



Vivien Southall

Nominated by **Robin Hodges** – Previous lay Chair for Honiton Deanery ‘Vivien is an inspiring addition to the General Synod, her kindness and thoughtful approach to leadership will ensure that complex decisions are guided by genuine pastoral care, wisdom, and a compassionate vision for the future of our rural Churches.

Seconded by **Anne Jerman** – Lay Secretary for Cadbury Deanery ‘I am supporting Viv because I believe she will represent and promote the importance of inclusivity in the future of the Church of England in the 21st-century whilst dealing sensitively with the challenges that this will represent for some.’

Dear Elector,

I am writing to ask for your first or high preference vote in the upcoming election of General Synod members for the house of laity. There are many significant issues that will be discussed and voted on in the next quinquennium, so please take the opportunity to ensure that you have representatives that will advocate for your views. I was elected to General Synod in November 2024. I have enjoyed seeing firsthand how parishes and the national church work together, from PCC through the various levels of synods. I have been surprised how I now consider debates on seemingly mundane governance issues, as well as big headlining controversial issues, interesting and important. I enjoy the debates and have begun to understand how General Synod works. I gave my debut speech in July on neurodiversity and the Church and now feel ready and confident to speak up on more matters. Of course, it is the votes that count and I try to be present for as many debates and votes as I possibly can. Synod is a busy and business-like environment, so I try to pray for wisdom before votes to ground myself in God’s will, remembering that each vote will impact individual people personally. My starting point is always about how God’s love is furthered through the work of Synod and whether all people are fully included in this. I enjoy responding to people who contact me about current Synod issues and do my best to represent their views. Not as many people as I expected do engage with me directly, and I am always open to this.

My husband and I have lived in the small rural parish of Kentisbeare since 1993 and worship in the village church. We have two daughters, two very young granddaughters, and one daughter-in-law. We understand the complexities, challenges and rewards of family life with one daughter and granddaughter living with us and the other family in New Zealand.

Do get in contact if you would like to find out more about me at vjsouthall@yahoo.co.uk and please take the time to vote for whoever you feel will advocate for the issues that are important to you.

Viv



My church work has included

- Children’s and youth work since I was 14.
- Homegroup member from 14 and a leader for much of the time.
- Leading Marriage preparation, enrichment and parenting courses
- Leading a Living in Love and Faith course and follow up sessions
- Prayer ministry
- Working on policy
- Safeguarding

My life outside of Church...

- Primary school teacher for over 20 years.
- Set up and ran Kentisbeare Preschool 1994-1997
- Relationship Educator for Mid Devon Community Family Trust (MDCFT), 2000 – 2026
- Lecturer in Education at Plymouth University, 2009-2019
- Education Doctorate 2019-2025.
- Carer for my mother who had dementia 2017 – 2021
- Alumni research fellow Plymouth Uni 2025-7

My view on current synod matters so far...

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - My career in Education, my charity work in Relationship Education, and my long-term volunteering in church children's work, reflects the importance that I give to the wellbeing of families, children and young people – but also that I enjoy being and working with people and helping them flourish. Much of what is debated at synod has an impact on these groups, including safeguarding, social care and even clergy housing. It is through this lens that I make my voting decisions.

SAFEGUARDING - I have been a parish safeguarding officer and appreciate that safeguarding is a complex and stressful process. Thank you to all of you who carry out this role in our diocese. Safeguarding structures have been hotly debated at Synod, and the current situation is still contested. I believe that any structures we adopt need to be consistent across the church, accountable and transparent as well as manageable at parish level.

RURAL and URBAN PARISHES - I have been involved in large parish churches for many years as well as very small village parishes. I enjoy and value what each has to bring. I am also aware of the challenges for each context. I do share the concerns of many that our rural parishes are challenged by the lack of clergy and stress on clergy well-being, as well as the maintenance of large buildings and small populations. When voting at Synod I have borne in mind the impact of decisions on small, rural parishes.

SUSTAINABILITY – I live my life with commitment to sustainability, and I appreciate measures debated in Synod to support Churches in becoming more sustainable. This is both in taking big measures where possible, but also employing much smaller, cheaper and more manageable initiatives.

INCLUSIVITY - 'May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (Romans 15:5). This underpins my understanding of how God wants us to relate to each other and informs my passion to see the Church of England as an inclusive Church for all.

Inclusion for neurodiversity and disability. I have an eye to the ways in which people with physical and mental difficulties can be disenfranchised and hindered in their ability to fully engage and thrive in Church life. Like many families ours is neurodiverse. My Doctoral Thesis looked at long-term romantic neurodiverse relationships. Therefore, neurodiversity is an area that is of interest to me. I attend the neurodiversity and disability group at Synod that is currently working on how to ensure neurodiverse people are able to access and be fully involved in Church life, work already underway in Exeter Diocese.

Relationships, sexuality and gender. In the next quinquennium matters of relationships, sexuality and gender will continue to be debated. With two same-sex attracted daughters I am an advocate for LGBTQAI+ Christians to be fully included in the life of their own parish and the national body of the Church of England. If elected to General Synod I will continue to advocate for clergy to be able to choose to use Prayers of Love and Faith in stand-alone services and for clergy in same sex relationships to be able to marry. However, I do consider it important that clergy and individuals can act in accordance with their conscience without judgment. I am part of the Together for the Church of England group in Synod.

Racial equality. I attend the racial equality meetings at General Synod. Having started my teaching life in London with RE as a specialism racial equality has been part of my professional development. I consider attention to racial equality to be important in our small, rural parishes as well as our parishes that are richly diverse.

Please take this opportunity to vote and consider giving me your first or high preference vote.

Voting closes on 13th October

