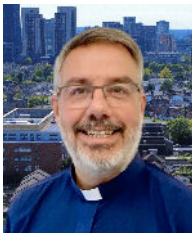
GENERAL SYNOD ELECTION ADDRESS



Greg Prior – Archdeacon of Croydon

Proposer: The Ven Chigor Chike Seconder: Rev Joyce Forbes

Serving Southwark – with Christ at the centre

I am standing for General Synod because I love Jesus Christ, I love his Church, and I long to see more people come to know him, grow as his disciples and discover the joy of serving his mission.

For more than 22 years I have served in the Diocese of Southwark – first as a parish priest in the Kingston Episcopal Area and now as Archdeacon of Croydon. Before coming to the UK I served for eight years as a priest in South Africa, where I was born and raised, and I am part of the Global Majority heritage community. These experiences have taught me the importance of listening carefully, seeking to understand before responding, and treating people with dignity and respect – particularly when we disagree.

As Archdeacon, I serve across the breadth of our Diocese, alongside churches with very different histories, traditions and theological convictions. Much of my ministry involves helping people navigate disagreement, discern a way forward and remain committed to one another. I believe this experience would be valuable on General Synod.

Christ at the centre

At the heart of my ministry is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and a conviction that Holy Scripture is the supreme authority for our faith, teaching and life together as the Church. I want to see a Church confident in the gospel – unashamed to proclaim Christ, call people to faith and repentance, make disciples and equip God's people for ministry.

My understanding of Scripture also shapes my convictions about marriage and human sexuality: that marriage is the lifelong union of a man and a woman, and that sexual intimacy belongs within that covenant. I want to hold these convictions with clarity and compassion – faithfulness to Scripture should never become an excuse for harshness, and a desire to be kind should not require us to abandon what we believe Scripture teaches.

Healthy, growing local churches

I believe the local church is where much of the real work of God's mission happens. We need churches confident in the gospel, growing in discipleship, welcoming new people and developing new leaders – prioritising the Great Commission of helping people come to faith, grow to maturity and be equipped for ministry.

My years in parish ministry have shown me the difference that investing in people can make: training curates, developing ministry apprentices and seeing people discover and grow into ordained, lay and missionary vocations. I am passionate about the local parish, and want our national structures, finances and priorities to enable rather than frustrate its mission. Strategy must serve mission.

Caring for those who serve

Ministry is both joyful and costly. Through my work as Archdeacon, and my responsibility for clergy wellbeing, I have seen at close quarters the pressures on clergy, lay leaders and their families. Mental health matters to me not simply as a policy question, but because I encounter its human consequences in the lives of those who serve the Church.

We cannot ask people to give themselves sacrificially to ministry without caring properly for them. General Synod should take seriously sustainable patterns of ministry, good formation and training,

appropriate pastoral support, and a culture in which clergy and lay leaders can ask for help without shame. Healthy ministers and lay leaders are essential to healthy churches.

Wisdom in difficult times

The work of General Synod is not simply about legislation or policy. Recent debates on safeguarding structures, Living in Love and Faith, mental health and clergy discipline have shown how closely theology, policy, justice, accountability and pastoral care are connected. As Archdeacon, I have encountered many of these issues at close quarters – the importance of safeguarding that is rigorous, independent and compassionate, of fair process, and of the deep hurt that can arise when we disagree about questions of faith and practice. Good Church leadership needs both clarity and humanity: the courage to make difficult decisions, the humility to listen, and the wisdom to distinguish matters of principle from matters of prudence.

I love the breadth and diversity of the Church of England – a gift, even when it makes life complicated. As Archdeacon I have sought to be an agent for unity across real differences of conviction, and I have learned that unity does not require uniformity, but neither does it mean pretending our disagreements have no consequences. Our unity is in Christ. I want a Synod where we can speak clearly about profound disagreements, listen seriously to one another, and recognise the consequences of our decisions, while resisting the temptation to treat those with whom we disagree as enemies. I am particularly concerned that clergy and churches who hold to the Church's historic teaching of Scripture should be able to exercise their ministry faithfully and with a clear conscience, with appropriate recognition and support within the life of our Church.

A voice for Southwark

If elected, my primary responsibility would be to serve the whole Diocese of Southwark. I would want to listen to the experience of our clergy and churches – large and small parishes, urban and suburban communities, chaplaincies and pioneering contexts, those growing and those facing decline, and those asking how ministry can be sustained for the future.

I would bring the perspective of someone who has worked from parish to diocesan level, and who now works with churches across the breadth of Croydon. I would not expect to have all the answers – I would seek to listen, learn, collaborate and then lead: speaking honestly but graciously, working constructively, and finding common ground wherever I can for the sake of Christ and his Church.

Above all, hope

The Church of England faces real challenges: mission and growth, finance, buildings, ministry, safeguarding, governance, clergy wellbeing and the future shape of the Church.

I want to see a Church faithful to Scripture, confident in the gospel, courageous in mission, serious about discipleship and compassionate towards those who serve and those we serve. A Church that welcomes all people because it has good news to share. A Church that calls and equips people for ministry. A Church that can disagree without destroying one another. And a Church that looks beyond itself to the world God loves.

I have been privileged to serve Southwark for more than two decades and would be honoured to continue that service on General Synod, bringing the experience, convictions and perspective God has given me. With your support, I hope to serve as a faithful, pastoral, constructive and hopeful voice for the whole Diocese of Southwark – with Christ at the centre.

Greg Prior

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