

Revd Deborah Leighton Plom - Candidate for the House of Clergy, General Synod

Why I am standing

I care deeply about the Church of England and its vocation to proclaim the gospel, worship God faithfully and serve every community in our nation. Synod decisions about mission, ministry, safeguarding, governance, and resources affect the daily life of parishes, clergy and congregations. I would bring to them broad ministerial experience, sound governance practice and close attention to the people whose lives are affected by the decisions we make.

I am not standing on behalf of any particular group, issue or cause. If elected, I intend to serve independently: considering each matter on its merits, being honest about my convictions, and remaining open to evidence, prayerful discernment and representing the perspectives of others. I would approach the responsibility with pragmatism and integrity: listening carefully to different perspectives, engaging thoughtfully with the issues before us, and seeking wherever possible to contribute to greater unity across the Church.

What I would bring

My ministry has given me experience of the Church in varied town, country and city settings. I currently serve within a rural mission community of nine parishes, where I see both the remarkable faithfulness of local congregations and the practical pressures facing clergy, church officers and volunteers. Rural ministry requires imagination, flexibility and considerable resilience. National decisions must be informed by the realities of communities in which one priest serves many churches and resources are limited.

As an autistic priest, I bring lived experience of both the gifts neurodivergent people offer and the barriers they can encounter and I co-lead the Diocese of Exeter's Neurodivergent Clergy Hub. I have a deep awareness of how language, processes and working cultures can exclude people. I would bring that perspective to Synod, recognising that accessibility benefits the whole Church. I also have over 20 years' experience of governance across varied sectors, so am accustomed to reading complex papers and asking careful questions. I adhere to the Nolan Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. I believe these principles are consistent with Christian discipleship and should be clearly visible in the Church's own governance.

How I would serve

I value the range of traditions and perspectives within the Church of England. Our unity does not require us to pretend that our differences are unimportant, nor does conviction mean we regard those who disagree with us as less faithful. I would seek to speak honestly and respectfully, acknowledging the sincerity of those whose conclusions differ from mine. I would work constructively with members from across all Church traditions, and would hope to earn your trust by being transparent, well prepared and willing to listen.

My independence would mean not being bound by a predetermined group voting instruction. I would examine proposals carefully, considering theological implications and applications, and pay particular attention to how they would affect parishes, clergy and communities with limited institutional influence. If elected, I would regard communication with Exeter's clergy as an essential part of the role. I would make myself accessible, seek views before significant debates, and report back clearly after Synod. I would be willing to discuss any issue and explain any of my voting decisions. I would aim to represent the breadth of diocesan experience while remembering that Synod members are called to exercise their own prayerful judgement.

My commitment

I offer myself for election as a priest committed to prayer, the ministry of word and sacrament, the life of the parish, and the Church's service to the wider community. I would bring practical ministerial experience, an independent mind, careful governance and a willingness to undertake the demanding work of Synod conscientiously. I can promise to listen carefully, prepare thoroughly, speak honestly, act with integrity, be accountable to my electors, and seek the good of the whole Church.

I hope you will consider making me your first choice or ranking me highly among your preferred candidates.