



Reverend Joanne (Jo) Smith Candidate for House of Clergy

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Imagine this... the world knowing Jesus!

That's my passion. I believe General Synod has massive influence and that mission-minded decisions made by Synod can equip God's people to tell others about the good news of Jesus.

If elected, this will be my first time serving on General Synod. I hope to bring my significant experience in the areas of ministry to children and young people and of mutual flourishing to Synod's debates and I want to continue making a difference for the benefit of all.

A little bit about me...

I grew up in a Christian family and came to faith in Jesus as a teenager – I was the one in the youth group with all the challenging questions! My dad was ordained when I was a teenager and this has had a significant impact on me. Now a vicar myself I have experienced both sides of vicarage life. In my free time, I love to escape onto water, whether on a narrowboat or a paddleboard.

I worked in Human Resources for a few years after university, followed by almost ten years serving in full-time Christian youth ministry in Bedford and then Bolton. I was ordained in 2016, and I have served as vicar of Euxton Parish Church, near Chorley, since 2019.

I play for a local netball team in defence and I never cease to be amazed at how good a mission opportunity it is! I'm privileged to be godparent to seven godchildren. I love to experience different cultures around the world. I truly have a heart for world mission and for seeing reconciliation in the land where Jesus lived.

A little bit about my local ministry...

What looks from the outside to be a small village church, is a growing, joy-filled family with a real heart for children and young people. It has been a joy to launch all-age worship and to see this bear fruit and flourish. I also understand that ministry can have its challenges and in recent years we have experienced a significant building project which is now complete. Like many parishes we feel the financial pressures, but we rest in knowing that we have a God who provides.

There are huge opportunities for mission amongst the families of those who initially come to church to secure school places for their children and we love to introduce them to Jesus. Like most churches, we have the challenge of finding enough volunteers to do all that we dream of doing. I love seeing those who volunteer growing in their discipleship through serving. I am particularly proud of the strength of relationship we enjoy with local schools, especially the two church schools in the area.

A little bit about my wider ministry...

I serve in various ways in the Diocese of Blackburn. I am the Area Dean of the Chorley Deanery, a member of the Bishop's Council, I am a Diocesan Board of Finance Director, and a member of the

Bishop's Advisory Group for Mutual Flourishing. I have previously served on the HR Committee and the Diocesan Conference Planning Team. I am also a member of the Archbishops' College of Evangelists. Outside of church structures, I have the joy of being Chaplain to Ironman UK. It's a giant triathlon (not one aspect of taking part appeals to me!). I love being there for the staff, athletes and supporters.

What could I contribute to General Synod...

My top four priorities would be:

- Ensuring we keep Jesus as the main thing
- Bringing a parish focus to debates and decisions
- Promoting flourishing and well-being
- Speaking with a heart for all-ages

Ensuring we keep Jesus as the main thing

I naturally sit within the evangelical tradition but have an appreciation for the breadth of the Church of England. My passion is to prioritise proclaiming Jesus and deepening discipleship in ways that are appropriate and accessible across the Church of England's broad range of traditions and theological convictions – seeing people embrace his love for them and in turn giving their lives to Jesus.

Bringing a parish focus to debates and decisions

I am aware that the decisions that General Synod make have an impact on the ministry and mission of every parish. With twenty years in parish-based ministry I feel I can help to keep our feet on the ground. I won't be afraid to ask difficult questions on behalf of all those I will represent and I will ask the questions that matter, to ensure the reality of parish life remains central.

Promoting flourishing and well-being

I want to contribute at a national level to mutual flourishing across the Church of England. Whilst being respectful of the range of views, I am clear in my own convictions around the issues of human sexuality and hold a traditional view on marriage. Being a vicar's kid and now a vicar, I have experienced the demands of ministry from both perspectives. I therefore want to see ministry borne out of our primary baptismal vocation as children of God – that we may be sustained for the long haul. To do this, clergy wellbeing must be a priority.

Speaking with a heart for all-ages

Whilst much of my pre-ordination ministry experience was with children and young people, I am inspired by seeing churches of *all-ages* growing in discipleship. We have much to learn from those who have walked before us as well as from the rising generations. This of course must be grounded in safeguarding of all ages. I will advocate for the best safeguarding, seen through the lens of Jesus, who welcomes and cares for all.

And finally...

Thank you for reading this. If I were to be elected, I would seek to do the best I can to serve all my colleagues in the Diocese of Blackburn. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions. Please do consider me as you pray about how to cast your vote, and I hope that you will feel able to give me your first-preference vote (second or third-preference votes are also of course appreciated). Most of all, I hope that we have the opportunity to work together to help the world know Jesus.

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