

Mrs Clare Lillington

1. What has prompted you to stand for election to General Synod in particular, and in which ways do you think it will challenge your capacity and capabilities?

I am standing for General Synod because it gives me an opportunity to use my church and professional experience to serve the church I am committed to.

Synod matters. It is one of the many ways in which God works through his church. It debates a range of topics, produces resources and reports for the wider church to use.

Having served for one year, I am aware of the time required both with all the reading and debates, and know that attendance at the two five day sessions is important being both uplifting and challenging.

As a church treasurer of many years, I believe my skills as a charity accountant and in church governance will be very useful in debates and discussions.

2. What do you believe the Church of England should prioritise over the next five years to support mission, Christian discipleship and the flourishing of parish and other worshipping communities?

Many parishes are seeing new people coming to church and these green shoots require nurturing. The church must have the confidence to preach the gospel and show individuals how they can grow in faith. New members should have the opportunity to attend bible studies and enjoy church fellowship so all may grow.

The parish is one of great gifts of the Church of England being a Christian presence in each community. It is there for the residents, worshippers or not. What an outreach opportunity that we can all engage in. Yes, the church faces real pressures in finding volunteers, as well as challenging finances and maintaining ancient buildings. The provision of resources both financial and scriptural will go a long way to assist struggling parishes.

3. What should General Synod do to help the Church become safer, more accountable and more trusted, ensuring that national reforms work effectively in parishes, dioceses, and cathedrals?

In the next quinquennium, safeguarding will be a major topic. There have been too many high profile cases where the church has fallen short. We need an independent body to look at these matters as we cannot go on sorting out the problems internally. The Charity Commission are pressuring the central church to do just that. New safeguarding will bring its local challenges as volunteers may be put off by the courses and training they have to undertake. If we are to be more accountable and more trusted then this is something we will all have to do. Congregations of all sizes deserve to feel safer.

4. How should the Church prioritise good intentional investment in mission and growth whilst also resourcing parish ministry in all its forms?

This question can be seen as one topic. Traditional parishes have good community roots and presence and are often linked with neighbouring parishes in mission community groups. This means there can be a sharing of both lay and ordained folk to help each other flourish. The central church has given Exeter grants (as below) and we need to make the most use of them for mission and resourcing parishes.

The Diocese of Exeter has successfully been granted money from the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board to help reverse the decline in parish resources and fund new clergy posts. This is all part of the Pray Grow Service 2035 initiative enabling the church to reach out to our communities in new ways to get the message of Jesus out.

Exeter also receives money from the Lowest Income Communities Fund for the poorest parishes. A much needed resource.

5. General Synod must address issues on which faithful Christians hold deeply differing views. How would you contribute to honest debate, good disagreement and clear decision-making while helping the Church maintain its common life and mission?

The new Synod will be made up of a cross section of churchmanship and views and we all need to listen to the many sides of a debate respecting each other's point of view. It is essential to understand the topic and we must speak with both clarity and confidence when discussing it. Where there is disagreement, we have to be grounded in prayer asking for sensitivity and understanding and to be given good listening skills.

We have to work together and talk it through and see where we agree taking it step by step. It is no good ignoring any divisive topics. It is important that the General Synod comes together to represent everyone and a good debate ought to cover all sides of the argument.

While major debates are being discussed, the church must continue its mission to every community so it can flourish and grow. It is important that parish church life keeps going.