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About me

I grew up in a Christian home. I do not remember a time when I have not believed the good news about Jesus. As a teenager I became confident that I believed in Jesus for myself. That has continued ever since.

City and village congregations

I have been part of Anglican churches across the UK almost all my life. My wife and I married in Broadclyst Parish church in 1998. Since 2005 we have lived in Broadclyst, now with three student-age children. We are part of St. Leonard's church in Exeter. I have served on the Parochial Church Council, as a Sunday school, Bible study and home group leader, and on the technical team. We are also part of an afternoon congregation in Broadclyst to reach out to the village, although this sadly has met infrequently this year. I am on the electoral rolls of both parishes.

Synods

I have been on Christianity Deanery Synod since 2009, and Diocesan Synod since 2015. I make use of my opportunities to ask questions at most diocesan synods.

Genetics and ethics

I have a PhD in chemistry and worked in industrial research for a time. I re-trained in medicine and have worked as an NHS consultant in clinical genetics for the past 12 years. I hope to continue to apply my knowledge of genetics and the ethical issues it raises in synod. Working in genetics has reinforced my belief that all humans are made in the image of God, and that the weakest in society, such as the unborn, the frail and elderly, and the disabled, deserve protection by the stronger in society. It has also reinforced to me that "male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27) applies to every cell in our body. We should celebrate our complementarity as men and women rather than minimise it.

Marriage and singleness

I believe in the Church of England doctrine of marriage as in the Book of Common Prayer, and Canon B30 and following. I believe that the gift of marriage is for one man and one woman for life. Like many others, I believe we have elevated marriage over singleness, in contrast to the New Testament, and we need to reclaim the right balance between the two.

Neurodiversity

After a difficult period at work, I received an autism diagnosis. This helps me to appreciate and represent other neurodiverse people inside and outside the church.

Safeguarding and abuse

Contact in the past with some who have abused their position in Christian leadership has led to contact with their victims, although I am not one. If elected, I will push for the highest standards in safeguarding, and appropriate support for such victims.

Save the Parish

I stand for Save the Parish. The parish system is a beauty of the Church of England. All of the country has a responsible church. We see increasing centralisation within dioceses though, and consolidation of parishes into massive benefices.

Funding parish ministry

The first Save the Parish commitment is to restore Church Commissioners' funds to their founding purpose: stipendiary parish ministry. Its manifesto says that currently only 8 % of the Commissioners' planned annual distribution is ring-fenced for parish ministry. (See www.savetheparish.com.) In 1998 dioceses took on funding clergy pensions to help the Commissioners avoid insolvency. They now hold £11.6 billion. With Save the Parish I will aim to restore the statutory requirement that income from their endowment must be spent "with particular regard to the cure of souls in parishes where such assistance is most required," including funding those pensions.

Cancel Project Spire

As part of restoring that requirement, I will argue against Project Spire. It is the Church Commissioners' plan to invest £100 million of Queen Anne's endowment in businesses in the Caribbean and Africa, as a response to that fund's presumed involvement in slave trading. Ian Paul at www.pzephizo.com quotes Lord Biggar: "Richard Dale [...] has shown that the commissioners misunderstood the data: the 18th-century church fund, the Queen Anne's Bounty, neither directly invested in nor profited from slave-trading. I [...] have pointed out the astonishing failure of the commissioners to publish any considered ethical justification. And Charles Wide KC has exposed their failure of due diligence in launching the project before discovering that it's beyond their lawful powers..." I am all in favour of supporting churches and mission elsewhere. I am grateful to be in a church that does. Project Spire though, as Ian Paul says, "seems to be driven by ideology rather than Christian theology," and as he quotes, is "a diversion of funds intended for the good of parishes to a purpose for which they were not intended." I do not doubt the Commissioners' sincerity. They should focus on funding parishes though, and thereby help parishes to support worldwide mission.

Restoring parish ministry

The Save the Parish manifesto points out how diocesan and national headquarters have ballooned in numbers in recent years, while stipendiary clergy numbers have shrunk, by 28 %. I will push for commitments from dioceses to focus on parish ministry. That includes reducing or removing the time needed to administer the strategic grants system, and appointing front line parish clergy rather than back-room staff.

Restoring clergy wellbeing

I grew up in a rectory and saw the pressures on clergy at close hand. Unmanageable multi-parish benefices do not help the gospel. I live in one. Large churches struggle if the people to pastor ratio is too high. Managerial success metrics are not part of the gospel. With Save the Parish I would aim instead for recognition of faithfulness.

Restoring vocations

At the same time as parish clergy posts plummeting, vocations have fallen. It is harder to offer yourself for service if you are not sure if the people assessing you believe the same gospel. People who believe the historic teaching of the church need to be able to thrive in the Church of England. I would push for ways to help them to do so.