



General Synod Election Address 2026

Henry Cole – Cheltenham Deanery

House of Laity

Proposer: Ian Todd, St Barnabas Gloucester
drianatodd@gmail.com

Seconded: Becca Horton, St Matthews Cheltenham
beccahorton2023@gmail.com

About me

I'm a 28 year-old Maths teacher here in Cheltenham. I'm unmarried, blessed to be living close to my kind parents, some brilliant friends, and my vibrant church. In my spare time, I like playing accordion, making mead to give to friends, cramming in trivia for quizzes, and going for long cycles.

I've been at St Matthew's church in Cheltenham since I left university and teacher training, though growing up I've been part of the Church of England in a variety of contexts. I'm now standing for General Synod as I want to help ensure the Church I love continues to be a place where all people can come to know the saving gospel of Jesus.

My experience

- By God's grace and with thanks to my parents, I grew up a member of the church, though my faith became my own after working through Youth Alpha at the Holy Apostles Church youth group.
- I was exposed to more liturgical traditions as a chorister at Gloucester Cathedral, later singing professionally for St John's College choir in Oxford and occasionally at Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton.

- Whilst studying Maths at Oxford, I helped run the St John's College branch of the Oxford Intercollegiate Christian Union, leading Bible studies and outreach events.
- During my five years studying, I attended St Aldates and later St Ebbes churches, where the undergraduate Bible studies taught me to appreciate the necessity and sufficiency of God's word.
- Thanks to a church partnership, I've had some amazing opportunities to visit the Anglican Diocese of Lake Rukwa in Tanzania. With the generosity of Bishop Ephraim Ntikabuze hosting me, I was able to see how the Holy Spirit is growing the church explosively in East Africa.
- In the last five years while teaching in Cheltenham, I have continued to lead some small group Bible studies and have also served my church as a member of the PCC.

Why I'm standing

In Jeremiah 1:7, God tells Jeremiah to go and speak his message, despite Jeremiah's concerns about his youth and inexperience. While these words are of course not about me, they reminded me that God will use whoever he chooses, often those the world would not expect; the young, the weak, the inexperienced. In that light I am standing,

not as the most qualified, but as one who is ready to answer the call, eager to see the Church of England welcoming freely, governed faithfully, and evangelising fervently.

- **Welcoming freely:** Jesus welcomed the outcast, the sick, and the overlooked, we must too. Our churches must be a place where everyone can feel like what they are: cherished and valued image-bearers of God. While I hold the historic view on sexuality, I strongly believe God welcomes all, regardless of sexuality, relationships, age, status, or anything else. Our mission is not complete until every last person knows that they will be greeted like family at church.
- **Governed faithfully:** The Church faces many different challenges; ensuring proper safeguarding practices and training especially after the Makin Review, maintaining and growing both congregations and clergy numbers in an increasingly secular nation, stewarding our environment carefully while avoiding unnecessary burdens on smaller struggling parishes, and the list could go on. While the challenges are great, I believe that with God's help, and with considerate, careful, but decisive governance, these can be overcome.
- **Evangelising fervently:** We cannot as a church simply tread water or maintain "business as usual"! If the church fails to evangelise for even a single generation, it will cease to exist. Psalm 78 gives us the solution – we must reach young people with the gospel. I believe this must be a major priority for the church,

evangelising effectively in schools, youth groups, and universities.

My commitment

My commitment to you is this, if you choose to vote for me for General Synod I will

- Be **prayerful** and **diligent** in service, reading, and voting.
- **Listen** and **communicate** with the local parishes to ensure local concerns are heard.
- **Actively pursue** the priorities laid out above.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Please do contact me if you have any questions or comments, and I would be very grateful for your highest available preference vote.

Yours in Christ,

Henry

Contact:

Tel: 07577909340

Email: henryfcole@gmail.com

28b London Road, Cheltenham, GL52 6DX