Charlie Baczyk-Bell

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About me

I am first and foremost a pastor - I'm the non-stipendiary Associate Vicar of St John the Divine, Kennington, and am also a volunteer chaplain at St Christopher's Hospice. In my 'day job' I'm a Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist in a high secure hospital, working with criminal justice involved people**. I am passionate about ministering – in my roles within and without the institutional church – to those on the edge, who might find themselves forgotten, ignored, vilified, or abandoned by wider society.** I believe in a God who came to bring life in all its fulness, and I am committed to the work of building a church that embraces, welcomes, delights in, and fights for the dignity of all the beloved children of God. I am a founding trustee of Together for the Church of England and currently sit on the Executive, and have been heavily involved in recent work for inclusion in all its forms.

My faith life is enriched through ecumenical encounter, and I am strongly committed to ensuring that the Church of England continues to commit resources and time to this essential endeavour. I am an Associate Tutor at St Augustine's College of Theology, and a Visiting Scholar at Sarum College, and was a Vocations Adviser in the Diocese of Ely – in these roles, I have seen the crucial and critical need for serious, determined commitment to the work of vocations, training, and ongoing theological development of both lay and ordained people. In my interdisciplinary work at Girton College, Cambridge, I have seen the deep and often unmet need for the church to engage critically, convincingly, and theologically with issues facing today's world, and am determined to play a part in bringing this about. For me, the pastoral impulse that drives my ministry calls us to action beyond the church's walls.

In Southwark, I sit on the Diocesan Council of Trustees, the Board of Education, the Bishop's Advisory Group on Liturgy, and am an Examining Chaplain. I was also a member of the Vacancy in See Committee and will be part of the Crown Nominations Commission that will elect the next Bishop of Southwark. I have links across the Anglican Communion, particularly across the Atlantic, and am committed to a process of listening and decolonisation in the Communion. I have written widely in this area and continue to be fascinated by what it means to be an Anglican in the twenty-first century world.

What I believe

I am a creedal Anglican. I believe in the saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the call to share our common life and our common faith with all people of good will, and the coming of the Kingdom of God. I love being a priest and the opportunities it offers to serve the people of God.

I am committed to mission that is lived rather than merely proclaimed, embedded in the **joyfully diverse and creative communities that we are called to serve.**

I am convinced that, by God's grace, we are called to be a **more expansive, loving, generous church**, and that this makes demands of us. As such, I long for a church that is **more genuinely inclusive, hospitable, kind, and confident in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

It has been a privilege to represent this diocese for the past few years. The last General Synod achieved some great things but manifestly failed in others, not least in the LLF process. I have a strong track record in working for the priorities I outline here, across policy, legislation, and pastoral measures. I am committed to listening to you, learning from you, and representing you in the best way I can, and building on the experience I have had to work for the church that so many of us long for.

My vision for General Synod 2026-2031

Finances and culture
Decisions by national church bodies, including General Synod, need to be accompanied by accountability, good communication, and evidence. Our failure to get our house in order in this area has led to significant frustration across the church. If we are to improve trust, we must improve the visibility of how decisions are made, by whom, and on what authority. I am committed to supporting moves to recentre the church – and specifically its finances – towards those most in need rather than who are most 'successful'. I am fundamentally unconvinced that the way we organise our wider central funding streams is either equitable or effective, particularly the allocation of SMMIB funding at a national level. I am also unclear whether some new models of ministry are working in the way that was envisaged or in a way that serves the wider church effectively. I was dismayed, for example, that no plan was put in place to finance the nationally agreed increase in clergy stipends, despite concerns being raised on the floor of General Synod, and I am absolutely committed to ensuring that neither parishes nor clergy carry the can for poor central decision making or bad and unaccountable funding decisions. I have voted consistently in favour of moves to increase accountability and direct money towards parishes and chaplaincies.

Vocations
There is a clear and critical need for the church to address the vocations crisis if we are to be a Christian presence in every community. This is not solely the work of General Synod, but the Synod needs to empower those who are best placed to deliver this in an evidenced and effective manner – and recognise the clear link to clergy wellbeing.

Safeguarding
I was extremely disappointed that the last General Synod failed to vote for full independence for safeguarding and believe this is the only credible option in the future, one for which I voted. Safeguarding is a fundamental part of my clinical work, and I am determined to listen to and uplift the voices of survivors in the way we address our deeply disturbing history – and present – in this area.

Celebrating GMH voices
I am unambiguously in support of Project Spire. There have been disturbing levels of misinformation about this project, often the work of bad actors. I am committed not only to listening to the voices of Black clergy and laity and others from Global Majority Heritage backgrounds that we have far too often ignored but ensuring that these good intentions are translated into genuine action. We have far more to do here than allow ourselves to endlessly relitigate a reparative justice initiative which – in my opinion – is the very least we should be doing. I am an active member of the anti-racism fringe and believe this work is fundamental to our work as a diocese and church.

Intersectionality
I firmly believe that all those historically and currently excluded and othered by the church do better when we work together, amplifying and privileging the voices of the unheard, and standing alongside one another in solidarity with allies. I am acutely aware that there are plenty of white middle-class men on General Synod, and I will continue to do my best to promote the voices and views of those who are too often ignored or unheard – including those who are concerned that the current operationalisation of the Five Guiding Principles is neither just nor equitable. The church is the Body of Christ – and it is our duty to ensure all its members, whoever they are, are genuinely valued and welcomed. I am, therefore, absolutely committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health, or sexuality, and have consistently voted in favour of greater inclusion in all its forms.

Living together in communion
The previous Synod – and more recently the House of Bishops – failed spectacularly in its mission to offer 'radical welcome' to LGBTQIA/queer people, like me. I was at the forefront of efforts to progress LLF and have worked constructively at all levels within the church for greater progress in this area. I am determined to play my part to ensure that the new working groups deliver the freedom for clergy and ordinands to enter marriages to people of the same sex without penalty, that the current unjust (and unenforceable) restrictions on so-called 'standalone' services of blessing be withdrawn, and that the Church of England begins the steps towards equal marriage in church during this quinquennium. I have no wish to exclude people, and I am also acutely aware of the damage that 'structural provision' can do to the unity of Christ's church. I am therefore committed to working in good faith with others from different theological perspectives to find a way to a unified church in which different theological perspectives are held with integrity. This is a Gospel imperative, and our mission and evangelism rely on our finding a way to preach a Gospel that can be heard, and to be a church that people can believe in.

Please give me your number 1 or high preference vote! I would be honoured to be your representative on General Synod and to strive together for the Kingdom of God.

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these members of my family, you did it to me.'