

The Revd. Preb. Rosie Austin, standing for General Synod 2026

Nominated by:

Ven. Verena Breed, Archdeacon of Barnstaple
and Revd Tim Collins, Rector of Netherexe Mission Community

Who am I?

Team Rector of Shirwell Mission Community, but from late September I will be Team Vicar of the Edgemoor Mission Community. I am Rural Church Officer for Exeter Diocese and have served on General Synod since 2021. I am married to Adam with three grown children.



My background and the experiences which have shaped me

My vocational journey has been a varied one, first as a primary school teacher and then Assistant Manager of a Christian Outdoor Centre in North Devon. Here, I was able to talk about my faith with children and young people within God's good creation. I then worked in healthcare, beginning as a community care worker meeting people in need of both care and company.

My Christian family attended a small urban Methodist church, but I was baptised and confirmed in a large CofE church. I grew in my faith through an active youth group and Pathfinder camps. In North Devon we joined the local village church, I helped form a music group and led family services which allowed me to discover God's calling to explore my vocation further. I was ordained in 2011.

I have now spent 11 years as **Team Rector** with eight small churches on the edge of Exmoor. Together with my churches we have explored new ways of being church including outdoor, café and breakfast churches while valuing traditional worship. Some churches have become Festival churches, enabling these churches to connect anew with their communities and, with prayer and friendship, see new buds of growth. I have been a training incumbent to three curates and journal tutor to licensed lay ministers and ordinands. I was Rural Dean of Shirwell Deanery from 2018 to 2024.

My Diocesan post as **Rural Church Officer** enables me to work alongside small rural churches and support them in thinking about building better relationships with their communities to become sustainable for the future. I support clergy and lay ministers through a rural support hub, important for those who often find themselves isolated in their roles. I listen carefully to the concerns of rural communities and in particular our farming community and those affected by rural deprivation. I am often called to represent the rural church on various committees, and being on General Synod has further enabled this. I am on the steering committee for the Rural Interest Group for General Synod (RIGGS). I am in a Learning Community with other Diocesan Rural Officers, sharing issues we have in common. I am also a part of the Bright Field Community which reflects theologically on rural ministry.

I am an elected member of the Bishops Diocesan Council, have been on Diocesan Synod since 2016, and a member of Exeter Cathedral College of Canons.



"There are many of us that live in rural settings or small coastal towns in Devon, and it can be easy to feel as if we have no voice... Rosie cares and will make sure we are not invisible."

(Jenni Coats, Lay Chair of Shirwell Deanery)

What issues facing the church do I feel most strongly about?

1. Strengthening small/rural churches and communities, speaking out for a more equitable sharing of resources, and reimagining how we can do church together. I long for a confident church less anxious about forcing growth out of season, but simply following the call of Jesus and serving in every place. Our heritage buildings are immensely valuable – missionally, socially and culturally – but keeping them well maintained is a huge pressure on our clergy and laity, we need to talk about how to release people into their missional vocations.

2. Seeking the wellbeing of those who work and minister in our churches. Caring for people and parishes is rewarding but often challenging and all who minister need supportive teams and pastoral supervision which should be easily accessed. We need to create a culture where people can flourish in their calling, be enabled (not just encouraged) to take appropriate time off and, if paid, to receive fair wages and pensions.

3. Valuing our global connections. A curacy placement in our companion link Diocese of Thika in Kenya led me to see how much we have to learn from one another. We urgently need to act in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss while valuing local and ethical food production and those farmers who care deeply for land and livestock. Our sisters and brothers beyond our borders cannot afford for us to be complacent and recent global events are a reminder of our need to act.



With Bishop Julius of Thika



In East Jerusalem, overlooking settlements and the El zone

4. Calling for justice and putting our prayers into action. I was recently privileged to visit Palestine and Israel in preparation for a Carlisle 'Kairos' motion which eventually passed in General Synod in July. I was strongly in favour of this motion which called us to hear the voices of Palestinian Christians calling for a just peace for all who call the Holy Land home. The motion called for a rebuttal of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia within our churches, and for us to put our fine words and prayers into action. I also support the aims of the Spire Project, which enables us to face up to the evils of our past and will work with communities to address issues of racial justice.

5. Welcoming and including all. A welcome to our churches is not enough, and transparency is important. I will continue to call for the full inclusion of all at every level of our church, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity or sexuality. I was privileged to be the first woman serving as rector in our parishes, and give thanks for those who laid the foundations for that. I would love to be able to use the prayers of love and faith in a stand alone service with the support of the church in that place, and for clergy to be able to enter into civil marriage. Our churches need to be safer places, and I am keen to listen carefully especially to victims and survivors as we work towards more independent processes for safeguarding.

Why vote for me?

Everyone in our churches should feel they have a voice, and concerns as well as joys should be properly heard. I can't of course promise to always vote as you'd wish me to, and many of the issues we discuss don't have easy answers, but I always love a conversation and am keen to take time to listen and understand. *Philippians 2:4* asks us to look not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others. We may not always get this right but I pray I would be able to use the gifts God has given me to continue to serve the church in General Synod.

I'd be very grateful if you would put me as your first preference vote, and vote also for those who are transparent about desiring inclusion for everyone.

Rosie