

**Revd Hannah Alderson**



**A bit about me...**

I grew up in Somerset, studied Theology at the University of Exeter and trained for ordained ministry at Ripon College Cuddesdon. I was ordained Deacon in 2013 and Priest in 2014 in the Diocese of Bath & Wells, and have been in Exeter Diocese since 2016. I have two half-time posts – Vocations Development Officer for the Diocese and St Luke’s Chaplain at the University of Exeter. I live in Exeter with my wonderful husband Paul, my sons Arthur (5) and Rowan (8 months) and my cats Ted and Dougal. My interests include writing, baking and watching comedy, although I currently spend most of my spare time at soft play centres.

**Why am I standing for General Synod?**

The decision to put myself forward for General Synod has taken a lot of thought. With two jobs and two small children to juggle any new pull on my time has to be one I am very serious about. General Synod falls into that ‘very serious about’ category! I am committed to using this opportunity to represent clergy in this Diocese and to give attention to some particular interests, outlined below.

***Putting Vocation at the top of the agenda***

I will regularly tell people that I have the best job in the Diocese (tongue in cheek, I promise)! In my work as Vocations Officer, I am inspired on a daily basis by stories of God’s call on people’s lives. It is of utmost importance that the Church does not paint vocational discernment as only for those who will end up in collars and reader’s scarves; the journey of vocation for everyone. And it is also important that the church works to ensure that a more diverse range of people are enabled to respond to a call to ordained or licensed lay ministry. I would hope to help Synod work towards identifying and eradicating barriers in the vocations process for those from diverse backgrounds – in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, educational background and disability. I am particularly aware, from my own experience and from speaking to others, that there are a lot of young women who, for reasons of identity, confidence or family, feel they cannot yet respond to a call to ordained ministry. As a youngish (in the grand scheme of the C of E!) ordained woman, I feel I could be an ideal person to voice these issues, and the barriers that face other groups.

### ***Voicing the Experience of Disabled People & their Carers***

This passion of mine arises from the experience of caring for my eldest son, Arthur, who has spina bifida and hydrocephalus and is a wheelchair user. Since Arthur's birth, I have put a lot of thought and academic study into considering the Church's response to disabled people. I would love to use General Synod to put some of that thought and experience into action. Practical accessibility is key and it is important that individual churches are resourced and supported to make their buildings and services as practically accessible as possible. But issues of access are wider than ramps and hearing loops. The Church at large needs to embrace all that disabled people can bring; the unique gifts that arise from the experience of disability and from caring for those who are vulnerable. Disabled people need to be supported in their vocation, and the Church at large needs to be supported to reflect on the importance disability, vulnerability and mutual care in its community, as an echo of the broken Body of Christ. I am excited by the vision of a church where the experience of all is seen as a gift.

### ***The Church at the Forefront of Supporting those in Poverty***

I undertook my Curacy between 2013 and 2016 in the benefice of Holy Trinity with Durleigh, in the town of Bridgwater, Somerset. Holy Trinity is within Bridgwater's Hamp Estate, and has statistically among the highest levels of unemployment and child poverty in the South-West.<sup>1</sup> I found my three years there to be a real eye-opener, getting to know a group of generous and community-spirited people, many of whom were struggling to support their families on very limited means. This formative experience of parish ministry has focussed my mind on the urgent need for Christ's church to undertake Christ's mission to "proclaim good news to the poor" (from Luke 4:18). Although my Curacy was of a particular flavour of semi-urban housing estate, poverty and the church's response to it transcends geographical type, and is a pressing issue in parishes throughout our Diocese, in our cities of Exeter and Plymouth, and also in our smaller towns, villages and rural areas. I would be committed to speak up on issues of poverty at General Synod.

### **In Sum**

Thank you for reading my election address. I hope I've given you a flavour of what I'm about and my own particular interests. If I am elected to serve on Synod, please be assured that I will be committed to listening to the people of this Diocese, and representing them as best I can.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Index of Multiple deprivation, the parish of Holy Trinity ranks 1,127 out of 12,599, where 1 is the most deprived parish, according to Church Urban fund, accessed 8/12/17.