

Ann Aspden

Candidate for election as a lay representative of Blackburn Diocese to the General Synod, 2026–2031

I have been part of All Saints' Church, New Longton throughout my adult life, serving as a PCC member, Vision Champion, Parish Safeguarding Officer and Foundation Governor of our village school.

I believe the Church should be a place where people are welcomed, listened to, valued and loved. Behind every decision Synod makes are real people and communities: families under pressure, young people wondering whether the Church has a place for them, older people facing isolation, and those who have been hurt by the Church and wonder whether they can trust us again. These are the people Christ calls us to serve.

Education

Education has been at the heart of both my professional life and Christian service. As a headteacher in Church of England schools, I sought to live out a Christian vision centred on Jesus' promise of "life in all its fullness".

My experience includes:

- headship in Church of England schools;
- working closely with families, local authorities, health and social care agencies and faith communities;
- serving as a **SIAMS inspector** across Blackburn, Carlisle, Liverpool and Manchester dioceses;
- working as an **Associate Adviser for Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education**;
- extensive experience of safeguarding, governance, inspection and organisational leadership.



These roles have taught me to listen carefully, ask searching questions, work constructively across differences and turn vision into practical action. On Synod I would take a particular interest in the work of the **National Society for Education**, policy affecting Church schools, and safeguarding in both churches and schools.

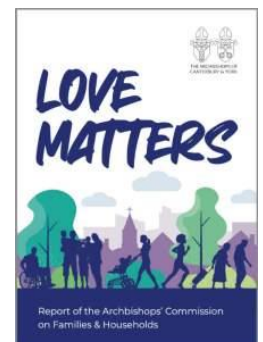
Families and Young People

I am a mother and grandmother, and family life has always been closely connected with my faith. I brought my own children to baptism and confirmation and have tried to be the faithful presence that keeps family and Church connected across the generations. I would like Synod to build on the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households and its *Love Matters* report. The Church should not simply talk about supporting families, but help them flourish in practice.

Through Synod, I would seek to work on how the Church of England could:

- better support families facing financial hardship, caring responsibilities and loneliness;
- encourage parish activities which help generations worship, learn and spend time together;
- ensure that children and young people have a genuine voice in the Church;
- work in partnership with other organisations where this can make a greater difference.

My hope is that families hear a simple message from the Church: **you are welcome here, and you matter to God.**



Parish Life, Safeguarding and Governance

My interests extend well beyond education. I believe that:

- **parish churches** should be at the heart of their local communities, and national structures should serve rather than burden their worship and mission;
- **safeguarding must be rigorous, compassionate and trustworthy**, listening properly to victims and survivors while maintaining fair and transparent processes;
- **Church governance should be accountable and effective**;
- **our resources should be used responsibly**, with a clear focus on strengthening mission and ministry.

My professional life has involved working within complex organisations, scrutinising policy and making difficult decisions which affect real people. I would bring that same practical and constructive approach to Synod.

Character and Faith

I have often been described as a “**doer**”: someone who wants to turn good intentions into action.

My faith has been strengthened through pilgrimage, including travelling to the Holy Land with a diocesan group led by Bishop Philip and walking the Portuguese Camino to Santiago de Compostela. These experiences have reminded me that Christian discipleship means walking with others: listening, serving, learning and seeking God’s guidance.



My faith teaches me:

- to see the **person**, not simply the problem;
- to listen before judging;
- to recognise the dignity and worth of every individual;
- to challenge what I believe is wrong;
- to be willing to change my own mind when persuaded.

If elected, I would willingly contribute to the committee and ecumenical work of Synod as required.

What I Would Bring to Synod

My priorities would include:

- **education and Church schools**;
- **families, children and young people**;
- **safeguarding and rebuilding trust**;
- **the health and mission of local parishes**;
- **good governance and responsible use of resources**.

I would also seek to **represent Blackburn Diocese faithfully**: listening to clergy and laity across the diocese, remaining accessible to those I represent, reporting back on Synod’s work, and ensuring that the experience of our parishes, schools and communities is heard nationally.

I want to help build a Church that is **courageous but not careless, rooted in its traditions but not closed, and willing to embrace necessary change without losing sight of the Gospel**.

Most of all, I believe in a Church that people can trust and in which they can encounter **faith, hope and love**.

Thank you for taking the time to read my address. I would be very pleased to hear from you.

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