

Canon Revd Dr Joshva Raja

Candidate for the House of Clergy – General Synod, Diocese of Guildford

Serving Guildford • Listening nationally • Strengthening the Church's mission

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

I am putting myself forward for election to General Synod because I believe this is a moment when the Church of England needs to listen well, speak with hope and work together for renewal.

I am relatively new to the Diocese of Guildford, serving as Vicar of St Mary the Virgin, Cuddington, but I bring many years of experience in parish ministry, theological education, international Christian communication, mission, research and leadership. I have worked with churches, theological institutions and Christian organisations across different cultures and traditions. These experiences have taught me the importance of listening carefully, valuing different perspectives, building relationships and bringing people together around the mission of Christ.

If elected, I would seek to contribute in four particular areas.

1. Strengthening Guildford's voice nationally

There is much to celebrate across the Diocese of Guildford. Our parishes are finding new ways of engaging their communities, reaching younger generations, serving people on the margins, developing new forms of ministry and sharing the Gospel in changing contexts. I would like to help bring these stories of hope, mission and growth into the national conversation.

We must be honest about the challenges facing the Church of England, but the story of the Church should not be told only through decline, difficulty and uncertainty. God is already at work in many places, and we need to learn from what is flourishing. I would seek to be a listening representative of Guildford: bringing the experiences, hopes and concerns of our parishes to General Synod, while also helping our churches engage constructively with national conversations.

2. Supporting the wellbeing of clergy and church staff

The Church cannot flourish if those who serve it are exhausted, isolated or struggling without adequate support. I would like to see the wellbeing of clergy and church staff taken more seriously nationally. This includes practical questions around workload, housing, financial pressures, retirement, physical and mental wellbeing, and access to appropriate support.

We should also be willing to explore imaginative and sustainable possibilities, including better healthcare provision, private medical insurance or similar forms of support, where these can be achieved responsibly. Supporting those who serve the Church is not simply an employment issue. It is part of sustaining vocation, ministry and mission.

3. Strengthening Global Majority Heritage leadership

The increasing diversity of the Church of England is a gift from God. Our different cultures, languages, experiences and traditions can enrich the whole Church. As someone from a Global Majority Heritage background, I have experienced the richness that diversity can bring, but also the importance of ensuring that different voices are genuinely heard.

I would like to see GMH clergy and lay leaders not simply represented, but equipped, encouraged and enabled to shape the conversations, leadership and future direction of the Church. The Diocese of Guildford has considerable diversity and many gifted leaders. I would seek to bring these experiences into the national Church while also listening and learning from colleagues across the Diocese.

4. Empowering lay leadership for the renewal of the Church

I believe the future renewal of the Church of England will depend significantly on how we recognise, equip and release the gifts of lay people. Across our different traditions—evangelical, catholic, charismatic, liberal and others—there are gifted lay people already serving faithfully in our churches, workplaces and communities. They bring professional experience, theological insight, pastoral gifts, creativity and deep knowledge of their communities.

Lay people should not be seen simply as those who attend worship or volunteer to support clergy. They are part of the whole people of God, called and gifted to participate in Christ's mission. I would like to encourage greater opportunities for lay leadership, theological formation, mentoring, discernment and participation in decision-making at parish, deanery, diocesan and national levels.

I believe renewal does not require us to choose between our different traditions. Every tradition has gifts from which the wider Church can learn. We need to create a culture where clergy and lay leaders work together, learn from one another and are released to serve God's mission. Renewal is not simply about doing more programmes. It is about releasing more of the gifts God has already placed among his people.

A General Synod that listens, discerns and serves

I do not see General Synod simply as a place for winning arguments. I see it as a place where we should listen carefully, discern prayerfully, disagree honestly when necessary and seek together the way forward for the mission of Christ.

Our Church needs both conviction and compassion; theological confidence and humility; courage to address difficult questions and generosity towards those with whom we disagree.

I would seek to be a representative who listens carefully, speaks constructively, works collaboratively and keeps Christ at the centre.

There are many issues before the Church of England, and I do not pretend to have simple answers to all of them. But I do believe that we can approach our challenges with faith rather than fear, with hope rather than despair, and with a renewed commitment to the mission of God.

My hope is that we can give greater attention to the things that unite us: Christ, the Gospel, prayer, discipleship, mission, service and our calling to share God's love with a changing world.

I would be honoured to serve the Diocese of Guildford on General Synod and to bring the experience, questions, hopes and concerns of our parishes into the national Church.

Please pray for all those standing for election, for our Diocese, and for General Synod as it seeks to discern God's purposes for the future of the Church of England.

With every blessing,

Canon Revd Dr Joshva Raja
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Diocese of Guildford