

ROBERT McNEIL-WILSON

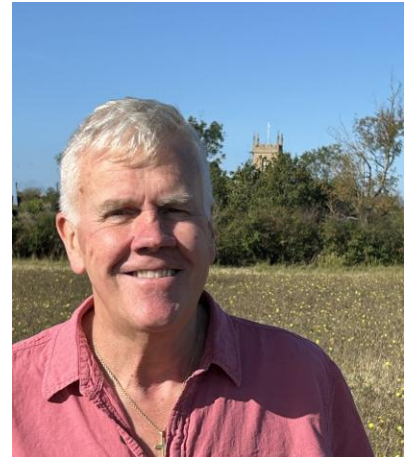
Standing for General Synod • Diocese of Gloucester

Faith • Parish life • Listening • Effective action

Five years ago, I was granted the privilege of representing the Diocese of Gloucester on General Synod. I am seeking your trust for another term.

My Christian faith and service are central to my life, with service a continuing thread—from the Regular Army and my professional life to 17 years as a churchwarden and five years on General Synod. For me, service to the Church has its deepest purpose in serving God: proclaiming the Gospel, bringing people to faith and serving our parishes, communities and the nation.

In 2021, I said that General Synod should be more than a talking shop: somewhere “to make things happen”. Five years on, I hope my record honours that commitment.



FAITH, PARISH AND MISSION

I champion the parish—and not from a distance. It is where I worship and where my Christian service is rooted.

For five years I led around half our Sunday services and continue to lead services regularly, as well as establishing new services ranging from a growing monthly BCP Evensong to ‘Well-Oiled Lamp’ services for young families.

As Churchwarden of St Peter's, Willersey, I initiated and lead the continuing restoration of our beautiful medieval church, developing and managing the projects and having raised, so far, some £150,000 through grant applications.

I established our village litter-picking group, keeping six miles of lanes clear, and secured funding to create two wildflower meadows. I work ecumenically with Methodist friends and our local Roman Catholic school, and supported the launch and continuing operation of our ‘Welcome Café’, now regularly welcoming 50–80 people each week in our small parish. All of these are different expressions of the Church's mission in the community.

As I told General Synod, **the parish is “the space, place and face of the Church of England”**. Wherever people live or visit in England, they should continue to find their home in that familiar, understandable and recognisable parish presence.

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

Five years on, I have tried to honour my 2021 promise, not simply by speaking in Synod, but by initiating, organising and carrying through significant practical change.

In July 2023 I successfully moved an amendment to the *Revitalisation of the Parish System* Motion, by which General Synod affirmed the parish system as “the central component of the mixed ecology”.

But parishes need clergy if they are to fulfil that role. I therefore initiated and am leading a national, diocesan campaign for a new financial settlement for parish ministry, having personally secured active support from 65% of dioceses, mostly at episcopal and Diocesan Secretary level.

I drafted the original Diocesan Synod Motion (DSM) and worked with dioceses across the country to secure 13 substantially similar DSMs and eight further Deanery Synod Motions. I then took the campaign into General Synod, drafting the Motion GS2396: *The Redistribution of Funds*, which was amended and passed in July 2025.

I have built on that with a second DSM pressing for robust financial modelling of the number of clergy parishes need nationally and the funding required to provide them. I moved this motion successfully in Gloucester and have supported its passage in two other dioceses.

The Church's response to this campaign is the National Funding for Diocesan Ministry Project (NFDMP). I serve on this Project's Synodical Reference Group and am working directly and in depth with the project team to help ensure the mandate secured through those motions is fulfilled and that the funding needed to sustain and revitalise parish ministry, including sustainable growth in clergy numbers, is properly identified.

An important reason for seeking re-election is to continue this work and see it through.

LISTENING, REPRESENTING AND CHALLENGING

In 2021 I promised to be accessible to you, to listen and report back. I have sought to honour that promise, as well as achieving 100% attendance at General Synod sessions throughout my first term.

I have visited Deanery Synods across our Diocese to report on General Synod, answer questions and listen. I also use our Diocesan Synod as an important opportunity to hear views and concerns from across the Diocese. Within General Synod I enter debates having done the work, but determined to listen carefully and retain an open mind.

I make a point of listening to people who lobby us outside General Synod, many of whom have travelled considerable distances because something matters deeply to them or they feel unheard.

I have repeatedly used Synod's formal Questions process to hold national Church bodies to account on matters ranging from Church finances and parish ministry to clergy formation and the place of the Thirty-Nine Articles in ordinand training.

As a member of Bishop's Council and the Diocesan Board of Finance, I scrutinise proposals closely and challenge where there are questions of governance, authority, funding or their effect on our parishes.

When pastoral reorganisations come before Bishop's Council, my first question is: "What do the people in the affected parish think themselves?"

SERVING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

General Synod has also brought friendships which have enlarged my understanding. My friend Billy-Jo O'Leary's experience of the care system led her to bring a successful Private Member's Motion on looked-after children and those in care. Supporting her in this brought home both the troubling outcomes experienced by too many children in care and the extraordinary difference loving, stable fostering can make. Following that debate, I took on the role of Diocesan Fostering Champion, to work with churches and other organisations to promote fostering and support foster families and children in care.

As one of General Synod's most active supporters of the Church's work on housing, my particular interest is increasing good rented social housing while exploring how long-term endowments can support the Church's mission.

EXPERIENCE I BRING

I served in the infantry in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers before beginning my engineering career underground in the coal industry. By 24 I was managing a coalface on days and nights, where I developed a pastoral style of leadership—rooted in love, care and responsibility for the miners entrusted to me—which has remained throughout my life.

In 1999, I founded an international project management and organisational transformation company.

My career has included major engineering and infrastructure programmes, senior positions within London Underground and serving as Head of Engineering for Eurostar International.

Much of my professional life has involved entering major organisations and programmes, establishing what is going wrong and why and putting them right. That instinct—to listen, analyse, challenge and find workable solutions—shapes my approach to the problems facing the Church.

I continue to play in the rock band I formed when I was 15 and am still in demand as a session musician, principally on bass, vocals and blues harp. Appropriately, my favourite Psalm is Psalm 150!

WHY I AM ASKING FOR YOUR VOTE AGAIN

The next five years will matter profoundly for the Church of England. We need a Church confident in its Christian faith and in proclaiming the Gospel; one which brings people to faith and serves its communities; which sustains its clergy and revitalises parish ministry; and in which, wherever we are in England, the parish church is still present and recognisable as home.

Five years on General Synod have strengthened my understanding of what needs doing and my ability to get things done. There is important work I have begun which I feel called to see through. I ask for your trust and your vote to continue that work.

As I have said to Our Lord, I now say to you:

"Here am I; send me." [Isaiah 6:8]