

Rich Miles

Candidate for House of Clergy

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Please do contact me if you have any questions

Nominated by: The Revd Suse Osmond

Vicar of St Marys and Chilton Trinity, Bridgwater

Seconded by: The Revd Jon Ball

Minster at Orchard Grove Church, Taunton



Why I am standing

Clergy across Bath & Wells serve faithfully in hugely varied contexts, but many of the conversations I have across our diocese tell a similar story: ministry is becoming increasingly complex, expectations are growing, and too often we are asking fewer clergy to carry more.

My current role gives me the privilege of travelling across Bath & Wells, working alongside clergy and churches and hearing candidly about both the joys and pressures of ministry. Those conversations are one of the reasons I have decided to offer myself for election to General Synod.

If elected, I would seek to be a representative who **listens carefully, thinks deeply and exercises good judgement**, bringing the realities of ministry on the ground into national conversations and being prepared to ask difficult questions and speak with both conviction and grace.

About me

I currently serve as the Diocese of Bath & Wells' Missional Priest for Youth and Young Adults. Although my role is diocesan in scope, it is rooted in the life of the local church, working alongside parish clergy, congregations, schools and communities across Bath & Wells.

I am a member of Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod, a trustee and director of the Diocesan Board of Finance, and a member of the Conditions of Service Group. Together, these roles have taught me both how decisions are made and how to work constructively within our structures to bring about change.

Much of my ministry has involved starting and developing new things. In 2015 I founded Movement, bringing together young people and churches from across the diocese for worship, discipleship and leadership development. I have since helped develop Young Leaders Learning Hubs and contributed to diocesan and national work around young adults, leadership and vocations.

My own journey has also given me an awareness of how easily people's gifts can be overlooked when they don't fit our expectations, and of the difference it makes when someone recognises God's calling and creates opportunities for those gifts to flourish.

What I would bring to General Synod

General Synod considers a huge breadth of issues affecting the life, governance and mission of the Church of England. I would approach these prayerfully and thoughtfully, seeking to understand the evidence and different perspectives before reaching a judgement. There are, however, four areas where I believe I could make a particular contribution.

Listening and representing. Clergy across Bath & Wells will not always agree with me or with one another. I value that breadth and would continue to listen to clergy serving in different contexts and seek perspectives beyond those I naturally encounter. Representation, however, is not simply reflecting back the views I hear. I would approach decisions prayerfully, informed by Scripture, careful listening and evidence, ultimately exercising my own judgement about what I believe best serves the mission and flourishing of the Church.

Clergy wellbeing and sustainable ministry. I believe clergy wellbeing needs to be a national priority, not simply something we address when somebody reaches crisis point. We need to look honestly at the structures, expectations and resourcing that affect clergy and their families. Through the diocesan Conditions of Service Group, I proposed increasing paternity leave from two weeks to six weeks a change which was subsequently agreed. I am also concerned about the continuing consolidation of clergy roles. I recognise the financial challenges facing the Church, but **we cannot keep responding to a shortage of clergy by simply asking fewer priests to do more.** In too many places we are already spreading our priests too thinly. I want us to be ambitious about sustaining and growing ordained ministry and creating patterns of ministry in which clergy, their families and the churches they serve can flourish.

Growing vocations and removing barriers. If fewer priests doing more is not the answer, we need to be ambitious about growing vocations. That means asking: **who might God be calling who we are currently failing to see?** I particularly want us to address barriers relating to socio-economic background, disability and neurodiversity within discernment, training and ministry. Vocation should be recognised because of someone's calling and gifting, not inadvertently shaped by assumptions about background, education or how somebody communicates. We need both to invest in the clergy serving today and to find, form and release those whom God is calling to serve tomorrow.

Mission and the next generation. For more than a decade, much of my ministry has focused on helping younger generations encounter Jesus, grow as disciples and discover their place within the life and leadership of the Church. There are encouraging signs of spiritual openness among younger generations, presenting us with a significant missionary opportunity. Responding cannot simply be the responsibility of youth and young adult specialists; we need healthy local churches, supported by flourishing clergy, where younger generations can encounter Jesus, belong and grow as disciples. I would keep asking whether our national decisions, structures and resources **equip rather than hinder local churches in the mission God has given them.**

A final word

These are particular priorities, not an exhaustive manifesto. General Synod will inevitably consider questions and challenges we cannot anticipate now. On those issues I would bring the same approach: listening carefully, engaging seriously with Scripture and evidence, hearing different perspectives and being prepared to exercise my judgement.

I want to see a Church that is **confident in Jesus Christ and his Gospel**; where clergy and their families can flourish; where we invest in growing ordained ministry rather than simply managing its reduction; where unnecessary barriers to vocation are removed; and where local churches are equipped for God's mission.

It would be a privilege to serve and represent the clergy of Bath & Wells on General Synod.

I would be very grateful for your prayers and, if you feel able to support me, for the highest preference you are able to give me in this election.

Thank you

Rich