



General Synod Election Address 2026: Rev. Jennifer Fellows

Email: jenniferfellows@stmatthewsandtheminster.org

Mobile: 07871555687

Please do contact me if you have any questions.

Proposer: Rev. Richard Coombs, Rector St Matthews and the Minster

Seconded: Rev. James White, Pioneer Vicar St Michaels Church Cheltenham and Area Dean for Cheltenham

After serving as a lay representative for Gloucester on General Synod, from 2021-2025, I am now offering myself to serve as a representative on the House of Clergy for the coming quinquennium. I am deeply committed to the Church of England and passionate about its thriving as we seek to, together, share the Good News of Jesus.

About me

I am 34 and live with my husband, Simon, our four-year-old son, Caleb, and our incredibly lazy dog, Fergus.

Originally from Glasgow, I moved to England in 2014 after studying at the University of St Andrews. I spent four years as a Children's and Families Minister in St Albans before becoming Assistant Pastor at St Paul's, Cheltenham. During this time, I also completed a Master's in Theology, specialising in ministry with children, families and young people.

In 2021, as my husband began his curacy, we moved to the Coopers Edge estate in Gloucester to establish a new worshipping community. Coopers Edge Community Church launched in 2022 and has been slowly growing ever since, with over half of our weekly congregation under 16. During this time, I also began training for ordained ministry and was ordained in June 2025 and now split my curacy between Coopers Edge and St Matthew's and the Minster in Cheltenham.

I am a huge extrovert and happiest with a dining-room table full of people. I love baking and exploring Cotswold pubs, although most weekends are now spent in Gloucester's play parks and soft plays!

Why am I standing for General Synod?

Serving on General Synod during the last quinquennium was, despite its challenges, a great privilege. Although definitely edging into my "mid-thirties", I remain one of the younger clergy in Gloucester Diocese and would seek to bring the perspective and experience of a younger woman to Synod.

I recognise the significance of the discussions facing Synod. If elected I would particularly seek to champion:

• Miscarriage and Stillbirth Private Members Motion

During the last quinquennium, I worked with Synod members from across different dioceses, beginning a Private Member's Motion calling for better pastoral and liturgical provision following miscarriage and baby loss. Unfortunately, with several members of the group having to resign from Synod, we were unable to take the motion further.

If re-elected, I would seek to restart this work. In particular, I would like to see the Church of England take the Miscarriage Association's Pregnancy Loss Pledge and ask the Liturgical Commission to develop a range of resources that churches could use for services of remembrance and when accompanying individuals and families through miscarriage and baby loss.

• Children and Youth Ministries

Having worked in children's and youth ministry for over a decade, it breaks my heart that the average Church of England church has just one person under 18. Too often, bold ambitious national strategies make little difference to the everyday reality of local churches. I will continue to speak up for the practical realities of this

ministry: for properly recruiting, training and supporting children's and youth ministers; for equipping clergy to lead churches in which children and young people can flourish; and for ensuring that sufficient resources reach the local church. Children and young people are not simply the future of the Church, they are a vital part of the Church today, and their voices, faith and discipleship must be taken seriously.

• **Mixed Ecology**

Being part of a Bishop's Mission Order (BMO) for the last four years has shown me first-hand the beauty and necessity of a mixed ecology. However, my commitment to mixed ecology begins with a deep commitment to the parish system. Its vision — that the Church of England should have a Christian presence in every community, there for everyone regardless of whether they attend church — was one of the things that drew me to ordination.

Alongside this, if we are serious about reaching those with little or no connection to church, we also need the freedom to think creatively. Church plants, new worshipping communities and other forms of mission can reach people from different backgrounds while flourishing alongside our parish churches.

Our experience is that the complexity and ambiguity surrounding BMOs can make this harder than it needs to be. I would advocate for clearer, simpler structures that enable new and inherited forms of church to flourish alongside one another, each playing their part in sharing the gospel and serving their communities. A healthy mixed ecology does not diminish parish ministry; it recognises its vital place while making room for new ways of sharing the gospel and serving our communities.

• **Social Transformation**

Having grown up in Glasgow and having worked in numerous areas of deprivation, I have seen the effects of poverty and social injustice first hand. I believe the Church must take Jesus' words in Luke 4 seriously that, "I have come to proclaim good news to the poor."

I believe the Church of England is called to be a Church for everyone and I passionately support "The Estates Project," which seeks to see a church on every significant social housing estate of the country. I believe the Church has a responsibility to be a practical support to those who are in need through programs such as debt centres and food banks but also to speak to the very heart of injustice in our society. This is a passion I would take with me to General Synod.

Living in Love and Faith

I believe clarity is kindness, and so I want to be open about where I stand. I hold to an traditional understanding of Scripture and believe that marriage is between one man and one woman. I also recognise that these conversations are deeply personal and affect people whom I value and care about.

One of the privileges of Synod has been getting to know people from across the breadth of the Church of England, including those with whom I disagree. I want to continue listening well, building friendships and approaching our differences with both conviction and grace. I believe there is far more that unites us than divides us, and hope to play my part in creating the trust and relationships that allow us to have honest, gracious and robust conversations as we discern the way ahead together.

Good News of Jesus

My favourite verse in Scripture is John 10:10 when Jesus declares, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' As Christians, I truly believe we have good news to share with the world around us. It is through Jesus alone, that light is brought to the hardest situations. It is through Jesus alone, that hope can be brought to despair. It is through Jesus alone, that life can be lived to its fullness. It would be such a privilege to serve as a clergy representative for Diocese of Gloucester at the General Synod. I would seek to serve the Church to have the fullness that God has called it to be and in turn the most effective vehicle for the sharing of the Good News of Jesus.

