

Mrs Jill Caporn

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 because I love the local church and want its voice heard where national decisions are shaped. I bring the perspective of the pew, the school gate and the vicarage kitchen table: a worshipper leading music and discipleship groups at All Saints Sidmouth; a mother of teenagers navigating faith, school and youth culture; and a vicar's wife who sees close up the joys and pressures of parish ministry. I want decisions on money, people and priorities tested against the question: will this help local churches to flourish? Trust in the national Church is sadly not high, and my prayer is that with a willingness to serve beyond the parish boundary I will contribute to a rebuilding of that trust through honest debate and questioning that holds leadership properly to account.

Synod will be a new experience for me and I do not underestimate the challenge of engaging with its process and the scale of the issues it faces alongside fitting Synod around teaching, music ministry, family and parish life. But I bring a readiness to listen, ask honest questions, and learn quickly — qualities I believe matter as much as prior experience of how Synod works.

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?

As we share the Gospel I would prioritise three things: the training, support and wellbeing of clergy, whose numbers are declining; investing in lay ministry, so people are valued, trained, trusted and released to help others grow in faith; and sustained resourcing of parishes themselves — the vivid, local presence of the Church, where the Gospel is lived out.

In recent years, decision-making and funding have drifted toward the Diocesan and national level in ways that do not always hear the local church clearly — even as we ask more of local volunteers, parish safeguarding officers among them, and of clergy, who need proper support in return. The allocation of SDF and SMMIB funds is one example: it has favoured large projects with heavy governance overhead, making it harder to fund smaller, parish-grounded initiatives that are often the most transformative.

The Church of England is hugely complex, so this will take patience and perseverance. But we believe in a God who can do more than we imagine, and now is the moment for Synod to reflect prayerfully on its role — focusing on what it truly needs to legislate, and intentionally passing power, funding and trust down to dioceses and 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?

The Gospel invites everyone to come to Jesus, and that invitation carries a responsibility: our worshipping communities must be safe, accountable and trustworthy places. Safeguarding failures have badly damaged the Church of England, and too often accountability has been perceived to be enforced differently across the church. Synod must keep engaging seriously with fully independent safeguarding, and ensure the same standards apply whichever level of the Church is under scrutiny. We also need to support and value local volunteers, so practice stays rigorous yet deliverable for smaller congregations whose committed, older members are not always IT-literate.

As I said in my election address, we need decision-making that is transparent and genuinely consultative, with parishes and their clergy in particular feeling heard and supported. Every decision Synod takes should be weighed by how it plays out in a typical parish, because Synod exists to serve the local church, and reform only works if parishes experience it as support rather than a further burden imposed from above.

This will need grace, humility and a willingness from all members of Synod to acknowledge when we get things wrong.

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

Jesus gave us the great commission to make disciples of all nations: mission and growth must clearly be a priority in Church decision-making and fund allocation, and responsible resourcing of parish ministry should be an integral part of that investment, acknowledging the vital work lay people of all ages are already doing. The local church needs to be given the opportunity to shape conversations about how to share the resources of money and expertise, demonstrating not just a hunger for new initiatives but a thirst to see the continued flourishing of existing discipleship groups, pastoral care, outreach and influence in local schools and community action.

It can be easy to respond to changing culture, demographics and financial shortfalls with anxiety, assuming more initiatives — and more central funding — are always the answer. Instead, we need a quiet confidence that when we pray, God will provide and lead us to do more than we can imagine. Programmes have their place but must never become idols. I want a Church willing to take risks and channel resources to the lowest level, trusting local Christians closest to the need to steward them well.

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?

I am committed to working alongside everyone with honesty, grace and prayer. Public debate can feel noisy, inharmonious and unforgiving, but I believe good disagreement is possible where we genuinely listen before we speak. There are issues on which I hold to the Church's inherited teaching, and others on which I expect to be rightly challenged by those who see things differently; either way, I want to understand the complexity behind a position before I contribute my own view.

If elected, I will approach representing Exeter Diocese with humility, conscious that I will not have all the answers and that my task is to listen well and prayerfully. There will be occasions where Synod will need to reach clear decisions people can live with, even when not everyone agrees with them. In doing so, it will sometimes be necessary to acknowledge the depth of our disagreements. I want to contribute with clarity, disagree well, and work faithfully with others in building God's kingdom here on earth.