

ANTONIO GARCÍA FUERTE

Candidate for General Synod

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Nominated by: Canon Roxanne Eversley

Seconded by: Revd Helen Harknett



I came to London from Madrid for a gap year in 2003; it has lasted rather longer than expected. I was brought up in the Roman Catholic Church, and the decisive turn in my journey towards Anglicanism came in **1996**, when I spent three months at a **mission in Venezuela**. Three nuns sustained the Church's presence across a vast and desperately poor region, running the school and offering basic medical care to scattered communities **without a resident priest**. Familiar European patterns did not fit the lives before me.

That experience did not lead to an abrupt break; it began a journey that developed naturally over time. I sought a home spacious enough to affirm that **God's love, gifts and grace are given equally to all**, and attentive to the Spirit's work across cultures. I found that home in an **Anglicanism of generous orthodoxy**, where

catholic and evangelical traditions enrich one another, cultural habits are not mistaken for religious identity itself, and people of different histories, cultures and languages belong equally within a communion deeper than complete agreement.

Why I am standing

I am standing because I **love the Church of England** and believe its **breadth, parochial presence** and vocation to serve every **community** are **gifts worth strengthening**. I feel called to bring parish ministry, cross-cultural mission and theological formation to Synod. I will **read carefully, pray, discern, listen across disagreement and vote with courage**. Unity is not uniformity; it is sustained by our common life in Christ and the bonds of love between disciples.

The ministry and experience I offer

I was ordained in 2015 in the Diocese of London. I came to Southwark in 2018, serving at St Barnabas, Dulwich, and St Christopher's Hospice, where I remain a volunteer chaplain. In 2019 I moved to St Matthew's at the Elephant to help establish and grow the Spanish Mission. Since 2022 I have been Vicar of All Saints with St Margaret, Upper Norwood. Our English- and Spanish-speaking communities worship as one congregation, working closely with our **church primary school** and with people **seeking asylum** housed in a parish hotel.

Alongside **parish ministry**, I serve as an **Area Director of Ordinands**, on **Diocesan Synod** and the **Diocesan Council of Trustees**. I mentor priests, practise as an Ignatian **spiritual director**, and belong to the **diocesan LGBT+ Clergy Group**. I have **taught** this year alongside a fellow priest,

Sacramental Theology and Ministry at St Augustine's and I will **tutor** on the SPIDIR course, starting September 26. My formation includes a bachelor's degree in Sacred Theology and a master degree in Pastoral Theology, alongside ordination training at Westcott House. Music, walking, photography, local history, bookbinding and woodworking help me slow down, pay attention and remain curious.

What I would bring to Synod

- **Parish leadership:** rooted in local communities and the daily realities of ministry.
- **Cross-cultural mission:** across languages, traditions and social backgrounds.
- **Theological and pastoral depth:** joined to spiritual direction and vocation discernment.
- **Governance and collaboration:** working constructively across disagreement while remaining accountable.



Christ at the centre



The Church is not the object of our faith; **Jesus Christ is**. Structures and resources are faithful only when they help people to **encounter** and **follow** him.

Safeguarding is a test of that fidelity. Children and vulnerable adults must be protected; **victims and survivors must be heard, believed and supported**; and institutional reputation must never come before truth or justice. Transparent accountability and **genuinely independent scrutiny** are essential. Where the Church has failed, it must name the harm, accept responsibility and change.

A generous and inclusive Church



I am committed to **equality for everyone, at every level and in every role**, regardless of disability, economic circumstances, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity or sexuality.

I fully support **the ordination of women as priests and bishops**. Women's access to stipendiary, full-time and senior responsibilities remains uneven. Some causes lie within the Church and others beyond it, but the Church should lead in ensuring **equality of opportunity between women and men**.

Commitments to **racial justice** and **wider inclusion** must also become reality in formation, appointments, funding and access.

I support the **Prayers of Love and Faith**, including standalone services, **equal marriage in the Church of England**, and the freedom of clergy to enter **same-sex civil marriages**. This is rooted in the image of God borne by every person and in the fruits of the Spirit I recognise in faithful LGBTQ+ couples and families. We can protect conscience and honest theological disagreement without separate structures or making LGBTQ+ people bear its cost indefinitely.

Renewing the parish for mission



The **parochial principle** is one of the Church of England's greatest gifts: a Christian presence committed to every community. I will advocate for the **maximum sustainable share** of Church Commissioners' funds to reach parishes, stipendiary

ministry and the **least-resourced communities**. New mission should complement patient parish ministry and be judged by its durability and fruitfulness.

Asking fewer clergy to carry ever larger collections of churches is unsustainable. Structures, vocations, deployment and funding should be considered together and, through honest consultation and local discernment, **adapted with care**.

Professional support with administration, compliance, buildings and grants can free clergy and lay leaders for prayer, worship, pastoral care, evangelism and Christian formation. Creative solutions need not reinvent the wheel; renewal may lie in **strengthening the spokes** that already carry the Gospel into every community.

Vocation, formation and reconciliation



Vocations grow through ministry that is demanding but joyful, prayerful and life-giving. Theological formation should be **lifelong**, and we must seek vocation **beyond familiar networks**, working with working-class communities, churches led by people of Global Majority Heritage, disabled and neurodivergent people, and LGBTQ+ groups.

Serious disagreement need not become hostility: **reconciliation is part of the Gospel we proclaim**.

The stranger becoming a neighbour



Welcoming the stranger and defending the **dignity** of displaced people are not optional additions to the Gospel. Ministry among people **seeking asylum** has taught me that accommodation is not enough: people need **belonging, continuity and the opportunity to contribute**. The Church's **parochial presence** can help people to become rooted anew.

As the established Church, we have a particular responsibility to **speak without fear** for those whom voices in public life exclude or turn against: refugees and people seeking asylum, people living in poverty and working-class communities. In the communities I serve, the Church's welcome, kindness and practical solidarity matter deeply. **Every person bears God's image**; when strangers become neighbours, we offer a sign of the Kingdom.

I have not served on General Synod before and do not imagine easy answers. If elected, I will consult Southwark's clergy, seek wisdom across disagreement, communicate Synod's work clearly and **remain accountable to the diocese**.

Thank you for reading my election address.

I would be grateful for your **first or highest possible preference**, and would serve in that spirit: **listening carefully, speaking honestly and seeking Christ in all things**.