Gerry Lynch: Restoring Hope – Restoring Balance

This is the most hopeful time for Christianity in this country in at least two generations. Young adults from unchurched backgrounds are walking into churches and asking how to become Christians in a way we've rarely seen before – this has been happening even in my Central Tradition benefice in rural Wiltshire.

Yet somehow the mood in the Church of England is terribly negative – divided, despairing of our leadership, and consumed by decline.

Your vote can help make us a better governed and more trusting Church. Sometimes General Synod makes things worse rather than better – amplifying our divisions, imposing extra burdens on clergy and volunteers, and driving negative headlines. New National Church initiatives divert resources away from ordinary parishes – but never deliver the growth they promise and leave grassroots clergy and lay leaders disaffected and exhausted.

General Synod has often colluded in this cycle of centralised hyperactivity and decline on the ground. **I want to be a voice that argues for imposing fewer things from the top down and empowering grassroots clergy and laity** – for central Church institutions that do less and cost less, but are more effective at feeding faithful Christians and drawing people to Christ.

Two serious barriers to reaching the people of this country with the Gospel are **the crisis in clergy retention** and **the lack of resources for teaching new or renewed Christians** the Faith. These are two of my priority issues for Synod; the third is to **end the diversion of money and people away from parishes and churches into central institutions.**

Across the Church of England, baptisms of adolescents and adults are up by 18% since before the pandemic. New converts aren't coming for either progressive or populist political agendas, but out of spiritual hunger and a need for meaning. Synod too often tries to turn around decline by management changes – but **the Church of England doesn't have a crisis in management but a crisis in meaning.** We can seem unsure of our role in a society that is changing rapidly. **Yet the Gospel is always relevant** – our job is to keep telling the old, old story.

I will also work for a more unified Church that is comfortable with its own diversity. I want to respect the conscience of those who cannot accept the sacramental ministry of women or the blessing of same-sex relationships, but we must also respect the majority who, like me, support women's ministry as equal to men's and wish to recognise faithful same-sex relationships among Christians.

With every blessing,

Gerry Lynch

P.S. – learn more about me and my ministry at www.gerrylynch.co.uk and feel free to contact me on rev@gerrylynch.co.uk, 07521 440622 (phone) or 07779 780739 (WhatsApp).

General Synod seats are **often decided by a single vote** or even a lower preference, **so your vote really will make a difference.**

What I Offer

I am the Rector of the Wellsprings Benefice, five rural parishes in Devizes Deanery – we are paying our way, have baptised five adults in the last year with two more in preparation, and are enjoying ourselves too. It is jolly hard work – but very rewarding.

I know the Diocese. I was Diocesan Director of Communications from 2013–18, helping parishes from Melksham to Poole, and was a communications consultant to Sarum College. I have spent my six years in ordained ministry in the Diocese and intend to do so for at least this full five-year term of General Synod.

I know Anglicanism. I've been a churchwarden, Diocesan Synodsman, Diocesan staff member, and parish priest in three Anglican provinces on two continents. I've worshipped in city churches with large gathered congregations, inner-city parishes, cathedrals, market towns, and villages. I've even been a mission agency volunteer in South Africa.

I have intellectual gifts to share. I am close to completing an Oxford doctorate on the Lambeth Conference and have had a paper on Anglican ecclesiology published in the *Ecclesiastical Law Journal*. Synod needs more members with advanced theological learning.

Before ordination I was a Whitehall civil servant for seven years, then the senior administrator of a political party in Northern Ireland: I stood for Parliament and was involved in face-to-face talks with British and Irish Prime Ministers. I have also been the council estate gay kid growing up on the dole who wondered if the Church had a place for me.

My Key Themes

A voice for working parish clergy and chaplains

Most people receive the sacraments and come to faith in their parish church; parish churches must lie at the heart of our work. Chaplains in schools, hospitals, prisons, and the military engage most often with those farthest from the Church. Our most neglected front-line evangelists, they are there for all people at times of crisis – I will always be there for them.

Get ready for growth

We are so consumed with managing decline that we are neglecting the opportunities for growth. If I could make just one thing happen on General Synod, it would be to establish a well-resourced adult catechumenate in every deanery for enquirers and new Christians.

Improve clergy retention

Every year, several hundred clergy leave full-time ministry before retirement age. We must stem this loss and encourage people to return to active ministry. Pay and conditions are part of this – but deeper questions of burnout and loss of purpose must also be addressed.

Fewer gimmicks – more faith in doing the job faithfully

We are all worn out with the constant initiatives that are supposedly going to transform everything. Let's focus on doing the basics of preaching, pastoral care, and evangelism well.