

Matthew Smith

Standing to represent Blackburn Diocese on General Synod

Proposed by: Mrs Jacqueline Stamper - General Synod 2015-26, Lay Chair, Morecombe & Lancaster Deanery

Seconded by: David Lyon - Morecambe & Lancaster Deanery



Hello, I'm Matthew. I grew up in a Baptist family in Leeds before finding my spiritual home in the Church of England. I now live in Rishton, a small town in Lancashire, and am an active member of the congregation at St Ambrose, Leyland, where I also serve as a member of the Parochial Church Council.

Christian faith has been at the heart of my life for as long as I can remember. My service in the Church of England began at age 10 carrying the cross in the procession. This involvement fostered a lasting appreciation for Anglican worship's beauty, discipline, and prayerfulness, and deepened my love for parish life. Since then, I have served as Director of Music at an Anglican church in Manchester and, more recently, mentored young volunteers at my parish church in Leyland.

My Vision for the Church of England

The Church of England is called to be a transforming presence in every community. To fulfil this calling, I believe our national church leadership must focus on four core pillars:

- 1. Empowering the Local Parish Church:** My faith and service journey has shown me that the Church's true life is in local parishes: in weekly worship, quiet dedication, children and young people being encouraged, and preaching the Gospel to the communities they serve. Having served as a server, sacristan, musician, and synod representative, I understand the dedication, prayer, and effort that sustain churches. Therefore, I believe national policy should support the local mission of parishes, chaplaincies, and new church expressions. Parish churches change lives, nurture faith, and practise Christ's love. National initiatives should strengthen and empower local churches, not add burdens.
- 2. Fostering a Culture of Grace and Unity:** My journey into the Church of England, has taught me to value the diverse gifts and experiences within the Christian family. In parish life, synod discussions, and serving with clergy, lay leaders, musicians, volunteers, children, and families, I've seen how listening, valuing, and being united in Christ strengthens the Church. Living in a divided society, we are called as the body of Christ to a gracious way of being together. General Synod should be a place for respectful disagreement, careful listening, and prayerful, loving dialogue. I am committed to bridging divides, seeking faithful, constructive ways forward, and strengthening our shared commitment to Christ and each other.
- 3. Sustainability and Responsible Stewardship:** Having served in parish life, Deanery and Diocesan Synod, I've seen the pressures churches face: financial issues, aging buildings, stretched clergy, volunteer fatigue, and changing attendance. These are real, ongoing challenges in communities weekly. We must support churches for growth, aid clergy and leaders, care for buildings, and ensure financial systems enhance front-line ministry. If elected, I'd bring a parish-based perspective, grounded in experience and a commitment to local church vitality.

4. **A Heart for the Margins** - I have a deep concern for people experiencing homelessness and those on the margins of our communities. I have had the honour of working with the School of Homeless Pastors who engage in homeless outreach. This involves listening to marginalised voices and I see this as vital to my Christian discipleship. Jesus uses the image of a Good Shepherd seeking the lost and this guides me to understand that the Church must care for its members, and reach out to those who feel forgotten, unheard, or unwelcome. This ministry has invigorated my faith, allowing me to encounter Christ through conversations, and learning from the dignity of often unheard people. If elected to the General Synod, I would advocate for including marginalized and homeless people as central to the Church's mission, ensuring they are not overlooked.

Why Vote for Me?

- **Grassroots Insight:** My active involvement in parish life keeps me grounded in the real pressures and joys our churches face, from stretched resources and volunteer fatigue to the growth of new faith. Having served on both Deanery and Diocesan Synods, I have firsthand experience of how our church structures work — not just on paper, but as spaces for prayerful discernment, listening, and faithful decision-making. While synodical government can seem distant from parish life, it works best when rooted in local experiences, concerns, and hopes.
- **Focus on the future for Younger Generations:** The roles I have held in the past has helped me grow in confidence, faith, discipline, and belonging, and taught me the importance of giving children and young people a real place in the life of the Church. As a sacristan, I have sought to offer that same encouragement to junior servers, helping them recognise that they are valued members of the Church today, not simply the Church of tomorrow. I am committed to helping the Church of England welcome, nurture, listen to, and learn from younger generations and their families.
- **A Collaborative Approach:** I believe in listening carefully, working constructively, and seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance. I would come to General Synod not with a rigid agenda, but with a heart for faithful service, consultation, and accountability.

Conclusion

Through my experience in parish life and my experience on synods synodical service, I have seen both the challenges facing our Church and the extraordinary faithfulness of those who sustain it week by week. I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality.

If elected, I would seek to represent Blackburn Diocese with humility, honesty, and commitment. I would listen carefully to clergy and laity, speak constructively in debate, and work faithfully to ensure that the hopes, concerns, and experiences of local parishes are heard at the national level.

Please consider me for your first-preference vote. If you would like to discuss anything in my electoral statement, please contact me at mjs0113@gmail.com or on 07983514206.