

The Revd Canon Professor Morwenna Ludlow

About me.

I am standing for re-election to General Synod, on which I have served since 2021.

I am a Self-Supporting Ordained Minister in the Diocese of Exeter and my current role is Canon Theologian at Exeter Cathedral. My day job is Professor of Christian History and Theology at the University of Exeter. I am also proud to be Chair of Trustees for Spiritus Theological College, formerly SWMTC, with whom I trained.



I believe that at its best the Church of England is a church that has space to hold different traditions together. I am realistic about how difficult that sometimes is, especially for those who have been hurt by the church. But I believe that we can be bound together by a love and trust in Jesus Christ who reaches out to all people.

I grew up with the experience of evangelical, Anglo-Catholic and broad Anglican communities and I find something to love in each of them. I grew up in a suburban parish with a broadly Anglo-Catholic liturgy and an evangelical youth group. As a student, I was a regular worshipper in chapel and, for a while, co-leader of the College Christian Union. These combinations were not always comfortable, but they left me with a stubbornly hopeful belief in building bridges between different traditions and convictions.

I discovered theology at university, being deeply influenced by the humility of my College chaplain who taught me that one could be profoundly touched by God's love, and at same time not know all the answers. This spirit of seeking after God inspired me to study theology after completing my undergraduate degree in classics. I've spent the rest of my professional life combining my deep love of theology with my fascination for "old stuff". I have taught in Universities for 30 years, specialising in the history of early Christianity. I have, amongst other things, written an introductory book on *The Early Church* and I am always deeply touched when a reader tells me it's helped them. This year my scholarship was recognised by my election as a Fellow of the British Academy. I bring my knowledge of theology and history into my role at the Cathedral with regular lectures and education events which are open to all.

I have lived in Exeter since 2006 when I got my job at the University. I love to blow the cobwebs away by walking on Dartmoor or on the beach at Exmouth and, when I'm feeling brave, by swimming in the sea. I love making things, especially knitting and sewing. My husband—a historian—teaches at the London School of Economics, and we have always had to adapt family life to two careers in different locations. We have two grown-up daughters.

The perspectives that I bring to Synod

My personal background, training in theology and history and experience as a leader in Higher Education all give me a distinctive perspective. I am very concerned about the current challenges facing education in theology and religion, whether in schools, Universities or ministerial formation. My experience as a leader in Higher Education also equips me to understand a large and complex organisation like the CofE. Since being elected, I have spoken twice in Synod debates on changes to the Crown Nominations Commission, drawing on my experience as member of the committee which considered how the church nominates bishops: in my speeches I highlighted themes of confidentiality, discernment and trust.

I am delighted to be on the list of candidates supported by Inclusive Church and am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality. I have spoken twice in debates on Living and Love and Faith in favour of more inclusion. I respect integrity of conscience but I am very wary of any arrangements in the church which – however well-meaning – would have the effect of further dividing us one from another.

I have extensive experience of working with those from different standpoints. Since 2020 I have given theological input into the senior leadership programme for new Bishops in the Church of England, working alongside people from very different perspectives from my own, both those taking and those facilitating the programme. I have sat on CofE working groups with people with whom I disagree; I recently greatly enjoyed giving a joint lecture on the Nicene Creed with a fellow academic and member of General Synod with whom I disagree on the doctrine of marriage.

Both in academia and in the church, I have worked with Christians from many different traditions, including those from Methodist, Baptist, Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran churches. This has helped me understand how much we have in common, but also how we are shaped by our particular contexts. This perspective has informed my two speeches in General Synod debates on the war in Ukraine, in which I drew on my knowledge of Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

As a historian of the early church, I have learned that the church has changed without losing its identity in Christ or its faithfulness to the Gospel. For me, Christian tradition is not a fossil, but a precious living thing to be handed on to the next generation. I am inspired too by early theologians who (despite the many disputes of their times!) taught that the unity of the church as the body of Christ is expressed by the mutual love of its members. The gifts of the Spirit are given for mutual encouragement (Rom. 1:11-12) and they only come alive as we share them with each other. Although Synod debates can sometimes be painful and fractious, there is also space for building each other up. If I am re-elected, I will therefore recommit myself to listening carefully and considering prayerfully before speaking and voting.