

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 have been a member of the Church of England throughout my life, and always felt a much greater interest in and concern for the national Church than the vast majority of my congregational colleagues. Since being able to retire from 'normal paid work', I have had more time available for voluntary work, and can see how my skills and experience, built up over both my main working lifetime and the various voluntary roles I have taken on, make me eminently well-suited to serve on a 'responsible governance' body like the General Synod. Given that background, and the longing I feel for the Church of England to flourish in its mission to advance God's kingdom here, I sensed a calling to this role – a calling which appeared to be affirmed by a reasonably wide selection of friends and acquaintances with whom I shared it.
2	What is your personal hope for the Church of England?
	My hope is for us to become a truly transforming Church, transforming lives for Jesus across this nation – and thus to be a worthy part of the Universal Church (the bride of Christ), making him known and bringing him glory as "the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Ephesians 2:23, alongside 3:10 and 3:21).

Church of England Structures

3	What do you consider the three top priorities of the Church of England over the next five years?
	1. Growing our members into fully committed (sacrificial) disciples who are living out what Jesus intended by "you are the salt of the earth" and "you are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13 -14); 2. Rebuilding the general public's trust in the Church (which has been undermined by safeguarding and other failings); 3. Restoring and re-casting our relationship with our brother and sister Anglicans in the Two Thirds World Church, sharing the joys of their continuing growth.
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?
	Safeguarding is a top-priority area in which new areas of concern seem to evolve rapidly, so that there is a constant need to re-evaluate and improve. Consequently, even though I have had specific 'extra involvement and responsibility' relating to safeguarding compliance and monitoring in recent years (both through being on the Safeguarding Sub-Committee of Bishop's Council and in my role as the Diocese's

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	Registrar of LLMs), I remain very much mindful of the fact that there is always lots to learn on this topic if our understanding is to remain adequate. I could well turn out to be wrong on this, but would anticipate the following being among the safeguarding topics needing consideration during this next General Synod: • Independence of regulation and monitoring (which in my view is inevitable); • Financial redress for victims and survivors; • How we prevent the (necessary) burden generated by growing safeguarding requirements from squeezing out our vital volunteer base; and • Responding to a potentially growing number of allegations of bullying or controlling behaviour by church leaders (an area where I sense it is likely to be very difficult to determine what does and does not constitute abuse).
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?
	Biblically, the Church has only one foundation and cornerstone – Jesus Christ. I would therefore hesitate to use the word ‘bedrock’ to describe any (other) underpinning basis of church structure. Nevertheless, in that it provides across-the-nation coverage with dedicated local leaders, I remain supportive of the historical ‘parish and priest’ structure, to the extent that we have the available resources for it (which is, regrettably, becoming an increasing problem – see questions 6 & 7 below). However, what we mean here by a ‘priest’ is worthy of discussion. There are two different Greek words which are translated as ‘priest’, and it seems to me that in the Church of England we tend to assume that we want (or need) a <i>hiereus</i> (in the form of a member of the clergy, probably stipendiary) – whereas, if the key element in what we are looking for is ‘leadership’, what is required is a <i>presbuteros</i>, who need not automatically be ordained (and/or paid).
6	What is your view on maintaining a church in every parish when many are struggling financially?
	I certainly want us to maintain a ‘church’ (being a group of believers) in every parish, although that doesn’t necessarily mean a traditional church building and certainly might not mean a ‘stipendiary priest’ <i>in situ</i>. There will be exceptions for new developments, areas of significant deprivation and certain other circumstances, but in general a parish will need to be responsible for covering the costs of its building and ministerial staff – and where it is unable or unwilling to do that, then the cloth has to be cut accordingly. But where and when a parish does ‘lose’ its paid minister(s) and even its building, it is important to retain a faithful remnant there, even if this is just a small gathering in someone’s home; another (neighbouring) parish would need to have oversight over this remnant (even if at that stage they did not feel called to offer greater support). And everyone’s prayer should then be that, in the Holy Spirit’s good timing, new growth

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	will emerge – quite possibly with the aid of a ‘graft’ from the neighbouring parish which had been providing the (more detached) oversight in the meantime.
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?
	As a member of Bishop’s Council, I believe that we try hard to strike the right balance in our financial management between supporting all parishes equitably and arranging/ releasing central funding for limited focal projects, and that the balance we are currently striking carries the approval of the Diocesan Synod (in its role of representing parishes and deaneries). That said, if Diocesan Synod felt that something was materially wrong with this balance, then it would be incumbent on Bishop’s Council (as the trustees of the charitable organisation) to revisit the balance struck and choices made.
8	How would you solve the burden of expensive church building maintenance costs?
	To the extent that our church buildings are valued resources for carrying out our ministry and mission, I suggest we have to accept the maintenance costs as ‘what they are’ and trust that God will ensure that our needs will be met. The situation is (though) different where the buildings are not ‘delivering’ for us, and we would therefore prefer something else. In this case, what we would (presumably) like to do is ‘swap’ a current building for a better/ more suitable one (similarly to what the Bishop’s Council is doing for appropriate vicarages where the opportunity arises). However, ‘swap’ options won’t always be available even when we would like them to be, and I suspect this is the case for a number of older churches. I am not usually in favour of churches asking non-churchgoers (or secular organisations/ authorities) to give us money, but if it is for the upkeep of ‘heritage’ buildings which we are not permitted to change in the way we would wish, then I believe it is reasonable to seek contributions from the wider community (and the manner in which we go about doing this <i>can</i> be ‘mission-oriented’, rather than an obstacle to it).
9	Should a candidate for General Synod who threatens to redirect parish share to the Ephesian Fund, withdraw their candidacy? Why or why not?
	No, if they still feel called to stand for General Synod, this course of action should not stop them from doing so. I believe that individuals and churches who decide to redirect their giving to the Ephesian Fund are <i>not</i> doing so with the aim of breaking up the Church of England, but with the motive of seeking to keep it together.

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Doctrinal and Theological

10	In what ways does the doctrine of original sin (as defined in article 9) influence your wider theology and ethics?
	Article 9 needs to be considered alongside the other Articles (including, in particular, 2, 11, 18 and 31), but is a central element of Reformed theology: “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous”; and “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” so that “the wages of sin is death”, “but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 5:19, together with 3:23 and 6:23). This core doctrine of salvation from sin through Jesus is fundamental to my preaching as a Licensed Lay Minister and consequently (I would hope) also to my ethics, which I would view as representing a response to the reality of sin in the world in a manner consistent with the way in which God has chosen to deal with that sin.
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?
	‘Love’ is such a wide-ranging word (especially in English) that it feels impossible to define it in terms which include a phrase like “nothing else but”. Nevertheless, I think that Aquinas’s definition has a lot to commend it in relation to ‘loving our neighbour’ (and indeed the rest of the ‘created world’), although I struggle more with the application of “to will good to that thing” in relation to ‘loving God’. Aquinas’s definition (like Romans 12:9) also communicates the key point that love is shown in ‘action’ rather than ‘emotion’. In this context (of ‘willing good’), I would define ‘good’ by reference to a starting-point of “there is only One who is good” (i.e. God, Matthew 19:17). “To will good” therefore means to desire (for that other person or ‘thing’) whatever God wills in accordance with his good plans and purposes, remembering that God created all things ‘good’ and the end result was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). This includes willing ‘moral goodness’ in others (i.e. that they act as God would want them to act) – a relevant point in relation to our approach to the issues discussed in several of the questions that follow.

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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?
	At the start of the last General Synod, the Church of England had just launched a new National Vision and Strategy involving becoming <i>humbler, simpler and bolder</i> . To be a transforming church, transforming lives for Jesus across this nation we must continue to be bold (and yet appropriately humble), confident in the knowledge that (with God) we are on the winning side! And while it is unrealistic to think that a large, historic institution like the Church of England can suddenly become ‘blissfully simple’, it is the job of the General Synod to shield God’s people on the ‘frontline’ from the burdens of our continuing complexities and set them free to be properly fruitful.
13	Why does it appear that other denominations are able to attract children and youth more than the Church of England?
	I’m not sure that this is necessarily true of all parishes (there are some which do still appear to have thriving children’s and youth ministries), but I agree that this area is a significant challenge for many. A big part of the problem is that these ministries need ‘critical mass’, and once that has been lost it can be extremely difficult to regain it – most families (and children and youth) will inevitably gravitate towards those churches where this ministry is already present rather than ones where it needs to be re-established. This can be a particular issue for smaller parishes, especially those without schools or other ‘natural’ contact points. It is (therefore) probably unrealistic to hope that every parish will have its own thriving children’s and youth ministry, and it will often be appropriate for groups of churches (broadly based on school catchment areas?) to join together for this. It is also the case that some churches do not offer services or other activities which are attractive to younger generations today, and that would be another reason why such ministry flourishes better in non-Anglican churches that do offer that.
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 is right to take ‘care for creation’ (including the effects of climate change) seriously, and it is good to set challenging targets which help to catalyse action. In practice, though, ‘NZC 2030’ is heavily dependent on the decisions made and actions taken by other parties (including, in particular, Government), and so it may very well be unattainable whatever the churches (and their members) individually do. But it nevertheless remains a worthwhile objective for the time being, albeit that if it is highly likely to need some refinement and/or adjustment in the near future.

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15	What are your thoughts on encouraging more people to enter the church as trainee ordinands?
	We should all be regularly thinking and praying about what God is calling us to do, and benefiting from the wisdom and encouragement of other Christians as we consider this question of ‘vocation’. An increase in the number of people (especially young people) responding to a call to train for ministry, including full-time ordained ministry (where many new recruits are needed to replace retiring clergy), is certainly a ‘good thing’ and very much to be welcomed. While being vitally important, full-time and/or ordained ministry is not (however) the only ‘vocation’ we need to encourage – most Christians will actually be called to serve in some other way (and I’m not just talking here about becoming ‘authorised lay ministers’ or other designated ‘church workers’). I do not mean to cast doubt on any individual’s call to ordination, but I suspect that we do not necessarily end up with more ‘labourers in the harvest field’ if those who have been serving faithfully as occasional preachers, churchwardens, safeguarding officers (or whatever) ‘get ordained’ in their later years and simply switch to a different form of ministry...

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?
	Yes, I am aware of this Racial Justice Covenant (having been part of the Bishop’s Council that approved it). I can confirm that I recognise and support its aims of confronting racism, celebrating racial diversity and seeking to make our churches more reflective of that diversity within the communities we serve, albeit that this last objective might not be fully achievable if we also want to see other churches which specifically target certain cultures (e.g. ‘Black Pentecostal churches’) continue to thrive alongside us. If this Racial Justice Covenant is to deliver meaningful change, we need to ensure we have a way of combating the danger that PCCs and others do not properly engage with it but instead just view it as a ‘policy’ which they are required to ‘tick off’ (and can then forget about).
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?
	To “foster a balanced and informed understanding of inclusivity”, we need to help our church members understand what this word (‘inclusivity’) means from God’s

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	perspective, because it is not necessarily the same understanding as we will pick up from the world/ common culture. We are all made in God's image (Genesis 1:27), and are all equally loved by him so that he "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) – so all 'fully inclusive' thus far... But the Bible does not present God's kingdom as being (ultimately) 'all-inclusive' – consider the passage of 'the sheep and the goats' (Matthew 25) and the words "whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12). So, God's 'inclusivity' does not extend to 'anything goes' or even to 'you can be whatever you want (if it's not a problem for anyone else)'. Nevertheless, we can still confidently affirm that God is 'for all of us' – in that those who are "in Christ Jesus" are "all children of God", with no distinction by race, class or gender (Galatians 3:26-28).
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?
	General statements or apologies are unlikely to be very effective – we need to invite affected individuals to speak individually to us, and then listen carefully and empathetically to what they have to say before offering suitable words of comfort and/or apology. We should have the grace to be willing to offer an apology even when we do not believe that the church has actually been abusive, homophobic or sexist, if we have nevertheless allowed that person to believe that it was (and the church did not address the issue at the time). We should discuss with the person concerned what actions we now need to take, and then make sure that those actions which have been agreed are duly carried out.
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?
	It seems to me that 'LGBTQI+ people' are a far from homogeneous group, so I would expect the 'answer' to this question to be significantly different between (for example) transgender and lesbian/gay people, and between different Christians who have made differing decisions on whether or not to stay celibate. While it might seem to be welcoming and valuing to lesbian and gay people to change historic Church teaching and affirm their intimate relationships, that course of action would almost certainly not feel welcoming and valuing to those same sex attracted Christians who have sacrificially resolved to stay celibate. My suggestion would be that a consistently-preached (and lived-out) message that our identity is in Christ (and not in our marital status, sexual orientation or whatever) could provide the desired encouragement for all kinds of people to flourish in the life of the Church, although I do appreciate that some people's response to that suggestion might be "it's easy for you (as a non-LGBTQI+ person) to say that".

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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?
	Paul gives guidance on dealing with ‘disputable matters’ in Romans 14. The problem is, however, that this guidance can only ‘work’ if at least one of the ‘sides’ regards the matter as ‘disputable’ and is therefore willing to make the necessary accommodation. If there is a difference of opinion over a matter which is not considered ‘disputable’, then inevitably there will be a loss of unity (as, in this event, the two ‘sides’ do not have a ‘united’ view on a specific point which they both regard as being fundamentally important). For some matters (such as the question of ‘real presence’ in the Eucharist?), a ‘unity of sorts’ can be maintained by the two ‘sides’ operating largely independently, but for other matters (and, at the moment, ‘LLF’ would appear to be one of them) it is much more difficult to see how this could be achieved.
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?
	In some (consciously) ‘complementarian’ churches, men and women are treated differently, but I don’t expect General Synod to change that (as I believe that to do so would involve some backtracking on undertakings previously given). Apart from that (though), I don’t perceive that there is any significant systematic unequal treatment in the Church of England, although inevitably there will be unconscious biases in play (and also some deliberate ‘reverse discrimination’) which will mean that some women (and some men) will sometimes feel that they have been unequally treated. I am passionate about the role that ‘ordinary’ lay people can play in the work of the Church, and if I am elected to General Synod will be looking for opportunities to promote the benefits of ‘every member ministry’ and the bringing into effect of the cultural change envisaged by the 2017 Synod report <i>Setting God’s People Free</i>.

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?
	I must admit that this is not a question to which I had previously given any thought. My initial feeling is that (subject to certain safeguards to protect the ‘seriousness’ of entering into a marriage), licensed clergy should be permitted to conduct weddings in suitable locations other than ‘licensed churches’. However, I would welcome the opportunity to hear different views on this before voting in any General Synod debate, as there are likely to be pertinent points which I haven’t yet considered.

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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? The wording of the question suggests a supposition that there will be no change in the CofE's doctrinal position on marriage (as being between a man and a woman, and the only rightful place for intimate sexual relations). In this case, the 'endless debates' will only cease if the advocates of revision agree (or are in effect forced) to stop advocating it. This seems unlikely to happen, even if all lesbian and gay people are successfully enabled to "feel included and welcomed". Nevertheless, enabling this enhanced feeling of inclusion and welcome is still a proper aim, and for some suggestions on how this might be achieved please see my responses to questions 17 to 19.
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 am not an Incumbent (and unlikely ever to have an Incumbent's authority in this area). I am, however, part of the leadership group for LLMs in the diocese, and therefore have an interest in how Incumbents might treat LLMs in this respect (albeit that I note that LLMs were not mentioned, alongside assistant clergy, in the question). I would not expect LLMs (or assistant clergy) to be allowed to use the PLF in any form of 'parish ministry' if the Incumbent of that parish had decided that these prayers should not be used. However, I would also not expect that Incumbent to stop the LLM from using the PLF elsewhere (i.e. beyond the parish) if he or she, in conscience, felt able to do so.
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? I would not normally be supportive of appointing a church member in a same sex marriage to a 'spiritually influential' position such as leading worship or children's/youth work. (NB: I would apply a similar principle in a number of other situations, such as for someone with an alcohol or 'attitude to money' problem as well as for someone in an unmarried sexual relationship.) But there might be exceptions – for example, if the person concerned was already in the marriage before becoming a Christian and felt it would be wrong to 'defect' on that commitment to their spouse. And the same considerations would <i>not</i> apply to the role of a congregationally-elected PCC member. Also, once a person has been appointed, I would then expect to be supportive of them in that role, whether I approved of that appointment or not. If for some reason I concluded that this wasn't possible, it would be down to me to step away enough to leave them the necessary space to minister to the best of their ability.