

James Turk

Rector of Stroud Team Ministry

A Local Voice for an Inclusive Church



Why I'm Standing for General Synod

I believe the Church of England must be a place where all are welcome, all are valued, and all are able to flourish as beloved children of God. My heart is to see us live out the radical inclusion of Jesus, while remaining a Church in which we can listen to one another, disagree well and work together.

Over the past year I have had the privilege of serving on General Synod, filling a casual vacancy for the Diocese of Gloucester. It has been a fascinating, challenging and at times demanding experience. I have listened to debates, contributed to discussions and voted on matters that affect the life and mission of the Church of England.

That experience has strengthened my conviction that the national Church needs voices that are rooted in the reality of local ministry. Much of what matters most in the Church happens in our parish churches, communities, schools and homes. I want to bring to Synod the experience of ministry on the ground in Gloucestershire, while listening carefully to the breadth of experience and conviction across our diocese.

I am standing for the next five-year term because I believe I can continue to make a constructive contribution: listening well, speaking with grace, standing up for inclusion, and working for unity without demanding uniformity.

My Ministry Context

As Rector of Stroud Team Ministry, I lead nine churches in six parishes. Our churches are diverse, including a civic town-centre church, suburban and estate churches, two small rural villages and Local Ecumenical Partnerships.

This gives me experience of the very different contexts in which the Church of England is called to serve. It has also taught me that there is no single model of church or ministry that will work everywhere.

In Stroud we have sought to develop a model of shared leadership which enables clergy and lay people to use their gifts well:

- **Clergy can focus on people, prayer and proclamation.**
- **Lay leaders are empowered and equipped for ministry.**
- **Congregations can be creative, agile and outward-looking.**

I believe this matters nationally. We need structures and policies that support the mission of local churches rather than simply adding to their burdens. We need to release people into ministry, encourage collaboration and find sustainable ways of working that enable our churches to flourish.

My Journey in Ministry

I was born and brought up in Gloucester and, on leaving school, began my working life in engineering. I became a Christian through St Barnabas Church, Gloucester, and for many years combined faith and family life with a career in engineering design.

In 2017 I was ordained, serving as a self-supporting curate at Upton St Leonards. Preaching and leading worship on Sunday and then returning to the office on Monday gave me a particular insight into the lives of people who combine faith with ordinary working life.

After many years in secular employment I completed my curacy and became a full-time stipendiary Team Vicar in Stroud, and in 2024 was appointed Team Rector.

My journey has given me experience of ordained ministry in different settings, from self-supporting ministry alongside secular employment to leading a busy team ministry alongside clergy colleagues and lay leaders. It has also shaped my conviction that the Church needs to hear the voices and experiences of people from every part of society.

A Vision for Inclusion

I believe the gospel is radically inclusive. Again and again Jesus crosses boundaries that others would not. Inclusion is not political correctness; it is the outworking of the Kingdom of God, whose embrace is extended to all.

I grew up in an evangelical church and for many years held the conviction that I could not support same-sex marriage, believing it to be against biblical teaching.

That changed through personal encounter, when I came to know, respect and love a same-sex couple as friends and fellow followers of Christ. Their faith in Jesus, their commitment to one another and the fruit of their lives challenged my assumptions. It led me to re-examine Scripture, pray deeply and listen to the lived experiences of others. I came to see inclusion not as a departure from the gospel, but as a more faithful expression of it.

My year on General Synod has reinforced for me how important it is that we are able to have these difficult conversations honestly and respectfully. I am committed to an inclusive Church, but I also believe that inclusion means making space for people with whom we disagree.

I support the Prayers of Love and Faith being available for those clergy who wish to use them, while respecting the theological conscience of those who would not. I believe we must find ways of living with difference rather than allowing disagreement to become division.

A Church for Everyone

As a national Church with the cure of souls for everyone in our parishes, we need to make sure that people know they have a place within us.

My years working in engineering have given me a particular concern that people from working-class backgrounds know that the Church is a place where they can belong, flourish and be called to ministry.

We need a Church whose leadership reflects the communities it serves. We also need to value the gifts of those whose routes into ministry have not followed traditional paths.

I want to use my experience, both in secular employment and in parish ministry, to contribute to this conversation at national level

Clergy & Lay Wellbeing

Ministry is a privilege, but it can also be exhausting. A sustainable Church must care for the wellbeing of its leaders and its people.

My experience in Stroud has shown me how shared leadership, delegation and releasing the gifts of others can make a real difference. Healthy leaders are better able to lead healthy churches, and national policy needs to recognise the pressures facing clergy and lay leaders.

Some of the structures and ways of working we have inherited no longer serve the Church well. We need the courage to change them where necessary, so that responsibility is shared, gifts are released and people can serve faithfully without being expected to carry unsustainable burdens. A healthy Church needs structures of representation and governance that enable ministry rather than add to its weight.

Prayer and Mutual Respect.

My experience of General Synod over the past year has confirmed for me that Synod is at its best when people listen carefully, speak honestly and generously, and remember that behind every motion and every vote are real people, real churches and real communities. I do not expect to agree with everyone. Nor do I think unity means pretending that our differences do not matter. But I believe we can disagree while still recognising one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. I want to be a representative who listens to those who agree with me and those who do not; who is prepared to speak clearly about the things I believe matter; and who seeks common ground wherever that is possible.

I have been grateful for the opportunity to serve Gloucester Diocese on General Synod for the past year. I would now be honoured to continue that service for the next five-year term.

I want to work for a Church where all truly belong — a Church rooted in Christ, confident in the gospel, generous in its welcome and able to disagree without losing sight of one another.

Together, we can model the unity, love and hope that our communities long to see.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I hope you will consider giving me your first preference vote.