

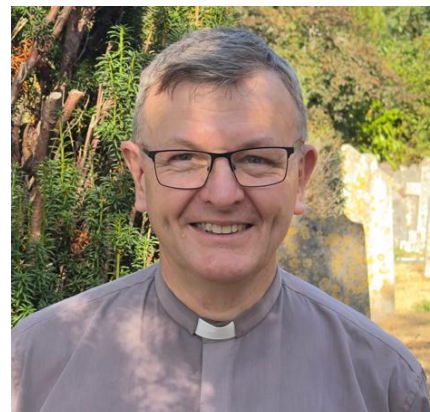
Rev Graham Hamilton (63)

Candidate for General Synod

vicar@pptbovey.church

07930 494201

The Vicarage, Coombe Cross, Bovey Tracey, Devon, TQ13 9EP



I wish to serve the Diocese of Exeter and the wider church by standing again for General Synod.
Proposed by: Rev Mark Ward, Team Vicar, Ottery St Mary
Seconded by: Fr Benjamin Rabjohns, Team Rector, St Michael's Heavitree

About me

I was born in Liverpool, found personal faith in Jesus at 18 on a *Scripture Union* camp, and spent 10 years in the Royal Navy as a Seaman Officer, mostly on ships based in Devonport, until I was sponsored for ordination by Exeter Diocese.

I have been vicar of St Peter, Paul & Thomas Bovey Tracey (PPT), a market town on the SE corner of Dartmoor, with Hennock, a small rural village on the moor itself, since 1999, and have learned the value of persevering in long-term ministry, pastoring and discipling the congregation, getting to know families over generations, and building trust with other local churches and the civic community. We have been blessed with a flourishing work with children and young people through patient and

systematic bible teaching, flexible patterns of worship and long-term investment in lay volunteers, supported at times by paid youth and family workers.

I have also served with *Through Faith Missions* on evangelistic missions around the country, was chaplain to a cottage hospital (till it closed), and am now chaplain to the *Devon Army Cadet Force*. I am an active member of Deanery and Diocesan Synods. I am a member of the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship and Church Society.

I am married with four adult children and eight boisterous grand-children. In my spare time I enjoy reading, playing piano, keeping an allotment and playing boardgames.

Why I am standing

I have served on General Synod since 2015, and have been encouraged to stand for re-election. Our church faces many problems, but I am convinced that God still has a good purpose and a unique vocation for the Church of England.

After the dry years when secularism and the New Atheism seemed unassailable, there is a new openness to spiritual issues, especially among younger generations, and the national church statistics report five years of steady

growth. We need to focus on proclaiming the good news of Jesus in its fullness to an increasingly anxious and divided society.

I fully support the [national church vision](#) for a simpler, humbler and bolder church, and the aim of doubling the number of children and young people in our church by 2030. The problem lies in the detail of how this can be achieved. I hope to bring my experience to bear on the challenges that are proving so intractable.

Where I stand

The Priority of the Parish Church: people come to faith when congregations are equipped and encouraged by local clergy to serve and witness with confidence to their neighbours, and draw them into the life of a local church. Our parish system is under serious strain - listed buildings too expensive to maintain or adapt, ageing congregations, a shortage of volunteers, and a looming crisis in clergy vocations. *Save the Parish* (STP) have produced a 24 page manifesto and a 12 page report on the crisis in parish ministry, and I agree with much of the analysis: clergy are exhausted, spread over too many parishes, distracted from ministry by bureaucracy, while diocesan staff numbers swell, bidding for national funds. Clergy need to be well- trained, with good housing, pay and pensions- and we have made some progress recently. I disagree with STP that the crisis facing rural churches can be easily addressed by returning to a traditional model, which was failing before Strategic Development Funding (SDF- now SMIBB) began, but central funding must be prioritised on deep rural and inner city parishes, and resource churches planted with full local consultation. I suspect that we may need to manage decline in some areas (in order to prevent collapse), while investing in growth in other places, and grow a new generation of disciples. We need both parish churches and new networks.

A period of peace in the National Church: the last five years of safeguarding scandals, divisive initiatives (Net Zero, Project Spire, SDF) and Synodical stalemate over "Living in Love and Faith" have been exhausting, and have left a bitter legacy of distrust. Under our new Archbishop Sarah I hope and pray that we can become a simpler and humbler church, restoring confidence in our safeguarding processes, simplifying national and diocesan structures and lifting the burdens they impose on parishes.

Unless we wish the rancorous debate over human sexuality to continue until one side

claims total victory, we need to acknowledge that both viewpoints are sincerely held, and cannot easily co-exist. We need to find a settlement allowing both positions to flourish or fail on their own merits, while remaining within a broader Anglican structure. I uphold the church's traditional doctrine of marriage, and I want to ensure that legally secure provision is made for traditionalists, if there is to be further progressive innovation. A 'victory' for either side in the debates on sexuality, and the departure of the losers, would be a disaster for the Church. Likewise I believe we must maintain the Five Guiding Principles to allow mutual flourishing to become more of a reality.

A Voice of Hope and National Unity: I have become increasingly anxious about the state of our nation - our identity (English, British?), the increasing likelihood of war with Russia or Iran, national insolvency, lawlessness, de-population (you can watch my Synod speech in July 2026), deep political polarisation, rising levels of anti-semitism, and anxiety about climate change, Islamism and mass immigration. I was greatly encouraged by the Synod debate in July on "Promoting Unity in our Nation" (GS2449). If we can learn to live at peace within the church, I believe that Synod together with the House of Bishops could be an example to wider society, and a voice for hope and unity, where different viewpoints can be heard respectfully. "We can be a prophetic voice without being partisan" (Bishop Martyn Snow). If we do not fulfil this vocation, other more strident voices will be heard.

I have tried in this page to set out my stall as clearly and honestly as possible: if you wish to ask me further questions, please do get in touch. I ask for your first preference vote.

yours sincerely
Graham Hamilton (63)