

Mr Simon Friend

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 have served on General Synod since 2018, speaking in debates on Living in Love and Faith, safeguarding, rural ministry, housing, and finance. I also served on the recent Crown Nominations Commission for the appointment of +Mike. I am standing again because the Church is at a pivotal moment on inclusion, trust, and the future of parish ministry. Synod work challenges me to listen deeply, hold tension without fear, and integrate my real-world experience as a property developer with the contemplative posture I try to bring as a Licensed Lay Minister. It stretches my capacity by requiring patience, theological attentiveness, and the ability to set aside my own agenda. I feel called to continue reflecting the voices on the margins and contributing grounded, strategic, generous discernment.

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?

The Church must prioritise confident, sustainable parish ministry, especially in rural areas and Low Income Communities, whose needs I have consistently supported through my voting on Synod. Flourishing grows where people feel welcomed, listened to, and able to explore faith without fear. Inclusion must be central, alongside renewed investment in children, young people, and intergenerational discipleship. The Church should also address poverty, housing and community pressures that shape everyday life. Mission emerges naturally when churches are rooted locally, resourced realistically and freed from anxiety about survival. Over the next five years, we need to strengthen the ordinary, local, faithful presence of the Church, the place where most people encounter Christian hope.

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

General Synod must ensure safeguarding reforms are not only structural but cultural. I believe safeguarding should be fully independent, with clear processes that are trusted by victims and survivors and workable in parishes, dioceses, and cathedrals. Independence is essential for credibility, transparency, and accountability. Synod should model good governance: clarity of communication, realistic expectations, and decisions rooted in compassion rather than institutional protection. I support mandatory reporting. Listening to

victims and survivors with humility must shape our reforms. As someone who works in a regulated professional environment, I know the importance of systems that are robust, humane, and consistently applied. The Church will only regain trust if safeguarding is seen to be fair, independent, and free from internal influence.

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

Mission and parish ministry should not be treated as competing priorities. Sustainable growth happens where local churches, especially rural parishes and Low Income Communities are supported, confident, and able to offer welcome and worship that feel authentic. I voted for the Hereford motion in July 2025, which, as amended, called upon the Church Commissioners to continue to make available the *maximum sustainable level of distributions* in support of parishes and the work of clergy and other ministers. That principle matters: national investment should strengthen, not bypass, the parish. My experience in brownfield regeneration has taught me that long-term growth requires patient investment, realistic planning, and listening to the communities we serve. Mission flourishes when parish ministry is properly resourced.

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?

Good disagreement requires clarity, honesty, and generosity. I believe candidates should be open about where they stand. I would support Prayers of Love and Faith being used in stand-alone services, and I would vote for a change to allow clergy in same-sex partnerships to enter into civil marriage. I hope one day we will be able to offer equal marriage in the Church. At the same time, conscience protections matter for those who disagree. I also believe strongly that money, including common fund contributions, should never be used to leverage theological or political positions; such tactics damage trust and fragment our common life. My aim is to contribute grounded, strategic, generous discernment that helps the Church disagree well while remaining committed to its shared mission.