

HUGO SUMMERSON



Hugo outside the beautiful 12th century church of St Mary the Virgin, Merton

ELECTION ADDRESS

Hugo and Diana have been married for thirty years. They have a son, Guy, age 26, who was diagnosed as autistic when he was 3 and attended special schools to age 19 - Blossom House School in Wimbledon, and St. Catherine's School in Ventnor. Guy is highly musical and gained a first-class honours degree in Commercial Music from the University of Chichester in 2024.

Hugo is a Chartered Surveyor & Land Agent (semi-retired), Diana a Paper Conservator (retired). They have lived in Merton Park since 2006 and attend St Mary's, Merton Park, where they both serve on the PCC. They are Occasional Singers, singing when the choir is away on holiday; they help deliver the Parish Magazine; and they started a Bible Study Group in 2024.

WHY I AM STANDING I love the Church of England for its rich liturgical tradition, historical significance, and commitment to community service. But our parishes are in trouble. They need: **A Clergy Covenant** Our clergy are insufficiently valued. How can it be right that about 30% of clergy suffer from depression and 40% from chronic loneliness? No wonder that last year more priests resigned than retired. We need a formal covenant of care that calls an immediate halt to cutting stipendiary posts as a means of balancing budgets.

A Churchgoers' Covenant in addition to a Clergy Covenant, which acknowledges the hard-working volunteers without whom parishes would collapse and churches close. There should be a cap on new internal compliance and procedural requirements (with an exemption for safeguarding), and a recognition that a long-running vacancy triggers a decline in church attendance and giving.

Parish Funds raised of about £1 billion a year to be directed more to mission and the cure of souls. Of this money £319 million went to dioceses in 2024 as parish share. Net contribution to parochial ministry from the Church's historic endowments was just £85 million out of a possible £653 million.

The Mission and Pastoral Measure to be reformed as follows: equal access to justice for parishes facing closure or merger; powers for a Church Buildings Council; a share for parishes when vicarages they paid for are sold. I favour also parish-led proposals that genuinely start with parishes and can be stopped by them; regard to be paid to a parish's tradition before appointment of a priest-in-charge; and existing rights of consultation, representation and appeal to be upheld.

Finally, while the Church's push for **net zero** across its entire estate is understandable and desirable where possible, the original target date was 2050. However, the rush to achieve it by 2030 is making life difficult for many parishes. At St Mary's our gas boilers have reached the end of their life. Replacing them with heat pumps would probably **cost about £80,000**, plus huge disruption of ministry and upheaval of building work to ancient fabric. That sort of cost, plus bureaucratic inertia, places the entire project in jeopardy.

If you share my concerns, please support me with your first or a high preference vote.

Dear Elector

I seek election in Southwark Diocese to the House of Laity, under the auspices of Save the Parish. You will want to know something about me, *and what I would do if you are so kind as to give me your vote*, so here goes. I was born in County Durham to loving but agnostic parents who – doubtless unintentionally – sent me to a prep school which had a strong Christian ethos: morning and evening prayers, and church twice on Sundays. Then after Harrow School I trained as a land agent and chartered surveyor at the Royal Agricultural College. When I got my first job in Hereford I stayed for two years with Roman Catholic cousins, attending Mass with them from time to time.

FAITH In 1977 I moved to London and started to attend the church of St. George, Hanover Square, Mayfair: appointed Churchwarden in 1998, Trustee to the Trinity Chapel Site Charity, the Hyde Park Place Estate Charity, and St. George's Hanover Square School. I gave up these roles in 2002 when Guy age 2 started to show symptoms of autism, but became the church's representative for St George's, Westminster (St Margaret) Deanery Synod 2004 - 2007.

In 2006 we moved to Merton Park and decided to attend Emmanuel Church in Wimbledon Village. An evangelical church, it was very different from the pageantry and beautiful music of St George's; it had a strong emphasis on, above all, the Bible. As Rowan Williams says in his book 'Tokens of Trust', the Bible is the Word of God because it is the primary witness to Jesus Christ, and when it is read in a community of believers it is used by the Holy Spirit to bring God's calling alive for us.

In 2020 in the wake of the pandemic we moved to St Mary's Merton, a liberal catholic church witnessing to the Gospel of God's love in Christ offered to all and committed to His kingdom.

BUSINESS In the early 1980s I worked in a property business. I had two business partners, both expatriate Iranians who fled when the Ayatollah arrived in 1979. Thus there were a Jew, a Muslim and a Christian (this is not a joke!) all working in harmony together. In the 1990s I also started a business training people in public speaking and communication skills. Today I still work in property.

ELECTIONS In the 1980s, 1990s and 2020s I stood in a total of seven elections: four council, and three Parliamentary. I won just one as Conservative MP for Walthamstow in 1987. I joined the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship where I met fellow Christians from all parties. In Parliament I learned a lot about procedure and committee work, which could be useful in General Synod.



Hugo and Diana at the seaside in Ventnor, Isle of Wight

