

Revd Martin Ball

Candidate for General Synod House of Clergy

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My hope

For too long Synod has been a focus for dispute rather than debate, for division rather than unity. I profoundly believe that unity in the faith is an important sign of the Church. It is needed for mission. A world divided needs a Church united. My aim in Synod would be to provide a constructive and helpful voice from a grassroots parish level in finding ways to articulate the shared faith of our one church to a world in need. I look forward to the opportunity of working on Synod to this end.

But any church organisation can easily get overtaken by the *business* of church, while subtly being distracted from the *purpose* of church, which has to be loving God, loving people, and making Jesus known. This cannot be just a concept or idea, but has to be a reality on the ground. The world needs to hear the clear message of the gospel, and know what we as a church believe and represent. That is our mission. The world needs hope and wisdom, which can only come from God. I have been, and I remain, primarily a grassroots priest in a community context. That has always been the focus of my ministry and mission, and where my heart has always been. I want to disciple believers who know Jesus and walk in integrity with him. That is where the work of the church is at its most focused. So my intention on Synod would be to provide a voice for local clergy in their mission and need as they minister, evangelise and care for their people.

My ministry

I am keenly aware of the need to stay rooted in the gospel but also rethink how to communicate it effectively to those around us in new ways in ever changing times. I know what this means for the local church in the challenges we face.

- I am a lifelong Christian from a Christian family.
- I have been involved in ministry, first in the new church movement in the UK and USA and then in the CofE, for 24 years.
- I have been ordained for 18 years, the last 15 as Vicar of St George's, Newcastle under Lyme.
- Married to Rachel for 45 years and committed to building a living local church community together.

I lead a local church with:

- A good-sized international contingent as part of our congregation and leadership.
- A toddler group which has become well known and respected in the local community and seen a good number of parents and extended family come through to faith and involvement in church life.
- A 'Family Essentials' ministry which provides hygiene and cleaning products to local families in need regardless of their faith or allegiance.
- A longstanding partnership with another town church in the local CofE primary school.
- Active members of the local ecumenical Churches Together group.
- Unchurched people coming to faith, being baptised and disciplined and finding a place to belong.
- Youth and kids' work growing in a way that our buildings are now proving too small, a good problem to have.

My mission

Synod has such an impact on clergy wellbeing in so many ways and I believe that I can help to raise the voice and concerns of ordinary local clergy. We need help with increased governing requirements. We need simpler safeguarding structures. We need to recalibrate how we use limited Church Commissioners' funds. We need to think carefully about how best to care and provide for retiring clergy. I want to be a part of strengthening what we can in Synod to help make good things happen, with the focus on the local church always kept firmly at the forefront.