

Rev'd Cathie Watson

Candidate for General Synod

“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35

In a polarised society I feel called to help be part of a Synod that is shaped by listening well, working together and engaging positively with one another; reflecting Christ's call to love one another as he has loved us despite our differences and bringing that love out into the world. This is radically counter-cultural in a polarised society and will be a prophetic witness in a broken world. It's not about diluting theological convictions, rather modelling Christ's vision for the Church to work together and love one another despite very different personalities, backgrounds, traditions and approaches to ministry.



From this attitude, I feel called to be a voice for the real issues that are a barrier to hope in people's daily lives, both within our churches and across our communities. Above all, I want to contribute to a Synod that focuses and models bringing the good news of Jesus to the United Kingdom and the world, through our decisions and our conduct. This good news includes spiritual transformation and growth as well as personal and systemic accountability for the Church of England and outside of it. Creating environments that models Jesus' call for the Church to be holy, generous, bringers of justice and hope for all people and creation.

Key Issues:

- ❖ **Safeguarding and Spiritual abuse:** Great work has been done but there is always room for more – especially regarding this hard to define yet incredibly damaging aspect of safeguarding that the Church needs to grapple with.
- ❖ **Review of Curacy Training:** As the ordinand recruitment process has been updated I believe we need to review the curacy process. What is working well and what needs to be improved to form healthy church leaders with positive experiences as anecdotal evidence suggests that too many curacies are breaking down, impacting both curates, Training Incumbents and church communities.
- ❖ **Cost of living Crises:** Using our voice as the established Church and religion of England to bring positive change for every day people and accountability through challenging unjust structures like the fourth mark of mission. This includes protecting and providing for parish communities and clergy and church workers who find themselves struggling more and more.
- ❖ **Climate Crises** – continuing to find ways to not only protect all of creation as individuals and systemically, but also to work with the gift that God has given us to use nature to communicate the gospel (as Jesus often did in his metaphors and parables) as well as to provide for all. Reviewing and actioning how the CofE can better utilise its assets to help with food scarcity and

building ecological resilience against floods, droughts, wildfires and more. This also includes Church housing and making them safe and comfortable places for clergy and other tenants.

About Me:

Currently living and serving in Keynsham Parish Churches with PTO in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, alongside my husband who is Rector in Keynsham. I left Trinity College Bristol in 2022 and completed my curacy in Derby, where I had the opportunity to work with very different traditions and church models within the Church of England. My current circumstances mean I am able to give effective time to Synod without the distraction of a full-time incumbency.

I have experienced a variety of ministry contexts including an **inner-city resource church, church plants**, and more established **multi-parish benefices in suburban and rural contexts**, and now a growing and diverse town between Bath and Bristol. I truly believe there is beauty and value across the breadth of the Church of England. I want the spectrum of the CofE to learn from one another as we grow in relationship with Jesus, deepen our knowledge of Scripture, and discern what it means to follow Christ in today's world. **My varied ministry experience has also taught me how valuable it is to listen well to those with whom we disagree.** Synod, the Church and indeed secular culture desperately need this during an age of polarity and division. While differences of conviction will always exist, I believe our Christian witness is strongest when we demonstrate that disagreement need not lead to hostility, and that truth and grace belong together. If elected, I will seek to bring a spirit of generosity, openness and hope to Synod's discussions. I want to help build a Church that truly models the love of Christ in both its words and actions.

A church engaged with the realities of life

Alongside ministry, I run Dove Birthing, supporting women and couples through pregnancy and birth. This work combines practical care with spiritual support, helping people engage their faith alongside the physical, emotional and mental challenges of becoming parents.

This experience has reinforced my belief that the Church is called to step into the brokenness of the world with God's love, grace and hope. We live in a time when many public services are under strain, loneliness is widespread and anxiety about the future is commonplace. In such circumstances, **we need church structures that encourage Christians not simply to maintain institutions, but to engage missionally with the communities around them and respond creatively to unmet needs.** I also believe **the Church has a vital prophetic role within society.** As the Established Church, we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to speak into the challenges facing our nation.

Throughout history, Christians from different backgrounds have spoken prophetically on issues such as slavery, poverty and injustice because they understood that faith has public consequences. Today, as many struggle with the rising cost of living and other inequalities we must continue to advocate for human dignity, justice and compassion. God cares deeply for the poor and vulnerable, as his ambassadors we must be willing to speak and act on their behalf. **Offering hope that is both spiritual and practical.**

