

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 believe God calls people through conviction, gifting, opportunity, and the encouragement of others. I feel a growing burden for the future of the Church of England at a time when many people are disconnected from Christian faith and confidence in institutions is declining. I am standing because I believe the Church needs both faithfulness and fresh thinking. We cannot simply manage decline or defend the status quo. We need to ask hard questions about how we structure ministry, develop leaders, use resources, and communicate the gospel in today's culture. I want to contribute to a Church that is rooted in Scripture while being courageous enough to embrace innovation, remove unnecessary barriers, and equip a new generation for mission. If elected, I would seek to listen carefully, speak graciously, and advocate for decisions that help the Church become more effective, accountable, and outward-looking in its witness to Christ.
2	What is your personal hope for the Church of England?
	My hope is to see a Church of England that is spiritually confident, missionally ambitious, and willing to reform itself for the sake of the gospel. We have a wonderful heritage, but we must not confuse faithfulness with preserving things exactly as they are. Faithfulness means continually asking how best to reach today's communities with the unchanging message of Jesus Christ. I would love to see churches growing through clear biblical teaching, intentional discipleship, church planting, youth ministry, and creative new expressions of mission. I hope we become known less for our internal disagreements and more for our impact in transforming lives and communities. Most of all, I want future generations to inherit a Church that has chosen courage over complacency, mission over maintenance, and gospel proclamation over institutional self-preservation.

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Church of England Structures

3	What do you consider the three top priorities of the Church of England over the next five years?
	First, evangelism and disciple-making. Every structure, budget, and strategy should ultimately be measured against our calling to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Second, renewal of leadership and ministry. We need to identify, train, and release a new generation of clergy and lay leaders. This includes being willing to challenge outdated processes and empowering local churches to innovate. Third, reforming structures to serve mission. Too many resources are consumed maintaining systems that can feel distant from parish life. We should simplify bureaucracy, improve accountability, and direct resources towards frontline ministry and church growth. The Church should be willing to experiment, learn from success, and stop doing things that no longer bear fruit. Our task is not simply to preserve the Church for another generation, but to ensure more people come to know and follow Jesus Christ.
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 must remain one of the Church's highest priorities. The key discussions involve survivor engagement, accountability, independent scrutiny, consistency across dioceses, and building a culture where concerns are raised and addressed without fear. The Church has often been too slow to learn from past failures. We need a culture that prioritises people over reputation and transparency over self-protection. That may require changes to long-established ways of working if they are not serving vulnerable people well. I would describe my understanding as good, whilst recognising that safeguarding demands continual learning. I am committed to listening to survivors, engaging with professional expertise, and supporting reforms that strengthen trust and accountability. The Church should aspire not simply to meet minimum standards but to become an example of good safeguarding practice.
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?
	The parish system remains a significant strength, but we should not assume that what worked in previous generations will automatically work today. A Christian presence in every community remains an important vision. However, we need greater flexibility in how ministry is delivered, more collaboration between churches, and greater empowerment of lay leaders alongside ordained ministry.

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	The role of the priest remains vital, but ministry should not be clergy-dependent. The future of the Church requires us to identify and release the gifts of the whole people of God. The question is not whether we keep the parish system, but how we renew it so it serves mission effectively in the twenty-first century.
6	What is your view on maintaining a church in every parish when many are struggling financially?
	I support maintaining a Christian presence in every parish, but we must distinguish between preserving mission and preserving every historical arrangement. Some churches are carrying unsustainable burdens because we have not adapted quickly enough to changing circumstances. We need to think creatively about shared ministry, local partnerships, church planting, multi-site models and the strategic use of resources. The goal should be vibrant, sustainable Christian witness in every community, not simply maintaining structures regardless of their effectiveness. Where change is needed, it should be driven by mission, not decline. We should be asking what will best serve future generations rather than what feels most comfortable today.
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?
	Targeted funding has sometimes encouraged innovation, but it can also leave many faithful local churches feeling overlooked. I believe we need a more balanced approach that combines strategic investment with broader support for parish ministry. Funding should help release growth, encourage experimentation and support churches serving difficult contexts. We should also be more rigorous in assessing outcomes. Good intentions are not enough. If projects are not delivering meaningful results, we should be willing to learn, adapt, or stop them. Resources are limited. Every pound should be working as effectively as possible to support mission and discipleship.
8	How would you solve the burden of expensive church building maintenance costs?
	Church buildings should serve mission rather than mission serving buildings. Many church communities are carrying maintenance costs that are increasingly unsustainable. We should preserve significant buildings where possible, but we also need fresh thinking about how buildings are funded, used, and shared.

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	I would support greater partnership with community organisations, local authorities, charitable trusts and heritage bodies. We should also simplify access to expertise and funding. Most importantly, we should be prepared to ask difficult questions about buildings that absorb huge amounts of time and money while contributing little to mission. Stewardship requires both imagination and honesty.
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 candidates should withdraw simply because they hold strong convictions. Healthy debate is important. However, I would prefer disagreements to be addressed through open engagement rather than financial pressure. The Church faces enough division already. At the same time, concerns about theological direction or financial accountability should not be dismissed. Leaders must be willing to engage seriously with those concerns rather than expecting unquestioning support. Trust is built through transparency, good governance and mutual respect. My preference would always be for constructive reform through dialogue rather than escalation through financial disputes.

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 is foundational to my understanding of both the gospel and human nature. It reminds us that every person, institution and culture is affected by sin, and therefore in need of God's grace and redemption. This shapes my theology by keeping Christ at the centre. The Church's primary task is not to offer self-improvement or moral advice, but to proclaim salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It also encourages humility, as none of us approaches theological, ethical or political questions from a position of moral superiority. Ethically, original sin challenges both complacency and idealism. It reminds us that human flourishing is found not in following every desire or trend, but in lives transformed by God's Spirit. At the same time, it cautions against placing excessive trust in any institution, tradition or leader. Far from promoting pessimism, this doctrine points to the hope of genuine renewal. Because all people need God's grace, the Church should be a community of repentance, transformation and restoration, continually asking how it can be reformed and renewed under the authority of Christ.

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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?
	Broadly, yes. Christian love is more than affection or approval; it is actively seeking the true good of another person. For Christians, goodness is ultimately defined by God's character and revealed through Scripture. To will someone's good, therefore, is to seek their flourishing as God intends: spiritually, emotionally, relationally and materially. This means love cannot be separated from either truth or compassion. When loving God, we will his glory, delight in his goodness, and seek to align our lives with his purposes. When loving our neighbour, we seek their welfare, defend their dignity, listen carefully to them, and act with generosity and justice. In a culture that often sees love as affirmation alone, the Church has an opportunity to demonstrate a richer understanding. Genuine love sometimes encourages, sometimes challenges, sometimes comforts, and sometimes calls for repentance. It is always concerned with the long-term good of the other person. The model for this is Jesus himself, who combined unwavering truth with extraordinary grace, compassion and self-sacrifice.

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?
	The greatest change would be shifting the Church from maintaining systems to multiplying disciples. Too much of our energy is consumed by structures, processes and internal debates. We need to empower local churches, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and release leaders to focus on evangelism, discipleship and church growth. The Church should become more agile, more willing to innovate and more willing to learn from successful ministries, regardless of where they originate. If we genuinely want more people to know Jesus, mission must become the lens through which all major decisions are viewed.

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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?
	Young people are looking for authenticity, purpose and meaningful relationships. Where churches are reaching younger generations effectively, they often combine clear Christian conviction with a willingness to innovate. They provide opportunities for young people to participate, ask questions, develop leadership skills and belong to genuine communities. The Church of England sometimes moves too slowly and can be reluctant to empower younger leaders. We should invest more intentionally in youth ministry, support families, create leadership pathways for younger Christians and be willing to experiment with new approaches. Young people are not the future Church; they are part of the Church today.
14	Care for Creation is part of the Church's marks of mission. How do you feel about the net-zero targets for 2030?
	Christians have a responsibility to care for God's creation, and the Church should lead by example in environmental stewardship. However, good stewardship also includes responsible use of financial resources. The route to Net Zero must be realistic, proportionate and sensitive to local circumstances, particularly for churches in historic buildings. I support the direction of travel but believe greater flexibility may be needed where costs are excessive or resources limited. Environmental responsibility should be integrated into church life in ways that strengthen, rather than distract from, our mission and ministry.
15	What are your thoughts on encouraging more people to enter the church as trainee ordinands?
	We need a fresh generation of leaders equipped for the realities of today's Church and society. Many people with gifts for ministry are never encouraged to explore a calling because nobody identifies and nurtures their potential. We need churches that actively spot, mentor and develop future leaders. The process should remain rigorous, but it should also be accessible and responsive. We should remove unnecessary barriers while maintaining high standards.

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	I would particularly like to see more emphasis on pioneering leadership, evangelism, church revitalisation and community engagement alongside traditional ministerial formation.
	The Church's future will depend heavily on the leaders we are developing today.

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's aspiration to ensure that every person is treated with dignity, fairness and respect as someone made in the image of God. The Church should be willing to listen carefully to the experiences of people from different backgrounds and address barriers where they exist. However, our goal should go beyond policies and statements. We should foster churches where leadership reflects the diversity of the communities we serve and where all people can flourish and contribute their gifts. Real progress requires humility, honest conversation and practical action, not simply good intentions.
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?
	The Church should be a place where people can disagree honestly without fear of being dismissed or caricatured. Creating that culture requires confidence in our identity in Christ and a commitment to listening well. Too often difficult conversations become polarised because people feel unheard. I would encourage a culture where biblical conviction and genuine hospitality are held together. People should be able to express differing views respectfully while remaining committed to fellowship and shared mission. Unity is strengthened when people feel able to contribute openly and know they will be treated with dignity, even when agreement is not reached.
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?
	The Church must begin by listening carefully and honestly to people who have been hurt by their experiences.

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	Where individuals or churches have acted in abusive, unkind or discriminatory ways, that should be acknowledged and addressed without defensiveness. Apologies alone are not enough. Trust is rebuilt through changed behaviour. We also need to distinguish clearly between faithful disagreement and harmful treatment of individuals. Everyone should experience respect, compassion and dignity within our churches. If people encounter the Church, they should find communities shaped by the character of Jesus: truthful, gracious, humble and welcoming.
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?
	Every person should know they are welcomed, valued and loved because they are made in God's image. The Church should ensure LGBTQI+ people encounter genuine friendship, respect, pastoral care and opportunities to contribute to church life. Nobody should experience hostility, exclusion or unkindness. At the same time, the Church must continue wrestling honestly with theological questions rather than pretending differences do not exist. I want to see churches where people experience both conviction and compassion, where they are listened to well, and where disagreement does not lead to rejection or exclusion from community.
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?
	Christian unity is rooted in our shared faith in Jesus Christ, not in complete agreement on every issue. Difficult questions should neither be avoided nor allowed to dominate everything else. We need to create space for robust theological debate whilst continuing to worship, pray and serve together wherever possible. Maintaining unity requires humility, generosity and a willingness to assume the best of those with whom we disagree. The Church's credibility is damaged when disagreement becomes hostility. We should model how conviction and grace can exist together.
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?
	The Church has made significant progress, but there is still more to do.

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	I would like to see women encouraged and supported in every area of ministry permitted within the Church of England, with equal access to development opportunities, leadership training and mentoring. We also need to examine whether our culture, structures or assumptions inadvertently create barriers to participation or advancement. The Church benefits when the gifts of all its members are recognised and developed. Supporting women's ministry is therefore not simply an equality issue but a mission issue.
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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?
	I am open to exploring greater flexibility around where weddings can take place, provided the location is dignified, appropriate and preserves the distinctly Christian nature of the service. Many people's expectations and circumstances have changed. The Church should be willing to consider reforms that help connect with those who might not otherwise engage with Christian marriage. At the same time, any changes should strengthen rather than diminish the theological significance of marriage and the Church's pastoral relationship with couples. Flexibility should serve mission, not simply consumer preference. The Church should consider changes because they help people encounter Christ and engage with the Church, not just because people want a more attractive or convenient wedding venue.
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 starting point must be recognising that every person is welcomed by God and should be welcomed by the Church. At the same time, many Anglicans continue to hold the historic understanding of marriage because they believe it reflects Scripture and Christian tradition. We are unlikely to move forward by forcing one side to capitulate to the other. Instead, we need honesty about our differences, generosity in how we relate to one another and a renewed focus on our shared mission. The Church must demonstrate that conviction and compassion are not opposites. I believe the Church must demonstrate that conviction and compassion are not opposites. Jesus modelled both perfectly. He spoke truthfully about God's purposes while showing

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	extraordinary grace, patience and love towards people. Too often these qualities are presented as competing alternatives, but faithful Christian witness requires both. The Church should be confident in its beliefs whilst ensuring that every person is treated with dignity, respect and genuine care. Our calling is not merely to win arguments, but to help people encounter Christ, whose life shows us that truth and love belong together.
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 seek to lead in accordance with my theological convictions while recognising that sincere Christians have reached different conclusions. Throughout the Church's history, faithful believers have disagreed on important issues whilst remaining committed to Christ and to one another. I believe leaders should be honest about their convictions, willing to engage with difficult questions, and respectful towards those who differ. Good leadership is not about imposing a personal view or avoiding disagreement altogether. It is about creating an environment where convictions can be expressed openly, people are treated with dignity and respect, and relationships are not sacrificed because differences exist. Whilst I would not compromise beliefs that I consider grounded in Scripture, I would seek to engage graciously and constructively with those who hold different views. If I were an incumbent, I would want any decision to reflect the Church's agreed framework whilst maintaining unity and trust within the parish. Above all, I would seek to keep the focus on worship, discipleship, evangelism and pastoral care, rather than allowing contested issues to define church life.
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?
	Any leadership role should involve consideration of doctrine, discipleship, character, safeguarding and the expectations attached to the role. I would seek to approach individuals pastorally rather than through simplistic categories. People are more than a single issue. The Church should be a community where people are welcomed, valued and encouraged to grow as disciples of Christ. At the same time, those exercising recognised leadership should be able to support the teaching and ministry of the church in which they serve. These questions are best approached prayerfully, consistently and with a desire to combine biblical faithfulness, compassion and wisdom.

Karen Booker – Sept 2026