work. For me that means allowing Scripture not merely to confirm what I already think, but to question, correct and equip me.

I would then try to **listen, investigate and consult**. None of us knows everything. I value the knowledge of people with relevant experience, and I believe claims should be tested against evidence rather than accepted because they are familiar, forcefully expressed or come from people with whom we normally agree.

What we need is not information alone, but **knowledge, wisdom and discernment**.

Jesus himself showed how deeply rooted hostility could be challenged. Relations between Jews and Samaritans carried centuries of religious and communal antagonism — what we might now describe as **anti-Samaritan hostility**. When the lawyer asked, “Who is my neighbour?”, Jesus characteristically did not give him a direct answer. He told a story which challenged his **deeply rooted assumptions**, then gave him the space to answer his own question. The lawyer could not quite bring himself to say “the Samaritan”, but he correctly recognised **“the one who showed him mercy.”** Jesus did not rebuke him. He simply said, **“Go and do likewise.”**

That seems important for Synod. When arguments become polarised, we should make a particular effort to hear people whose experience is easily overlooked, while applying the same standards of scrutiny and fairness to everyone.

I have tried to work in this way through parish and deanery synods, preaching and teaching, 25 years on a SACRE and in interfaith work, campaigning and public life, and more recent research into difficult questions facing Church and society.

I am particularly interested in our diocesan calling of **“Making Jesus known.”** That raises a very practical question: how do we share the Good News confidently and intelligibly with people who may have little knowledge of Christianity or contact with the Church?

I have been working on a draft paper, **“Sharing Good News,”** exploring some possible approaches. I do not regard it as a finished answer and would welcome comments, criticism and examples of what parishes are finding effective. One useful role for Synod members, I believe, is to help ideas and experience travel between parishes, deaneries, dioceses and the national Church.

I am also interested in the Church's **public witness**. Over many years I have developed contacts with a number of MPs and others in public life, and I try to encourage them and provide information, evidence and perspectives which may be useful in their work. If elected, I would hope that experience could also be useful to the Church — including in supporting bishops whose responsibilities in the **House of Lords** give them an important opportunity to bring Christian insight to national debate.

That does not mean telling politicians or bishops what they ought to think. It means doing some of the groundwork: asking questions, checking evidence, drawing attention to neglected considerations and, where possible, helping people who carry public responsibility to make well-informed judgements.

Recent work has led me to examine questions including creation and the environment, interfaith relations, and the General Synod debate concerning Palestinian Christian voices. My concern is not that everyone should reach the same conclusion, but that we should **hear seriously, examine evidence carefully and be willing to revise our judgement**.

I would therefore hope to bring to Synod an **independent mind rather than a predetermined voting programme**. Sometimes I may agree with bishops or established positions; sometimes I may not. What matters is whether an argument stands up to Scripture, evidence, reason and Christian discernment.

My own circumstances also keep me close to some of the realities many families experience. My wife is in a care home within easy cycling distance, and I visit her regularly — which explains the cycling helmet in my photograph. Alongside preaching, church work, research, writing and public engagement, I enjoy **swimming, walking and vegetarian cooking**.

If elected, I would try to **listen, ask questions, investigate, contribute constructively and report back**.

Above all, I would want my contribution to General Synod to serve the Church's central calling: **making Jesus known in word, worship, public witness and practical action**.