

REV. BEN NOTLEY

A voice shaped by estate ministry, recovery and the local church



Hello, and thank you for taking the time to read my profile. My name is Ben, and I minister in a growing, medium-sized church on a council estate in Bath. Much of my ministry is focused on community engagement, pastoral care, preaching and helping people discover a place of belonging within the life of the Church.

I am recently married to my wife, Samantha, who supports and encourages me greatly in my ministry at St Andrew's.

"We are not saved to sit, but saved to serve."

My story

My journey to faith was something of a slow burner. I grew up in a dysfunctional family deeply affected by addiction. My mum was an alcoholic, and my father had his own struggles with substance misuse. Much of my childhood was shaped by the fear that people would leave, and there were many occasions when I felt that I had to become the parent to my parents.

I encountered church a few times while growing up. Although I found welcoming communities, the seed of the gospel seemed to fall on hard soil.

As I grew older, I began to reflect some of the environment in which I had been raised. Drugs, low-level crime and anger became part of my life. I was an angry teenager carrying a great deal of resentment towards the world and towards the circumstances of my upbringing.

In 2014, I reconnected with my mum. By then, she had been sober for four years and had become a practising Christian. Through her, I walked into an Anglican church for the first time in many years.

I arrived as a broken mess, but I encountered a community committed to sharing life with people like me and pointing them towards Jesus—the one who restores broken lives.

Over time, I developed a deep love for the Anglican Church and its traditions. As a lad from a council estate, liturgy and the formality of Anglican worship initially felt as though they belonged to people above my social position. However, that church helped me understand that I had a place there too.

Since encountering the gospel, I have sought to build my life around serving Jesus and serving others.

Ministry and experience

Before entering full-time ministry, I worked in retail. Since then, I have served as a Children's and Families Pastor, completed a degree in theology at Trinity College Bristol, and undertaken a three-year curacy in Bath. These experiences have equipped me in teaching, leadership, pastoral care, teamwork, community engagement and communicating with people from many different backgrounds.

Outside church

Before becoming a vicar, I was—and, in many ways, still am—a musician, particularly within rap music. The arts remain an important interest and a source of enjoyment for me.

Recovery and family life

I also help lead a ministry called Believers in Recovery, which seeks to bridge the gap between twelve-step recovery and the Church. I am, and always will be, someone in recovery. Continuing to work a recovery programme makes me a healthier person, strengthens every area of my life and helps me support others with honesty and compassion.



Samantha and me

My wife and I also love films, and we can often be found watching the latest release with popcorn in hand!

Why vote for me?

The driving force behind my decision to stand for General Synod is a thought that frequently occurred to me during theological college and curacy: too few people in positions of influence and decision-making within the Church come from backgrounds like mine.

I want to help represent the many working-class people found in our churches, communities and diocese—particularly those whose voices can struggle to reach the rooms in which decisions are made.

I believe I would bring the following to General Synod:

- Firsthand understanding of poverty, addiction and recovery, enabling me to represent people whose experiences and voices can easily be overlooked.
- Experience of living and ministering on a council estate, where effective ministry requires us to look beneath presenting behaviours and understand the deeper challenges people face.
- A commitment to listening carefully, reasoning thoughtfully and speaking with diplomacy, including when there is significant disagreement.
- Patience and compassion for people whose lives are complicated, chaotic or different from my own.
- A deep commitment to the local church as a community in which people can encounter Jesus, experience genuine belonging and begin to rebuild their lives.
- A desire to ensure that the Church of England remains accessible to those who may feel that its traditions, structures and institutions are not meant for people like them.

Conviction, welcome and respectful engagement

I hold traditional convictions concerning a number of the current points of tension within the Church of England. At the same time, I am committed to treating every person with dignity, compassion and respect. The welcome I received when I came to faith has given me a lasting desire to help create a safe and genuinely welcoming church for everyone who comes through our doors.

If elected, I would seek to carry that same approach into General Synod: holding my convictions with integrity, listening carefully to others, and using my voice positively, respectfully and constructively.

I would be honoured to represent the diocese and to bring the experiences of working-class communities, estate ministry and recovery into the life and decision-making of General Synod.

REV. BEN NOTLEY | Candidate for General Synod