

THE REVEREND MATTHEW CASHMORE

Candidate for the House of Clergy Diocese of Exeter

Vicar of St. John the Evangelist, Bovey Tracey with
Heathfield | Team Vicar, Newton Abbot Parishes |
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Why I am standing

Before ordination I spent years making change happen inside large organisations including the BBC, Lonely Planet, Hachette and Blackwell's. I led digital transformation, managed R&D and innovation programmes, built new services and turned strategy into delivery. The best results came when central resources were placed in the hands of people who understood their audiences and were trusted to act.

I am standing for General Synod because the Church of England needs more of that instinct. The parish is not the edge of the Church. It is the Church in each place. Growth will come when money, trust and decision making are put closer to the clergy and lay people who know their communities. The centre should resource that work, remove barriers and be accountable for what it spends.

About me

I am an Anglo-Catholic parish priest and the Eucharist is at the heart of my ministry. I am married to Catherine and we have a teenage son. I write for Bloomsbury with a particular focus on pilgrimage and I travel widely by motorbike. I have ridden across Europe, Russia, North Africa, America and Australia. Pilgrimage and motorcycling both teach you to travel light, ask for help and meet people you might otherwise pass by.

My pre-ordination work was not only about ideas. At the BBC I ran Innovation Labs that brought small businesses and developers into the organisation. At Lonely Planet my job was to seek out partnerships with large companies such as Apple, Google and Adobe, but also with small companies, individual developers and travellers who had little money but plenty of zeal. I brought all of that together in a way the centre could understand and fund, while keeping the real power of storytelling with the people most passionate about it. By using Lonely Planet's reach to amplify their stories, we inspired people across the world to travel and delivered growth that the centre could understand. At Hachette and Blackwell's I helped publishers and booksellers through major digital change. I learned how to manage substantial budgets, build partnerships and give capable people the freedom to deliver.

I have also served as a trustee of SPCK and Veritas Educational Trust, and on the Diocese of London's Bishop's Council and Finance Committee during Bishop Sarah Mullally's leadership. That has given me practical experience of charity law, governance and church finance. Parish ministry has taught me something just as important. Plans only matter when they help people worship, serve and bring others to Christ.

Put parish and mission first

The parish is the Church of England's enduring promise to be present for everyone in every place. It is where people bring newborn children, grief, doubt, joy and the great questions of life. It is also where patient relationships create the conditions for growth. This work is local, personal and often quiet. It cannot be directed from a distant centre.

National initiatives and new worshipping communities can help, but they should strengthen the parish, not bypass it. Money given by today's worshippers matters, but so does the Church's accumulated historic wealth. Endowments and assets now held by the Church Commissioners, other central bodies and church charities should support front-line ministry much more directly. Decisions about mission funding should be made as close as possible to the people and places where that work happens. I will keep asking who holds the money, who makes the decision and whether it helps a parish bring people to Christ.

WHAT I WOULD BRING TO GENERAL SYNOD

From strategy to delivery

I know the practical realities of trying to grow parish churches in traditional ways and in more pioneering ways, with all the frustrations and joys that come with both. At St. John's and across Heathfield we are building relationships through schools and public worship. At St. Luke's, weekday Masses are growing quietly through faithfulness, welcome and prayer. At Stover School I am beginning the patient work of learning another community and listening for where God is already at work.

My ministry has involved both growing established parish churches and planting new worshipping communities. In London I planted a biker church. Here in Devon I planted Explorers in Heathfield, and we are now planning a new biker church, inspired by my time as chair of the 59 Club in London. Alongside parish ministry I serve as a Gregory Associate with CCX, which equips local leaders to start, revitalise and grow worshipping communities rooted in discipleship. Good pioneering work is a form of R&D. You listen to the people closest to the challenge, try something, learn quickly and put resources behind what works. The method may differ, but the aim is the same - meeting people where they are and bringing them to Christ.

Working together across traditions

My ministry has taken me through rural and urban parishes, schools, church planting networks, Catholic societies and national church structures. I have worked with people whose churchmanship and convictions differ from mine. The useful question is never whether we agree on everything. It is whether we can find enough trust and shared purpose to do the next faithful thing together.

I am not standing as an entrenched member of a party or organisation. I am standing as a parish priest who wants to bring people to Christ. I will be honest about what I believe, listen properly to those who disagree and work with anyone who shares that purpose. Synod needs less positioning and more patient work that produces real outcomes.

Money, power and trust

The Church must be worthy of the trust people place in it. Safeguarding must be independent where necessary, professionally competent, trauma-informed and fair. Our use of money and power must be just as open. National and diocesan bodies should say plainly what they cost, what they achieve, and how their choices affect parishes. Accountability is not hostility to the centre. It is how the centre earns trust.

How I would serve Exeter's clergy

If elected I would represent all the clergy of Exeter Diocese, not only those who share my tradition or conclusions. I would listen, remain available and report back in plain English after each group of sessions. I would make sure the realities of ministry across our towns, villages, coast and moor are heard.

I would bring parish experience, organisational skill, financial understanding and a record of turning ideas into practical change. Above all I would bring energy, warmth and a willingness to work across difference for the sake of the Gospel. I would be grateful for your first-preference vote, or for as high a preference as you feel able to give me.

Yours in Christ,



Fr Matthew Cashmore