

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?
	I love the Church of England. When I was in my early twenties and questioning the conservative theology I had been taught, I found the CofE to be a broad and spacious church in which my faith could genuinely grow. The two years I have spent on General Synod means I am not naïve about the challenges facing the CofE and the work of General Synod. Still, I sense that this is the best place to work for a Church I care deeply about, so that all people can find in the Church of England a place to experience the boundless love of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ.
2	What is your personal hope for the Church of England?
	The Church of England that I love is a broad, welcoming church, spacious enough for a variety of different ways of living out our common faith in Jesus Christ. It is a church open to questions, doubt and challenge. It is a church where all people can explore their faith in safety, without experiencing discrimination. This is the Church of England I found to be a welcoming, loving home when I was questioning my faith. My personal hope for the Church of England is that we won't become too dogmatic, too focussed on drawing the lines of 'orthodoxy' too firmly, and be comfortable as a broad church, with fuzzy edges, where everyone can belong.

Church of England Structures

3	What do you consider the three top priorities of the Church of England over the next five years?
	This will be a busy quinquennium with a considerable amount of important work to complete. I will, if I may, give four priorities: (1) Embracing safeguarding independence. Our historic failures have caused immeasurable damage to victims and survivors. We cannot credibly hold out the love of Christ to all while obfuscating about safeguarding. (2) Ensuring relationships, gender and sexuality group concludes its work in a way which ensures the LGBTQI+ community are fully welcomed, embraced and celebrated in the Church for the people God has made them to be. The nation looks on in amazement that we cannot extend this simple welcome to all. (3) Ensuring that parishes and parish ministry across the Church of England (rather than just a few, fashionable projects) are properly supported by the Church Commissioners substantial financial resources. We simply cannot go on closing parishes, increasing the number of churches under the care of a single stipendiary priest and expect to see growing engagement with the gospel. (4) Ensuring that we achieve net-zero targets in ways which make parishes more rather than less financially viable. We can do this with proper advice and grant funding.

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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?
	My two years on Synod has convinced me of the importance of safeguarding independence. In February this year we voted overwhelmingly in favour of the plans presented in General Synod paper GS2429 to establish an independent safeguarding authority. In this quinquennium there will be the ongoing tension between so called 'Model 3' (independent scrutiny) and 'Model 4' (fully independent operation). While Synod voted to progress with a national independent body, the fact that diocesan and cathedral safeguarding officers remain largely embedded within local church hierarchies presents a significant challenge. To achieve a true separation of powers, Synod needs to revisit Model 4 and work towards transferring all local operational safeguarding away from the Church so that we finally stop "marking our own homework". Synod will also need to take seriously the implementation of the lessons learnt from recent major accountability investigations such as the Makin Review, ensuring the Church legally embraces mandatory reporting, and resolving the complex questions around the seal of the confessional. I have a very clear understanding of these topics, and the legislative mechanics of getting these reforms through Synod. I have consistently voted in favour of the most robust forms of safeguarding independence.
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?
	I have been in parish ministry for the past sixteen years. Parishes (and I might add, chaplaincies) are absolutely essential to the ministry and mission of the Church of England. We are the church to the nation and were historically known for having a Christian presence in every community. It is a lamentable failure that we have allowed this to be eroded over the last several decades. In the last 13 years the number of multi-parish benefices in Guildford has increased significantly. If we believe that mission and evangelism are a priority we must do everything to slow down and reverse this trend.
6	What is your view on maintaining a church in every parish when many are struggling financially?
	As a parish priest I know that the greatest financial pressure on parish ministry is the ever increasing parish share. Every year it goes up, often because of rising central costs. No business would replicate the same administrative functions across 42 regional offices. Business leaders know that this would be a path to inefficiency and loss. Why do 42 dioceses have to replicate the same roles at the cost of hundreds of millions every year? I think if there were a sensible consultation about how central costs can be shared across dioceses, we could create some headroom in diocesan budgets to be able to reduce parish share and allow more parishes to stay open. It is surely better to find ways to reduce parish share than close struggling parishes?

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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?
	I have a real concern about SDF/SMMIB funding. It is far too easy to see certain projects as jazzy and worthy of significant investment. The stats around growth from these projects is, as we are increasingly becoming aware, that they over promise and under deliver. I would much prefer to see central funding being spread more evenly, reducing the demands on dioceses and commensurately reducing the demands on parishes. In my experience as a parish priest, there is nothing that distracts from ministry and mission quite as much as the need to engage in constant fundraising brought on by ever increasing demands for parish share.
8	How would you solve the burden of expensive church building maintenance costs?
	Our church buildings are both a gift and a burden (I speak as a priest working with an incredible team of lay people in caring for two grade II* Norman Churches). They are a gift because they form a central part of our mission, both as stable venues for mission, worship and other activities, and also because so many who never think about religion still want to engage with the nation's ecclesiastical built heritage. This provides a significant opportunity for proclaiming the gospel. The next Synod might fruitfully lobby the Government for assistance as local congregations seek to preserve the most significant portion of the nation's architectural heritage. VAT zero rating building and maintenance works for listed places of worship would be a significant step in the right direction.
9	Should a candidate for General Synod who threatens to redirect parish share to the Ephesian Fund, withdraw their candidacy? Why or why not?
	I do not believe that someone threatening this should necessarily have to withdraw their candidacy. I do think, however, that they should think long and hard about whether they are able to represent their whole diocese on General Synod and make their decision accordingly. For those who don't know, the Ephesian fund seeks to withdraw money from the broader church, channelling it to churches with whom they agree theologically. Any candidate who would threaten this has, in my opinion, an attenuated attitude towards being a member of the Church of England and might not be able to properly represent the clergy or laity of their whole diocese.

Doctrinal and Theological

10	In what ways does the doctrine of original sin (as defined in article 9) influence your wider theology and ethics?
	The doctrine of Original Sin has undergone significant theological re-interpretation since the 39 articles were written. I think it is unwise to make the mere re-statement

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	of the articles our jumping off point for a discussion of this disputed doctrine. The argument for an original human pair who fell from innocence and transmitted sin biologically to all their offspring is woefully unscientific and fails to understand the allegorical nature of the Genesis creation narrative, which tells the story of a general human proclivity towards destructive fantasy and the resulting rupture of the human relationship with God as well as with other humans. Catholic theologian, James Alison, offers one of the most creative recent accounts of original sin in his book 'The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin Through Easter Eyes'. He states that human society is so immersed in systems which distort our desire (resulting in violence and scapegoating) that we cannot understand the depth of our entanglement in sin without the 'intelligence of the victim', which we see in Christ's triumph over violence in the resurrection. Experiencing God's forgiveness, we can know healing and understand our entanglement in sin as a source of joy rather than guilt and shame.
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?
	The specific article of the Summa concerns God's love for all things, predicated on God willing all things that exist (existence itself being a participation in God's transcendent goodness). Aquinas uses this to contrast the love one creature has for another (which is a response to the goodness perceived in the other), and the love of God for creatures. God's love does not 'respond' to the goodness within the creature but bestows that goodness upon the creature. While this is an article that concerns love rather than goodness, it does depend on understanding created goodness as a participation in the supreme, universal goodness of God, and I agree with this definition. To love God is to desire a greater participation in God's goodness (that is, union with God). To love neighbour is to desire the same for them. This love, however, is not merely spiritual, but extends to willing the good for neighbour in countless different ways including their bodily good (see ST 2a2ae 21.5 corp.)

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?
	If I may, I'll give two of the most significant changes: First, a renewed commitment to the parish as the place most likely to provide the community of safety and welcome in which people can take the first steps in coming to know Jesus. Second, ensuring that clergy and lay ministry formation is theologically and liturgically rich and spiritually deep enough to equip clergy and lay people to articulate the faith in a credible, compelling way in the Twenty-first century.

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13	Why does it appear that other denominations are able to attract children and youth more than the Church of England?
	I am sure reasons are too complex to be tied down to a particular reason (consider how growth in interest in Roman Catholicism is strong among young people appears to run alongside interest in Pentecostal churches). I think the conclusion of the (now widely discredited) 'Quiet Revival' report would have us believe that 'full-fat Christianity' is the answer, and that the Church of England is too wishy washy. I think this is likely a biased judgement. More likely that other denominations feel comfortable with being their authentic selves. The Church of England less so. Indeed, I think it is increasingly hard for people to identify what the Church of England 'looks like'. That is not necessarily a bad thing as diversity and breadth are key Anglican charisms. I am certain, however, that the Church of England shouldn't abandon being authentically Anglican in order to chase youth engagement. We should lean into that heritage with enthusiasm.
14	Care for Creation is part of the Church's marks of mission. How do you feel about the net-zero targets for 2030?
	I feel enthusiastic about the net-zero targets for 2030. Our planet, our one home, is in crisis because of our reliance on the burning of hydrocarbons for energy. This is an existential crisis for humanity and for every creature on earth. Our energy demands are not reducing and so it is a missional imperative to work towards net zero as soon as possible. We simply must pay attention to the scientists who are warning us that the time for action is now. I do know how difficult it is for parishes to work towards these targets though, both as a parish priest and as a member of Guildford's DAC. I am pleased that there are funds being made available through the Decarbonising Church scheme to allow churches find creative ways forward, but I think much more needs to be done to help churches financially and through easing planning restrictions in achieving these crucial targets.
15	What are your thoughts on encouraging more people to enter the church as trainee ordinands?
	We desperately need to find a way to encourage vocations to both lay and ordained ministry, and I think initiatives like the Foundations in Ministry programme in our diocese are doing a great job to encourage this. Any answer to this question would have to take clergy wellbeing much more seriously than it is at the moment. There is nothing less attractive to potential vocations than a priest who is jaded by ministry because their bathroom hasn't been sorted, or because their pension is inadequate, or because the central administrative demands from the church prevent them from carrying out the ministry to which they were called. Well supported, enthusiastic clergy are highly likely to encourage more vocations.

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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 am aware of the racial justice covenant and am an enthusiastic supporter of it. Racism should have no place in our churches, though we have learnt in 'Form Lament to Action' (2021) and more recently in 'Behind the Stained Glass' (2024) that systemic racism still exists in the Church of England. I remember listening to Lord Boateng's address concluding the work of the Archbishop's Commission for Racial Justice at the February 2025 group of synod sessions. I remember the resistance he said he and other members had experienced to the work of the commission and feeling a rising sense of outrage that the church has swept this under the carpet for so long. My own PCCs we have adopted the covenant and are actively using the racial justice toolkit to ensure that the covenant isn't just a piece of paper we have signed but a commitment to keep our church culture under continuous review so that we actively seek to eliminate racial injustice and bias, so that UKME/GMH members are truly included, valued and safe within our churches.
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?
	We clearly aren't getting this right at the moment. There are parishes where the conversation about Prayers of Love and Faith and LGBTQI+ inclusion is not even allowed to be up for discussion and there are parishes where it is equally difficult to hold conservative views. I suspect that parishes will increasingly become more polarised. For me, I understand inclusivity as meaning that everyone is welcome, with no exceptions. For my inclusive parish, this means including welcoming and celebrating conservative Christians, even though I and the vast majority of my congregations would disagree with their theological and ethical conclusions. The balance which this questioner hopes for, and which I share, will not be achieved through legal frameworks but only through collegiality, respect and friendship.
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?
	I think the church needs to stop being abusive, homophobic and sexist. Until we achieve that, church always risks being a triggering place for those who have experienced trauma because of abuse, sexism or homophobia. Until such a time, ensuring that our safeguarding practices are attentive to the voices of victims and survivors, ensuring that there is liberty of conscience for those who want to be able to solemnize the marriages of same sex couples, and ensuring that there are no corners of the church where women are treated as second class members will all be practical ways that we can put discrimination behind us. There is still much more to

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	do, though, struggling against all other kinds of discrimination (race, gender identity, disability, neurodiversity to name a few). We have much work to do.
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?
	Allowing same sex couples to get married in church, or at very least to have their civil marriages blessed in stand-alone services in church would be a good place to start. Clearly, there will be churches and ministers who would not feel their conscience was able to perform these services. Restricting the practice of every church/minister to protect the conscience of some seems, to me, to be injudicious. Much better to do as we have done with re-marriage after divorce, allow both convictions to exist side by side in the Church with maximum liberty of conscience for churches and individual ministers.
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?
	As a church, through painful experiences over our five hundred year history, we have learnt to do this already, is one of our key spiritual gifts. There was a time when Anglo-Catholic priests were put on trial and in some instances, jailed for putting candles on an altar, wearing vestments or making the sign of the cross. As a church, these experiences have taught us to value our diversity. Most people now see heresy trials as absurd. To me, it shouldn't trouble us when Christians disagree in their interpretation of Scripture. The breadth of the Church of England is one of its strengths rather than a weakness. We achieve this unity in diversity when we have sufficient intellectual and spiritual humility to say, 'I might just be wrong. What can I learn from you?'
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?
	Lamentably, I do not believe that women and men are treated equally in the Church of England. Only eight out of forty-two diocesan bishops are women. Statistics show that women priests are more likely to be serving in large multi-parish benefices with no support, whereas large town and city churches with significant support are predominantly served by male priests. Women are disproportionately represented in House for Duty roles. Women in ministry often report feeling that, if they raise the ways they are treated that they will be labelled as troublemakers. Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin has spoken of her own continued experience of discrimination: 'There is still hostility. There are still people in my diocese who will not accept me, because I am a woman, and that is sad. Is it painful? You are damned right it is, but I have to rise above that.' I am committed to working against discrimination wherever it is found in the Church of England, and to this end, if elected, will take an active part in measures

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	seeking to bring an end to the Five Guiding Principles, which allow this discrimination to persist.
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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, I think clergy should be permitted to do this. We have a rather Victorian/Bridget Jonesesque ideal of marriage in a church. It was not always this way. Marriage was once a civil matter. By the Eleventh-century the church had become increasingly involved in marriages, primarily for the purposes of administrative regularity and to prevent inheritance disputes. Marriages were still primarily civil, though weddings would often take place in church porches rather than in the church itself so that a couple could receive a priest's blessing after the civil marriage was entered into. The church has, within its own history, some latitude in how it understands the mechanics of marriage. We should be willing to flex to meet the needs of society today. After all, isn't it a great thing that people still want prayers and God's blessing to be an integral part of their marriage service, even if it happens on a beach or in a forest rather than in a church?
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?
	I don't see the conflict. I acknowledge that Christians interpret the Bible differently and that our understanding of marriage changes (e.g. the Church of England's change in position on remarriage after divorce). The way to allow the church to move on from 'endless debates about sexuality' is the same way we allowed the church to move on from 'endless debates' about the ministry of women: we ordained women. We should allow equal marriage and for clergy to be able to enter into same sex marriages without fear of sanction. We need to make space for difference of perspective, and for the conscience of individual ministers and congregations to do something differently, but we will only move on from the debate in a way which allows all to be included (not just 'feel' included) when we allow same sex couples to marry and, having married, to minister in God's church.
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?
	Yes, absolutely. Similarly, I would not force a minister for whom I was responsible to offer PLF if they felt, in conscience, unable to do so. My hope is that, if and when same sex marriages are allowed in the Church of England, collegiality and the bonds of friendship will allow us to maintain the unity of the church within the various different attitudes towards same sex marriage.

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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?
	Absolutely. Without question. LGBTQI+ Christians are God's beloved children who have been gifted and called by God to play their part in the strengthening and equipping of the Body of Christ. They are accepted and loved by God for who they are. Their love for their spouse is a blessing, and God blesses the church and the world through their love. If I were to prevent them from fulfilling their vocation in the church, I would be denying the Body of Christ a gift which Christ intends for the body's good.