

The Revd Graham Hamilton

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?

After much prayer, I have been persuaded to stand again by colleagues in the Diocese who have appreciated my reports and broadly support my views. I believe that General Synod has a critical role in holding the Church of England together, and representing the National Church to the nation in testing times.

Having already served for 11 years, I have experience and understanding of the Synodical system, its strengths and limitations. I am fully aware of how much time and effort it takes to prepare for each session, and if re-elected, I will be laying aside another extra-parochial role to prioritise Synod business.

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?

Mission and the making of disciples is our first calling and takes place in local churches and chaplaincies. The National Church can best support that work by easing the burden on local congregations of finance, the maintenance of listed buildings, and addressing the vocations crisis, as stipendiary clergy retirements outstrip recruitment.

The new Synod will have a choice between hindering gospel work by stoking the fires of deep disagreement and deepening distrust, or it can take the lead in humble and repentant listening to the concerns of all sides, and seek a way to hold us together as closely as possible, without compromising good conscience. We should allow all our different traditions to flourish, uphold the five guiding principles, and invest in effective mission and evangelism, especially among children and young people, and in well resourced vocations to ordained and lay ministry. Where the parish system is under strain, we must have the courage to rationalise structures - Dioceses, deaneries and benefices - and lighten the organisational burden on clergy and lay volunteers in order to maintain a Christian witness and pastoral presence in every community.

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?

Parliamentary concerns over safeguarding have recently scuppered important governance reforms previously approved by Synod. Safeguarding at parish and diocesan level has improved immensely, but we must do everything to dispel the impression that hierarchies

and constituencies (including my own Evangelical tradition) continue to put managing reputation over the protection of the innocent and the needs of victims. No-one must be considered too important to be held to account.

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

Because mission and growth happen in the local church, the most important thing that Dioceses and the central church bodies can do is to provide churches with financial requests that are transparent and comprehensible to ordinary church members, proportionate to the real local cost of clergy, and consistent over years, so that the local church can plan and invest in local mission.

National funds from the Commissioners need to be allocated by Diocesan Bishops and their staff in genuine consultation with Diocesan and Deanery Synods, so that everyone can see how much central support is being given to parish ministry in deprived areas, urban or rural, or invested in resource churches and regeneration projects, with realistic expectations of growth. The absolute priority must continue to be in work with children and young people.

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?

In these polarised and anxious times, the nation needs a calm national Christian voice more than ever. Our first call is proclaim the living Lord Jesus, retell the story of scripture, and articulate the ethical and philosophical foundations of our Christian heritage, which have been largely been forgotten. I believe that the Church of England can still be a bold but humble 'voice in the wilderness', whether or not we remain established as present.

I am not convinced that Synod always needs, or has time properly to address issues on which faithful Christians hold different views, and I have often felt that a 90 minute Synod debate with a poorly worded motion is probably the worst way to address them. However Synod, meeting outside the debating chamber, could helpfully test and commend resources to enable local churches to discuss difficult issues, which enable the strengths of different positions to be recognised and the weaknesses critiqued. The 'Living in Love & Faith' course material was actually a good example of this.