

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

*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 had a sense of God speaking to me through his word, through my experience and the encouragement of the Church (friends and colleagues in ministry): long experience of ordained ministry, a track record of delivering positive change in the churches and deaneries where I have served, experience in positions of responsibility in the Diocese, working well with all kinds of people, and having an ability to handle difference well.
2	What is your personal hope for the Church of England?
	That we can be known as the people who constantly talk about Jesus and are good news in every local community, a visible signpost to a loving God. That our actions at every level of our organisation, especially General Synod, may reflect these values.

Church of England Structures

3	What do you consider the three top priorities of the Church of England over the next five years?
	(1) To intentionally orientate ourselves towards outward mission and ministry and away from internally focused debates. Many of these issues need our attention but we must not allow them to dominate all of our work. (2) To continue the good progress we're making on clergy wellbeing, to consider how best we can use our resources. (3) To prioritise the vulnerable, poor and marginalised in all our decision-making.
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?
	(1) Getting to grips with the legacy of abuse in our institution and ensuring that we properly hear the voices of victims as we discuss these issues and implement cultural change. (2) Embedding a culture of safeguarding at every level throughout the Church, so that every member understands how to spot a concern, what to do when they do, and that they will have confidence that it will be dealt with well. (3) A relentless focus on safety and prevention which seeks to understand the risks church communities face from sex offenders and which mitigates these sensibly and robustly, with wisdom and courage, whilst also providing a safe and appropriate welcome to everyone.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

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

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. However, I think we need to continue to grasp more nettles to ensure that this structure works well on the ground in every diocese and type of ministry, and is owned by our congregations and not just our institution.
6	What is your view on maintaining a church in every parish when many are struggling financially?
	By 'church' I understand 'worshipping community' and not 'building(s)'. We can ensure that we resource a faithful, missional presence in every parish and there are numerous good examples of this happening in creative ways in parishes and areas where this is a particular challenge. Ancient heritage buildings and modern buildings each bring issues with them, as do services in other people's buildings. The Church of England can and should learn from the creativity and best practice which is out there.
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 strongly support the structured central funding which has been supporting mission and ministry in areas where it is harder for local communities to fund themselves. It is working well to have a 'bidding' system, where parishes, deaneries and dioceses must be able to provide evidence of effectiveness in their plans. There must be adequate support on the ground from experts who understand mission and ministry, and this is where dioceses come in. Guildford Diocese's Mission Enabler team is a really good example of good practice in this area. The clip from my speech in General Synod referred to on my candidate statement is on this subject.
8	How would you solve the burden of expensive church building maintenance costs?
	I can't solve it and you shouldn't trust a candidate who offers easy answers on this! Many of our buildings are significant local landmarks and in many parts of the country, including my parish, they are the oldest buildings in the neighbourhood. They are expensive to maintain and there is no way round this. I think there is a strong case for more government support as happens, for example, in France and Germany. We also need to share best practice of how our local communities in- and outside the church can feel invested in churches and our buildings.
9	Should a candidate for General Synod who threatens to redirect parish share to the Ephesian Fund, withdraw their candidacy? Why or why not?

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

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

	No. The Ephesian Fund only exists because of the painful divisions on sexuality and gender in the CofE. The only way this issue will be settled is by finding a settlement on LLF/PLF which enables traditionalists, progressives, and the large number of people in the middle, to worship and practice in the way we choose. The ‘Leicester conversations’ in the previous General Synod provided a potential way forward based on ‘three spaces’ and ‘delegated episcopal authority’ which was a compromise solution and should have been put to Synod, but it was not tabled. Since the very emotive debate in 2023, we have been speaking to each other respectfully across our divides, by and large, in General Synod, and I think agreement could be within reach, but not without flexibility from our bishops. Voters in this election can send a strong message that the longer we continue not to settle this, the worse it will be for God’s mission and ministry through the CofE.
--	--

Doctrinal and Theological

10	In what ways does the doctrine of original sin (as defined in article 9) influence your wider theology and ethics?
	It helps me to understand the church as a collection of sinners in need of a Saviour. Humans let each other down; God never lets us down. We fail ethically if we only assume the best of people and the systems they create. We also fail if we don’t treat people with grace, recognising that there but for the grace of God go all of us. That’s why we start our services with confession: we recognise that we can only stand before God through the sacrificial love of Christ. Jesus encourages me to look at the plank in my own eye before helping my neighbour with the speck in theirs.
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?
	Yes, I’m not going to argue with Thomas Aquinas! I understand ‘good’ to mean living under God’s blessing and aligned with his character. I pray for God’s blessing on our neighbours as I walk round my parish. This means both that I ask God to provide for them and enable them to flourish, but also that I ask God to give them faith in Jesus, to become the fully human people he is calling them to be. When I bless God, I seek to worship him fully in who I am and how I am, trusting the Holy Spirit that he is making me more like Jesus each day. A Christian’s whole life is an act of worship of God, who is present in everything we do.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

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

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?
	Ultimately the answer isn't about strategy or structure. The most significant change would be for every leader, lay and ordained, to talk about Jesus continually and to find and embody the good news in every part of our parishes. So in every decision we make, we need to ask, 'How does this help us embody the good news in my context?' We are called and formed to become the kind of people whose lives make the gospel credible. As we seek to follow Jesus more closely, we will live God's way so visibly and genuinely that people encounter something of him through the way we live.
13	Why does it appear that other denominations are able to attract children and youth more than the Church of England?
	I don't accept that they are. The evidence from our own diocese Youth Catalyst team and the national church is that churches which prioritise children's and youth work, pray and resource it well, are seeing significant growth, and I think this is true across different traditions and denominations. It is not enough to want more young people in churches which do not have them; our congregations need to listen to the needs of young people, families and carers locally, and change to meet them. Change is challenging in churches, and it takes wisdom to know what God is asking us to do, then courage to actually do it, often in the face of conflict. The Church is one of the few places in our society where truly intergenerational community is possible, but promoting it is hard. Listening to and empowering children to be fully part of our churches is a good start. Jesus said we can only receive the kingdom of God if we do so like children receive things, so we need to observe and learn actively from them.
14	Care for Creation is part of the Church's marks of mission. How do you feel about the net-zero targets for 2030?
	When the target was set, I thought it was too ambitious, unrealistic and potentially unhelpful. I changed my mind because I think a bold, scary target motivates action. The goal is motivating many churches (including my own) to act, and this is making a big difference countrywide. I think we will be closer to net zero in 2030 than we would have been without the target, but we need many more resources to be released from the centre quickly to help us with this.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

Answering is optional in all these questions. Enter your response below the questions.

Responses limited to 200 words per question

15	What are your thoughts on encouraging more people to enter the church as trainee ordinands?
	Under Bishops Andrew and Paul, Guildford Diocese has been a success story in championing vocations and increasing the number of ordinands. I support this fully and I have been really encouraged to see the high calibre of candidates coming through, in my roles as a Local Vocations Advisor and an IME tutor. If we can continue pressing into the good progress we've made on clergy wellbeing, and resolve the issues around LLF/PLF, the Church should be able to encourage more people to explore their vocations.

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: at St Mary of Bethany we have adopted the Covenant and I advocated for this in Woking Deanery as Area Dean. I arranged a Deanery training morning on unconscious bias with the Diocese Racial Diversity Enabler. I strongly support the aim of prioritising marginalised ethnic groups in the church. In my local context this means working hard to welcome people who are different from us into the church and helping my congregation to understand how to reach across racial and cultural divides. As a middle-class white man, I understand that I have a vital role in advocating for, and standing with, people whose position in society is less privileged than my own. Being an advocate means speaking out, and standing with, colleagues of colour on racial justice issues, and I have sought to do this consistently.
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?
	By prayerfully listening, seeing and valuing people different from myself and encouraging others to do so. At St Mary of Bethany we try to embrace each other in our differences, encouraging and blessing each other with openness and kindness. Jesus welcomes everyone just as they are, and people who meet him go away challenged and changed. The Church of England often talks in terms of 'disagreeing well' and being committed to 'mutual flourishing', but in many places these are little more than aspirations and warm words. In any family we can disagree about all sorts of things, but love each other nonetheless. The Church should surely be the people who model this to our culture, which at its worst is anxious, judgemental and intolerant. It is a grievous shame when we fail to do this and it harms our mission and ministry.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

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

	Bishop Andrew modelled this so well for church leaders: holding his own beliefs with clarity, but expressing them graciously in ways which were appreciative and curious about brothers and sisters with whom he differed, and loving his flock well.
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?
	One of the positive things about the LLF process is that it provided an opportunity for many of us to hear voices we have never heard from, before these groups. Having begun to listen carefully, we need to press into this and continue listening and loving people with whom we differ, and those who are victims of abuse. Those of us from more privileged social groups (for example white, middle-class, middle-aged men like me) need to work much harder on this than others, as my experience in middle-class church communities has taught me that many of us do not recognise or understand the status and power we hold. One of the things I find most infuriating about the Church (and not just the Church of England) is the lazy sexism, homophobia and bias in all these directions from people who should know better. When the Church is like this, we are failing to reflect Christ, to be his body and his bride. Sometimes this behaviour comes from people who exist in an echo chamber where they do not know or engage with anyone significantly different from themselves. We need to call this out, starting with ourselves and our own traditions –
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?
	By welcoming, valuing and enabling everyone to flourish in our congregations. All of us can offer warm hospitality to everyone whilst being true to our respective traditions. We have to be open to all kinds of people and yet also refuse to define people by any particular personal characteristic in how we structure our ministry. For traditionalist churches this means being kind, clear and straightforward about ‘how we do things round here’; for all of us it means embracing difference.
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?
	By loving each other it is possible to disagree well. We know within our families and churches that it is perfectly possible to love other people and disagree with them passionately about some things. I do not agree with any other human being about absolutely everything. The beauty and tension of the Church of England is that we hold together a wide variety of traditions and perspectives. We will do well to adopt a stance of appreciative curiosity and generosity around difference, and reject the ‘othering’ which is so toxic and prevalent in our culture, and which regularly seeps

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

Answering is optional in all these questions. Enter your response below the questions.

Responses limited to 200 words per question

	into the Church. We have far more that unites us than divides us across the Church of England, but we often behave as though the opposite is true.
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?
	See my answer to question 18. We need to continue to affirm women in both lay and ordained ministry, and recognise that there are particular issues where the Church is behind the curve of our society, for example maternity/paternity leave, understanding the impact of menopause and making proper provision for part-time working when life circumstances change. We also need to ensure that the needs of self-supporting clergy (the majority of whom are women) are properly heard and accounted for. We also need to challenge 'man-splaining' and condescension towards women, particularly younger women, in our churches. Leaders are sometimes hesitant to condemn words and behaviour which would not be tolerated in most secular workplaces. We need wisdom and courage to handle this well. In Synod I supported measures to make PCCs and church members more accountable for their behaviour, as well as positive changes to the clergy conduct/discipline system. We can go much further on all these issues.

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 please! Back in 2003 when I worked in book publishing, I commissioned <i>The Alternative Wedding</i>, which recognised that there are many options available to couples to make their weddings individual and personal. Since then our culture has moved very strongly in this direction, but the Church of England has remained stationary. When it comes to weddings and funerals, I want to be the clergyperson who says 'yes' wherever possible, because the alternative is potentially really harmful to mission and ministry in our parishes. I strongly welcome moves to give clergy the flexibility which our parishioners expect to have in every other area of organising a wedding.

General Synod 2026 – Hustings questions Mark Wallace

Answering is optional in all these questions. Enter your response below the questions.

Responses limited to 200 words per question

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?
	See my answer to question 9. I believe the only way is to resolve this issue in Synod by creating three parallel spaces under one overall structure and organisation. This is known as 'delegated episcopal authority' and would enable clergy and PCCs to seek oversight from senior staff with whom they are aligned theologically on these issues. Clergy and PCCs could then decide how they want to minister, enabling us all to thrive and remain united on the vast majority of issues and practices where we agree. By the end of the last General Synod, it felt like the Houses of Clergy and Laity would be prepared to accept this kind of compromise within very carefully agreed boundaries, so there is an opportunity at this election to send a very clear signal to the House of Bishops to move this forward constructively.
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?
	No, I wouldn't. However I would signpost to another local church which would offer this. I ask my assistant clergy (and lay preachers) to abide by my theology on this, as I think diversity on a team in this area is unhelpful and confusing for a congregation.
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?
	These pastoral decisions are best made in prayerful conversations with the individuals involved. It isn't my practice to decide these things solely on the basis of particular characteristics of those individuals.