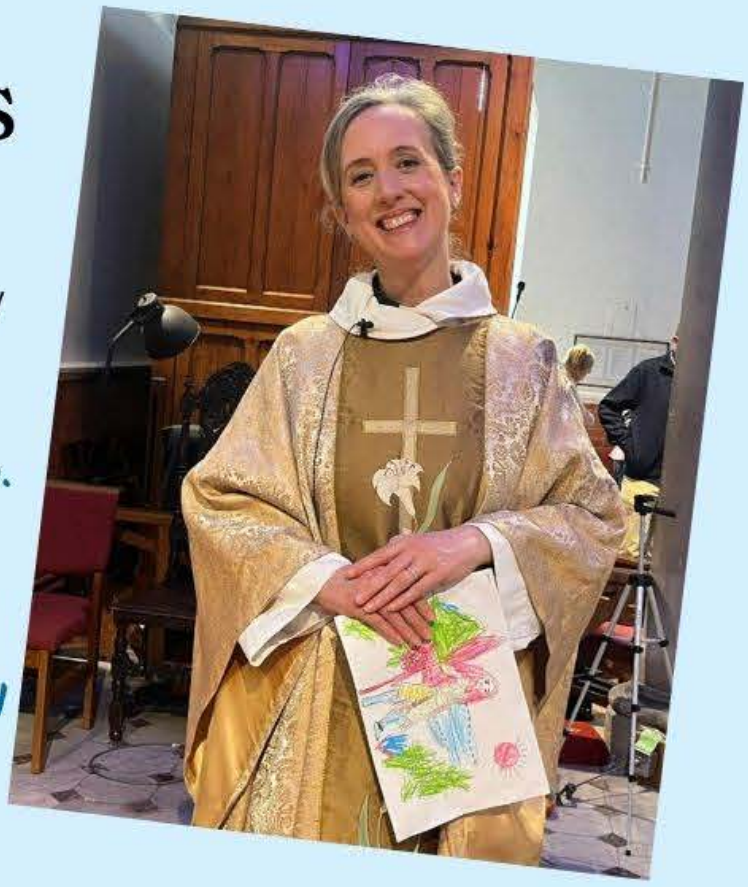
Melanie Harrington-Haynes

Standing for General Synod

Proposed by: Revd Canon Kit Gunasekera, Area Dean, Lambeth South Deanery
Seconded by: Revd Eils Osgood, Area Dean, Richmond and Barnes Deanery



Dear Colleague,
I am writing to ask for your vote in the upcoming General Synod election.

I am standing for General Synod because I am passionate about parish ministry and its future; I care deeply about my fellow clergy; I love the Church of England, and I am committed to serving the Diocese of Southwark. I want to be a voice for collaboration, finding common ground and seeking a way forward amidst division. I am also prepared to speak up for what I believe is important for the Church of England as we approach the crucial debates ahead in the next term of General Synod.

What's my background?

I come from a long line of priests in the Church of Ireland, but I became aware of my own commitment to the Church of England as a child when I cycled several miles to my parish church on a Sunday to sing in the choir. That commitment, and my own personal faith, were further developed when I was a student at Selwyn College, Cambridge, where I became a regular member of the Chapel community. That experience gave me a deep sense of belonging, community, purpose and shared identity in Christ. I have wanted to share that experience of faith with others ever since.

Before ordination, I completed a PhD in early modern history. My research focused on reconciliation and transformative justice after the Restoration of Charles II, and my interest in conflict resolution and reconciliation has continued throughout my ordained ministry. While there are many differences within the Church today, I believe that while acknowledging and honouring those differences, we need to find ways to move forward together.

I was ordained in 2018 and served my curacy in the Diocese of Lichfield. During my curacy, I was involved in developing a new parish worshipping community on a new-build housing estate which literally grew up around my curacy house. I came to the Diocese of Southwark in 2021, when I was appointed Vicar of the United Benefice of Kew. Since then, I have worked hard to get to know my fellow clergy across the diocese, and I rejoice in the diversity and gifts that our diocese offers. In 2023, I became Area Advisor for Women's Ministry in the Kingston Episcopal Area. I have been truly blessed by this role and its opportunity to support clergy and gain a deeper insight into their experience of ministry.

My background in writing and publishing has also continued in my ordained life. During Covid, I published an article in the journal Practical Theology comparing approaches to providence and lament in the early modern period with responses to the pandemic. For the past three years, I have been a contributor to the Canterbury Preacher's Companion. I think my ability to articulate a clear, strong voice and communicate well will stand me in good stead in General Synod.

What I would bring to Synod

- A strong voice for parishes and clergy.
- A collaborative approach that seeks common ground and disagreeing well.
- A passion for an inclusive and welcoming church.
- Clear, thoughtful and constructive advocacy for the future of the church.

What's Important to Me



The next five-year term of General Synod will include some critical decisions for the future of the Church of England. Here are some of the areas I feel passionately about, which I think will be significant strands of Synod business in the next term.

Parishes, finance and institutional trust.
As an issue raised by our clergy and congregations, I will seek greater transparency around the Parish Support Fund (PSF) and the allocation of the Church's central funds. With half of all dioceses facing short-term liquidity risks, and with a £200 million emergency cash distribution scheme running through 2034, I want to ensure a fair distribution of funds across dioceses.

I will speak up for our parishes and their essential importance in providing the grassroots sacramental life which is the beating heart of the Church of England. I will argue for the essential funding needed to support the needs of parishes, especially in economically disadvantaged areas. I will be asking whether the Church's current strategic investment model, SMIBB, is actually delivering the kind of growth and parish renewal we need.

Supporting clergy
With the framework for the new Clergy Conduct Measure approved in the last term of General Synod, implementation of this framework will be a key focus. I would seek to guide this process towards a fair, timely and transparent system which offers appropriate support to clergy throughout the process.

Environmental crisis
With the environmental agenda in Synod moving from principle to implementation, I would wish to advocate for how we deliver our climate policy in terms of practical discipleship, but also land, buildings and finance.

A Church for everyone
Inclusion and diversity are hugely important issues in our society today, and rightly had a high profile in the last term of General Synod. This is an area I care deeply about. I believe that we are all made in God's image, and that this should be celebrated and recognised in every person. We have an opportunity to share Jesus' message of welcome for everyone, within the Church and beyond. I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and in all roles within the Church, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health, neurodiversity or sexuality. I support marriage for faithful and committed couples, regardless of their gender.

Listening to each other well
The legacy of the important debates during the last term, particularly Living in Love and Faith, is a synod divided by deep fault-lines. I believe that, fundamentally, we have more that unites us than divides us, and that in order to move forward and make progress, we need to find a way through division whilst acknowledging our different perspectives.

I believe General Synod is at its best when people listen honestly to each other, respect differences of position, and work to collaborate for the future of the Church of England. This doesn't mean diminishing our differences: we don't have to agree – but I would advocate for disagreeing well and working together. I believe I have the skills to be a strong voice for this collaborative approach in the next General Synod.

"Mel has a passion for the Church of England to become truly diverse and inclusive. She also has a heart for parish ministry and to enable the local parish churches to thrive, especially ones which face huge pressures. She is an impressive speaker and communicates with grace and great conviction. Her services in the diocese were recently recognised when made an honorary canon. We need more people like Mel at General Synod, and I would ask you to please give her your first vote."
Rev'd Canon Kit Gunasekera, Vicar, St James Clapham, Area Dean, Lambeth South Deanery

Thank you for reading my election statement.
Please consider voting for me and making me your first preference. ***Voting closes on 13th October.***

If you have any questions, please do contact me. I'd be very happy to hear from you.

Rev Canon Dr Melanie Harrington-Haynes

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