

Karen Czapiewski – Election Statement for General Synod 2026



Thank you for engaging with the important decision on who you would like to be your General Synod representatives for the next five years. The discussions, debates and decisions that take place at Synod are a very public demonstration of the church in action and affect each one of us. I am deeply committed to the flourishing of all in our Diocese and fervently believe we need to hold our Diocesan strapline front and centre – *I come that they may have life, and have it to the full* (John 10.10). Every person in our Diocese matters to God as does every parish: each one should be helped to flourish. I want to make sure that Synod makes this possible.

I am a member of All Saints' Church in Kemble which is part of the Thameshead Benefice, a group of six parishes with nine places of worship in a rural setting containing the source of the Thames. As a Reader, I conduct services across the Benefice and value the variety and strengths of each Parish, serving their respective local communities. Within my home parish I serve on the PCC and have previously been churchwarden, and I do try to engage fully in parish life - though I must admit my biggest contribution is probably providing a husband who understands the technology...

I have also previously been Secretary and Lay Chair of Cirencester Deanery and Lay Chair of Gloucester Diocese. Following the latter role, I held the post of Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, including through the troubled times of the pandemic and its aftermath. I am now the Bishops' Advisor for Reader and Lay Ministry, enabling me to support, and advocate for, the Reader community and for Lay Ministry more generally. I also have the huge honour of being a Canon of Gloucester Cathedral – a privilege I take very seriously.

My Parish, Deanery and Diocesan roles, including ten years on Bishop's Council, have allowed me to understand the wonderful complexity and variety to be found in our amazing Diocese and I have been very proud to represent us on General Synod for the past four years.

At national level, I am a Bishops' Adviser for discernment for those seeking ordination training and have also been involved in national discernment for other programmes.

During my time on General Synod, I have engaged fully in all the sessions and found, somewhat to my surprise, that the skills I have gained through my working life, at the Bank of England, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the Royal Agricultural University, have enabled me to contribute to all types of debate. I have been a member of the Standing Orders Committee and also worked on the National

Governance Measure, both of which have provided useful insight and knowledge into the ways Synod is structured and how business is conducted.

There will be many significant issues to face in the coming years, including the challenge of implementing decisions already made. As a Trustee of Sportily, I am passionate about ensuring that young people come to embrace a Christian faith, and that they are safe to do so. Safeguarding is key to so much of what we do and having the National Lead Bishop on this topic here in our Diocese gives us extra strength in supporting our excellent Parish Safeguarding Officers and Diocesan team. And on the subject of Parish Safeguarding Officers, what a wonderful illustration in action of the importance of the parish.

Often we find that some of the work at Synod may prove to be contentious, and we live in a fractured society, but we need to find a way of disagreeing well as we work together in unity, seeing hope rather than fear and realising that love is stronger than hate. As we move forward, we need to listen to each other and learn from each other, to see both sides of every argument, to pray, and to seek God's guidance in our hearts. Most importantly we all need to be committed to the flourishing of those who may feel isolated by the decisions we make.

That does not mean, however, that we should be afraid to make difficult decisions on occasion: I find holding the five marks of mission in mind help in that regard.

When I first joined General Synod, I felt called to that responsibility, both to make the decisions that I prayerfully consider to be right for God's church, and to ensure those decisions are implemented. That call to serve is still strong: I hope you will consider giving me your support.

Karen Czapiewski