

Michael Bailey

Incumbent, St Stephen with St Mark, Lewisham

Proposed by Rev. Dr Charlie Bell,
Assistant Curate, St John the Divine, Kennington
Seconded by The Ven. Bridget Shephred,
Archdeacon of Wandsworth

I believe in a Church which is equal in every way. We are all equal through our baptism, and no human divisions – gender, race, sexuality, identity, disability, background or anything else – matter. We are all created in the image of God. We all have an inherent dignity, and we all share in the life and worship of our Church.

Unfortunately, I see a Church that is far from equal. Resources are unevenly distributed. There is a crisis in volunteering, contributing to over-worked, inadequately resourced clergy and diocesan staff. At the same time, we repeatedly see well-resourced parishes given more. This is not how a just and equal Church should function. I want to see this change. This starts at the top. If the Church's governance fails to make decisions which support poor and vulnerable parishes then we need to change this. It is unchristian to not look after every member of the Body of Christ. There is no biblical justification for this.

As a priest and area dean working in a Society parish I have asked for more inclusion in our Deanery: more women to reflect our diverse church, more people from BME backgrounds to reflect our community. Full inclusion means exactly that. We do not need to be uniform, and when the church makes decisions on which there is a diversity of opinion, then we must be brave and make it work. All parts of the Church need to commit to each other, sharing generosity rather than hiding behind empty rhetoric and stale arguments that wreak untold damage on the Church's mission to the nation. I believe we have often lost sight of a proper understanding of grace, and I yearn for us to engage with theology when this so often feels absent in our debates.

I have watched and listened to the GS for the last ten years. Talking is empty if the Church won't embrace full inclusion. I will work with Save the Parish, UNISON and all allies of inclusion to make this happen. I have worked as a volunteer with UNISON as a Faith Representative for the past four years, representing our members across various dioceses.

My three areas to focus on as we look ahead will be the Code of Conduct, Inclusion and the Seal of the Confessional.

I will fight to keep the Seal. I will seek the highest standard of safeguarding so that this sacrament is practised at the most accountable level. As an experienced penitent and confessor, I will seek to work with all churches to protect the sanctity of the sacrament. I believe the Seal and the highest standards of safeguarding are totally compatible, not mutually exclusive, despite some current misrepresentations.

Integrity in our celebration of the sacraments is as essential as integrity in our individual lives as priests and disciples. Genuine integrity also calls us to honesty and grace in our conversations and debates. However, one area where we as a church are reluctant to engage in honest debate is sexuality. The Church of England has changed its position on divorce and remarriage, although these changes continue not to be received by everyone. Despite these disagreements, we are learning to grow in grace which enables us to coexist with our differences. This is another example of mutual flourishing in action.

The focus has now shifted to LGBTQ+ issues, where many of us have been disappointed by the response of the House of Bishops. An apology was issued by the last Synod regarding our Church's past failings, but the more recent actions have been perceived as graceless.

The culture of our church needs to change, and we should return to our original calling of serving the people in our parishes and chaplaincies. All missional activities should originate in the local as this is our fundamental mission. The PSF system is, ideally, a great tool for mission, but we know that it is not working as it should because some churches have decided not to share in the spirit of how it is intended. We should look again at how we fund our Church and what resources are needed for us on the ground to do what we have been called to do.

My contact details are below, and I am happy to have talk through whatever you wish to discuss.

Thank you for your time in reading this.

I hope you will be willing to vote for me and give me your first, or high preference.

frmichaelbailey@gmail.com

St. Stephen's Vicarage, Gressingham Road, London, SE135AG

07713258429