

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

*Answering is optional in all these questions. Enter your response below the questions.
Responses limited to 200 words per question*

Your Calling

1	In what ways do you think God has called you to this role?
	God has led me from a theology degree, to being a member of staff of the General Synod, to being a member of Synod, on to working for a legal organisation whilst being a churchwarden. I feel certain that I would do a good job as a General Synod member and that God has led me to this place.
2	What is your personal hope for the Church of England?
	My hope is for the Church of England to worship God, be faithful to Scripture and be empowered by the Holy Spirit. By drawing closer to God we will draw closer together.

Church of England Structures

3	What do you consider the three top priorities of the Church of England over the next five years?
	For priorities for the Church of England, see my answer to question 2. For priorities for the General Synod, I suggest: 1.) Reforming our financial structures to reduce Parish Share (see my article https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/202609-Should-we-change-national-Church-of-England-finances.pdf); 2.) Embedding the new structures for safeguarding; 3.) Ensuring new General Synod legislation and rules are designed to make the work of parishes easier and not impose additional burdens.
4	What do you feel are the main safeguarding topics for discussion at the General Synod? How would you rate your own understanding of those topics?
	I am not a member of General Synod but I have kept up to date by watching all the debates. I have published twelve articles where I identify key issues from safeguarding reports. My articles are regarding: - John Smyth: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/202608-The-Makin-Review-on-John-Smyth-QC-the-resignation-of-the-Archbishop-of-Canterbury-and-subsequent-events.pdf - Soul Survivor: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/202410-Review-into-Soul-Survivor-actions-for-the-General-Synod.pdf

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	- Revd Mike Pilavachi: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/202404-Let-There-Be-Light-documentary.pdf - Prof Alexis Jay report: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/202403-Next-steps-for-Church-of-England-safeguarding.pdf - Independent Safeguarding Board: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/202402-Review-of-the-Independent-Safeguarding-Board.pdf - Revd Michael Hall: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/202312-Spiritual-abuse-by-the-Reverend-Michael-Hall-a-lesson-for-churchwardens.pdf - Past Cases Review: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/202210-Safeguarding-Past-Cases-Review-2.pdf - Titus Trust: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/202201-Titus-Trust-Independent-Culture-Review.pdf - Fr Alan Griffin: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/202109-Alan-Griffin-and-CofE-Safeguarding.pdf - Revd Jonathan Fletcher: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/202104-Jonathan-Fletcher-review.pdf - Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/202003-IICSA-Safeguarding-Investigation-Report-Oct-2020.pdf - Bishop Whitsey and Revd George Gibson: https://adrianvincent.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/202003-IICSA-Safeguarding-Investigation-Report-Oct-2020.pdf
5	Do you recognise the key structure of the parish and priest as the bedrock of local ministry and mission in the Guildford Diocese and the Church of England?
	Yes. Synod can become too obsessed creating new schemes and strategies that they forget parish ministry. This cheeky Synod speech made that point: “Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford): We are being encouraged to be visionary, so I would ask if we were going to start the Church of England from scratch and think really big, what might we want it to be like? Let us dare to dream for a moment. Would it not be great if we could reach people where they are by having our very own building in the heart of every community as a centre for people to gather and worship and which might also sometimes be used for community events [...] Each one of these centres might have its own clergy, especially selected and trained [...] we do not have to dream because we already have all this. [...] the more we channel our energies into ambitious new initiatives, the less time, money and energy there is for the daily round of traditional parish ministry. [...] There is Strategic Development funding and Fresh Expressions

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	funding, but where is the getting on with the parish ministry on the ground funding?” <i>Report of Proceedings, page 350</i> https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/report-of-proceedings-july-2021.pdf
6	What is your view on maintaining a church in every parish when many are struggling financially?
	This should be a key priority. There are steps that can be taken to help. See for example my article proposing changing national church finances (link in answer to Q3). More legal flexibility has been introduced, which can help. For example, I think that when a group of small rural parishes can't find a treasurer, churchwarden etc for every church, it is legally possible to combine the volunteers into a single PCC, without merging the churches into a single parish.
7	Given the previous question, what thoughts or concerns do you have about the choice of central funding for limited focal projects or a model of funding towards the dioceses in support of all parishes?
	My article (link in Q3) proposes a model of funding which is a bit different from the two options: the Church Commissioners funding specific projects; or the Commissioners giving money to dioceses to pass on to parishes. Instead, I propose money direct to each parish, by the Commissioners funding clergy pensions, which reduces Parish Share in every church.
8	How would you solve the burden of expensive church building maintenance costs?
	The Church of England should continue to lobby the Government to remove the requirement to pay VAT on listed building repairs. We should build a broad coalition to increase the pressure. Our main focus should be on sharing the Good News of Jesus and providing excellent services. When the church grows the financial giving follows. We should not forget to promote to our congregations the option to leave a legacy in their will. In my own church we were able to install underfloor heating and new toilets thanks to a generous legacy.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

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9	Should a candidate for General Synod who threatens to redirect parish share to the Ephesian Fund, withdraw their candidacy? Why or why not?
	Any decision on Parish Share is taken by a PCC not an individual. If a church protests against what they see as the Church of England taking an unbiblical turn, the response should not be to tell them that they are no longer allowed a voice on Synod.

Doctrinal and Theological

10	In what ways does the doctrine of original sin (as defined in article 9) influence your wider theology and ethics?
	I had to reach for my Book of Common Prayer to remind myself which was Article 9! St Paul says something similar in Romans 7 of the inner struggle between his fleshly nature and his spiritual desire. Verse 19, “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.” Sometimes as Christians we are tempted to pretend that everything is going great, because we are ashamed to reveal our struggles in case we do not look like good Christians. The reality is that every Christian struggles with sin. In General Synod debates some argue we must “affirm” everyone in everything. However, this emphasis can overlook the fact that we all have a sinful nature and are in daily need of God’s love and forgiveness.
11	Thomas Aquinas defined love as “to love anything is nothing else but to will good to that thing.” (Summa Theologica 1.20.2, c.f. Romans 12:9). Do you agree with this definition? If so, how would you define the word <i>good</i> (particularly but not only moral goodness), and practically what does it mean to will good when loving God or our neighbour?
	If there is an award for the most difficult question, this one should win! Aquinas wasn’t covered in my theology degree, so I have focussed on Romans 12:9, “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good;” C.E.B Cranfield’s: <i>Romans: A shorter commentary</i>, explains, “Paul’s point is to insist that the Christian is to be utterly committed in his opposition to what is morally wrong and in his support of what is morally good.” Page 310.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

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	How I define the word “good” and what it means to “will good” I am struggling to answer. I would rather discuss this with the questioner and learn from them. Feel free to get in touch.
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Mission and Ministry

12	What is the most significant change to the structure/strategy of the Church of England that will allow more people to come to know Jesus?
	I first want to manage expectations about what the General Synod can and can't achieve. The Synod sets the legislation and distributes finances. How it does that can help with mission. But the most successful initiatives that have enabled more people to come to know Jesus, have not come from the central structures, but from the parishes. For example, the Alpha Course came out of Holy Trinity Brompton. Messy Church came out of St Wilfrid's Church, Portsmouth. Sometimes the best thing the General Synod can do is to get out of the way and allow local churches the space and resources to get on with it.
13	Why does it appear that other denominations are able to attract children and youth more than the Church of England?
	Within every denomination there are some churches with loads of children and youth, and some with none. The research report “From Anecdote to Evidence” https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/from_anecdote_to_evidence_-_the_report.pdf found, page 26: “churches where there is a high ratio of children to adults are twice as likely to be growing; [...] Recognising the possible “chicken and egg” element (i.e. parents may only come to a church with provision for children, but the amount of provision is influenced by how many children there are), the parish survey [...] found that [...] Those which also showed a link with church growth were: - Worship services designed for children - Youth programmes - Camps and retreats - A church school There is a particularly strong association between growth and youth programmes.”

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

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14	Care for Creation is part of the Church's marks of mission. How do you feel about the net-zero targets for 2030?
	The Church of England's Net Zero target is a good example of what is best and worst about the General Synod. Best, because it recognised the importance of caring for creation. Worst, because it set a target without a realistic plan as to how it could be achieved. The result was churches were presented with a target that was not practical to achieve in the timescale which put their backs up from the start. The General Synod is good at passing motions, but not so good at focussing on delivery.
15	What are your thoughts on encouraging more people to enter the church as trainee ordinands?
	I used to work in the Ministry Division at Church House, paying grants for those training for ordination. I also observed a Bishops Advisory Panel (called a Selection Conference in those days) to see the process at first hand. I have confidence in the process. I have seen how, regrettably in order to save money, some dioceses have sought to divert people who wanted to train residentially, into non-residential training, such that theological colleges are now struggling to survive and some have already closed. Non-residential training is a great option and is essential for many, but it should not be the only option.

Inclusivity

16	Are you aware of the Racial Justice Covenant in place for the Guildford Diocese, and can you make a statement about your recognition of the aim of the covenant and your support?
	I support the Covenant and our PCC have adopted it. Its main aim is for our churches to “reflect the racial diversity of their communities.” (Page 2). This means more than simply saying “everyone is welcome”, but being proactive. For example, to: “identify and mentor UK Minority Ethnic and Global Majority Heritage (UKME/GMH) leaders and emerging leaders, intentionally nurturing vocations

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

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	and creating pathways for leadership at every level of church life and chaplaincy life, including PCC, ministry teams, and other roles.” (Page 4).
17	How will you encourage a Church of England where each parish can foster a balanced and informed understanding of inclusivity, creating a culture where differing perspectives can be expressed openly, and where everyone feels genuinely heard, seen and valued?
	There have been excellent conversations at parish level as part of the ‘Living in Love and Faith’ process. But, when the discussion then moved onto the voting lobbies of General Synod on liturgies for same sex blessing and whether clergy can be in a same-sex marriage, that is when the fighting started. In theory the Living in Love and Faith process was brought to a conclusion, but the Synod recently set up two new working parties to put together further proposals. So it seems that the Synod fighting will continue. Fortunately, at the local level, churches can work on becoming ever more welcoming and inclusive. In preparing to stand for election I have attended 26 churches in the Diocese. A good example of inclusivity is St Mary’s Camberley. The congregation was a wide range of ethnicities, and those with special needs had additional provision. I expect when I go to heaven I will experience a similar diversity.
18	What do you think the Church of England needs to do differently if we are to engage those who have experienced the church to be abusive, homophobic or sexist?
	It is vital that everyone is listened to and meaningful action is taken. There have been so many cases where Church leaders and members have behaved appallingly, and those in authority failed to stop it. An inspiration is Phil Johnson, a survivor of sexual abuse, who has advised the Church on how to improve our safeguarding procedures. Some progress is being made. For example, if there is an allegation against a member of the clergy, the old Clergy Discipline Measure process took far too long. The July 2026 Synod voted to replace it with the new “Clergy Conduct Rules 2026”. Under the new process, timescales will be shorter, and complaints will be divided into three tracks: grievance; misconduct; and serious misconduct. The grievance level will include the opportunity for mediation and alternative forms of resolution. What is more difficult, is what to do when a member of the congregation is bullying a member of the clergy? Congregation members don’t have to obey a job description or

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

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	code of conduct which you could then discipline them for breaching. Some have been prosecuted by the police for stalking and harassment.
19	How do you think the Church of England can ensure LGBTQI+ people are fully welcomed, valued and able to flourish in the life of the Church?
	Please see my answer to question 17.
20	Given that faithful Christians interpret Scripture differently on difficult and contested questions, how would you seek to maintain unity within diversity when they disagree?
	This will depend on the issue. People sometimes talk about ‘first order’ and ‘second order’ issues. I’m not sure things fall neatly into two categories. I think that they sit along the line of a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum, members of the CofE vary in their understanding of the eucharist. Unity within diversity is maintained by <i>Common Worship</i> having eight eucharistic prayers to choose from, and parishes pick from the range of options according to their tradition. At the other end of the spectrum, to make up a silly example, if the General Synod passed a motion by 55% to 45% that God does not exist, I think it would be impossible to maintain unity within diversity. So, the ability to maintain unity in diversity depends on where along the line the particular issue falls. Archbishop Welby often used the phrase “walking together” to show how we need to keep together as a church even though we have different views. I agree. But it can be difficult for people to walk together when they are in a tug of war pulling in opposite directions.
21	Do you believe that women and men are treated equally in our churches? If you were elected to the General Synod, what changes would you like to see which would support women’s ministry?
	Not always. For example there have been occasions where a clergy couple are appointed to a parish, but there is only 1.5 of a stipend, with an unspoken expectation that the woman priest will be the one to work for half the stipend. Maternity provision also varies between dioceses. Each instance needs to be flagged up and specifically addressed.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

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Equal Marriage and Marriage Law

22	Marriage laws in the UK are being reformed, with the proposed change moving the system from licensed buildings to licensed officiants. Should clergy be permitted to conduct weddings in any dignified and safe location?
	Yes. My son got married in our beautiful All Saints Church, Woodham a couple of weeks ago. You could not ask for a better venue. But if someone would like a religious wedding ceremony presided by a priest at, for example, a stately home, I don't see why not.
23	How do we resolve the apparent conflict between making all people feel included and welcome whilst holding firm to the Bible's and CofE's historic position on marriage, and so allow the CofE to move on from endless debates about sexuality?
	It is possible to hold to the Bible's and the CofE's historic position on marriage and make all people feel included and welcome. There are lots of examples from churches across the diocese.
24	If you were an Incumbent, would you allow an assistant priest or curate in your parish to use the Prayers of Love and Faith if, in conscience, they felt able to do so?
	I would encourage them to use the Prayers of a Covenanted Friendship on page 1 of the Prayers of Love and Faith: https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/prayers-of-love-and-faith.pdf
25	Would you support a member of your congregation who was in a same sex marriage being on your PCC, or leading worship or children's/youth work in your church?
	Some background: The 1993 House of Bishops Statement "Issues in Human Sexuality" stated, in the "way of life of an ordained minister [people] ought to be able to see a pattern which the Church commends. [...] This means that certain possibilities are not open to the clergy by comparison with the laity" (Paragraph 5.13). That was used to explain why clergy are not allowed to be in a same-sex marriage, but laity are. Some objected that we should not have two-tier ethical standards within the church. In July 2025 the General Synod voted to: "remove any requirements relating to Issues in Human Sexuality from the

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions

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	Vocations (Shared Discernment) Process and replace it with an interim requirement of living consistently with the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy” (Business Done, 15 July 2025, page 4 https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/business-done-am-tue-15.7.25_0.pdf) My experience: As someone with traditional doctrinal views, who attends their local church which is a member of Inclusive Church, I have worked well with all members of the PCC. For example, when as churchwarden I led on plans for a new heating system, the marital status of PCC members has not been relevant.
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