

Neil Hutchinson - Candidate for Election to the House of Laity – General Synod

The Church of England has always been at its best when it combines faithfulness to the Gospel with practical service to the communities it exists to serve. Throughout my working life, whether in education, safeguarding or church leadership, I have tried to help organisations become places where people flourish, where leadership is accountable, and where difficult issues are addressed with honesty, compassion and hope. Those are the values I would bring to the General Synod.

My Christian faith has been shaped within the Anglican tradition. I worship in an Anglican parish, have served on my **Parochial Church Council**, **Deanery Synod** and **Diocesan Synod**, and have experienced first-hand both the joys and the challenges of parish life. Those experiences have convinced me that the Church's greatest strength lies in its local congregations. General Synod exists to support that local ministry, not distract from it, and I believe every decision made nationally should be judged by how it enables our churches to proclaim the Gospel, serve their communities and nurture disciples.

Alongside my parish involvement, I have been privileged to serve professionally within the **Methodist Connexion** as a **Regional Officer for Safeguarding**. Working across circuits and churches has given me an invaluable ecumenical perspective. I have seen churches from different traditions working together in mission, sharing resources, supporting vulnerable people and witnessing to Christ in communities where no single denomination could meet every need alone. Whilst our traditions may differ, our calling is shared. I believe General Synod benefits from members who understand both the distinctiveness of Anglicanism and the opportunities created through strong ecumenical relationships.

My theological formation came through the **East Midlands Ministerial Training Course (EMMTC)**, where I was awarded an **MA in Theology and Pastoral Issues** from the University of Nottingham. Studying theology whilst remaining rooted in parish life reinforced my conviction that theology is not simply an academic discipline. It is about helping the Church discern faithfully how to live and proclaim the Gospel in an ever-changing society. Good theology should inform good governance, compassionate pastoral care and confident mission.

Before entering church safeguarding, I spent over thirty years in educational leadership, serving as a Headteacher, Executive Principal and educational consultant in schools facing significant challenges. Much of that work involved leading organisations through periods of uncertainty, rebuilding confidence, strengthening governance, developing leadership teams and helping communities rediscover hope. Those experiences continue to shape my approach today. Leadership is rarely about having all the answers; it is about listening carefully, bringing people together, making wise decisions and having the courage to act when necessary.

Safeguarding has rightly become one of the Church's greatest priorities. It is not simply about policies or procedures; it is about creating churches where every person is valued, protected and able to participate safely in the life of God's people. My work has involved

supporting churches through complex situations, advising senior leaders, delivering safeguarding training, undertaking risk assessments and contributing to the development of national safeguarding resources. I believe safeguarding should never be seen as a burden imposed upon the Church but as an expression of our Christian commitment to justice, dignity and the care of every individual.

However, safeguarding is only one part of the wider picture. General Synod faces significant questions about mission, governance, ministry, finance, church growth and public witness. These challenges require thoughtful discussion rather than quick answers. My experience has taught me that progress is made when people are willing to listen respectfully to one another, even where opinions differ. I have spent much of my career bringing together people from different backgrounds to solve difficult problems, and I would hope to contribute to Synod in the same spirit.

If elected, I would seek to make a practical contribution in several areas. I want to see parish churches properly supported in their ministry and mission, recognising that every community is different and that local churches often understand their own context best. I believe we should continue to strengthen safeguarding and governance in ways that build confidence rather than bureaucracy. I would encourage greater collaboration across Christian denominations wherever that strengthens our witness and enables us to serve our communities more effectively. I also believe the Church must continue to invest in younger generations, recognising that today's children and young people are not simply the future of the Church but an essential part of its present life.

I am not standing to represent a particular faction or tradition within the Church. I am standing because I believe General Synod needs members who are prepared to listen, to work collaboratively and to focus on the common good of the whole Church. Healthy disagreement has always been part of Anglican life, but so too has the commitment to remain together in prayer, worship and service.

The Church of England faces many challenges, but it also has extraordinary opportunities. Every day I see churches transforming lives through worship, pastoral care, community engagement and quiet acts of faithful service that rarely make the headlines. I believe General Synod should encourage, support and enable that work.

If elected, I will bring experience of parish life, theological study, safeguarding leadership, governance and ecumenical partnership, together with a commitment to serve prayerfully, thoughtfully and with integrity. Above all, I will seek to ensure that the voices of local churches remain at the heart of the national Church's decision-making.

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement. I would be honoured to have your support.

Neil Hutchinson