

Sammi Tooze
General Synod Election Address 2021

I have lived in York for nearly 8 years, after completing my degree in music, and in that time I have been worshipping regularly in York Minster. As an active member of the community, I serve on the Community Committee – our equivalent of a PCC – as well as participating in worship and ministerial roles. Beyond the life of my church, I was pleased to have been an elected member of both Deanery and Diocesan Synods through the previous term, during which I valued being able to contribute on those platforms.

Before moving to the Diocese of York, I worked in Church Growth within the Diocese of Leeds. This professional experience has been vital in growing my understanding of community engagement and the transformational role the Church plays in people's lives. This position led me to become a Regional Co-ordinator for Messy Churches in West Yorkshire, as well as engaging in developing good quality worship, mixed ecology and new forms of church. I also joined the Diocese of York's Leading your Church into Growth (LyCiG) team, contributing to the facilitation of both training and follow-up for churches in this vision to encourage and equip churches to grow numerically, missionally and spiritually. This experience provides me with a good grounding as General Synod discusses how we double the number of children and young people we disciple, how we can be missionary disciples, and building on our parishes whilst reaching out to see churches planted across our communities.

In more recent years, my professional experience has drawn me to work as a Generous Giving Adviser in the Diocese of York. This role has given me a good understanding of inner parish life across the whole spectrum of theology and tradition within the Church of England, as well as a good insight into the challenges churches are facing at the present time, from local parish level through to national issues. As an Adviser travelling around parishes, I consider myself enriched and humbled by the diversity across our family of churches, through listening and learning from the experiences of people in those local communities. Having been invited to sit on the Mustard Seed Ambassadors Working Group, this deepens my understanding of churches in areas of deprivation, and the way those churches walk alongside people whose life is tough. As General Synod continues to shape the Church for the future, these experiences give me a good awareness of how I can make informed contributions as these debates continue and new legislations are considered,



especially around the concerns in the way we fund mission and the day to day running of our local churches.

Beyond the boundaries of the Diocese of York, I am grateful to have been invited to work with the national church through various projects, including writing resources for the National Generosity Week and training materials for the National Generosity Learning Hub. This gives me experience of producing advice and using my voice on a national platform, which I would love to expand into being a representative on General Synod.

As an adult in my late-twenties, I feel I am a suitable candidate for General Synod as we seek to become a younger and more inclusive church. I am committed to supporting the new vision that is taking shape led by the Archbishop of York in growing simpler, humbler and bolder, and the emerging Church of England programme to enable the local church to flourish. My own journey in discipleship anchors me in all life brings, personally and professionally, believing that we encounter God in the face of those around us, and in those gifts we grow and journey together. My personal faith leads me to being committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health or sexuality – and this being an essential way in how we move forward as a church for the 21st Century, growing and learning together. As General Synod continues to debate through the Living in Love and Faith materials, I will, if elected, anchor myself in these beliefs and principles as we travel towards an outcome.

As an active young adult within the Church of England, I have been encouraged to stand for General Synod in particular to represent a younger generation as the Church seeks to grow younger, and I feel called to offer myself to stand for the concerns of our communities across our diocese at a national level. My expertise in worship, church growth and giving serves as useful in upcoming debates, as well as in the value of good communication, the importance of the way we use language within the Church, and the benefits of vision-setting within local church communities. I believe I can offer a firm voice in contributing fully to upcoming debates and votes, which I would undertake through prayer and in a way which I believe will lead the Church of England to become more Christ-centred, simpler, humbler and bolder.

I would love the opportunity to serve as a representative for the Diocese of York, and I offer you my willingness to serve as well as listening to different points of view and representing them fairly if the opportunity arises. I would deeply appreciate your prayers and first vote in this crucial time for the Church of England's General Synod.

Thank you.
Sammi Tooze

Nominated by Tina Pownall
Seconded by Ehren Mierau