

General Synod Election Address 2026

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Proposed by: Carole O'Donnell, Diocesan Chair of House of Laity

Seconded by: Julian Elloway, Stroud Deanery Synod Member

It has been a privilege to serve as a diocesan representative on the General Synod for the last eleven years. So, a big “Thank You” to all of you who may have voted for me in 2015 and even again in 2021! I hope that you will want to do so again by giving me your first preference vote. You can find some thoughts about my experience on Synod, and my reason for standing again, at the end of this address.

Who am I?

- I’m a lifelong Anglican, now in my early seventies, worshipping at Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton since I moved to Gloucestershire in 2000
- After a thirty-year career in social services, I worked part-time as a freelance on a variety of social services related projects but retired in 2017.
- I’ve become increasingly involved in the life of the church at local, Deanery and Diocesan level and finally nationally and as a Cathedral Chapter Member.
- I live alone, apart from my springer spaniel so have a compulsory interest in walking, but I also enjoy reading, music, theatre and meeting friends for food and talk.

What do I stand for?

I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality. So I stand for:

- a church which is generous, welcoming, inclusive and safe for all who approach it;
- ensuring that the challenges facing the church are met through revitalising the parish ministry (lay and ordained) that is the heart of Anglicanism
- making sure the church’s distinctive message and mission is heard by and relevant to the communities it serves and that local church communities have confidence to work in new ways
- a strong desire to refocus the church’s energy on proclaiming the gospel in the public arena and engaging with the urgent issues of our times

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What experience do I bring?

- My professional knowledge and experience
- Locally, a server, member of the Pastoral Care Team and PCC Secretary
- Member of Stroud Deanery Synod, of Diocesan Synod and of Bishop's Council
- Senior Non-Executive Member of Cathedral Chapter
- School and college governor

What would I bring to the role?

- extensive experience of getting things done in complex organisations
- a sense of humour and a practical approach
- an appetite to get involved in the big issues that face the church and the world
- an understanding of the life of the diocese at every level
- skills in leading and participating in discussions: listening and responding
- substantial experience of General Synod

General Synod Experience

We have covered a wide range of business over the last five years concerning key issues in society as well as the church's own life and how those two themes interact in our mission. Two topics, in which I have a strong interest, have continued to be dominant throughout the period and will continue into the new Synod:

- ensuring all aspects of the church's Safeguarding arrangements are strong and appropriate, including a new, more independent structure;
- taking forward the work on identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage arising from Living in Love and Faith

However, we have also dealt with important legislation on Clergy Conduct, the central Governance of the church and the distribution of funding; have approved better remuneration and pension arrangements for clergy; have had lively and often moving debates on topics related to full inclusion in the life of the church related to mental health, disability, neurodivergence and access to ministry for working class people. We have also debated issues in society, conveying the church's view to government and considered some international issues.

I would be very grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve the Diocese and the wider Church as part of General Synod and particularly in relation to the two major issues mentioned above. I hope this tells you enough to decide whether to give me your vote, but if you would like to know more, do contact me via the details shown at the head of this address.



25th August 2026