

General Synod 2026 Candidate Statement - Diocese of York

Gillian Holmes

Email: mrsgmholmes@gmail.com

Mobile: 07803038393

Proposer: Christian Price - Member of York Deanery Synod,
PCC Secretary St Lawrence Church, York

Seconder: Evan Garrod - Member of York Deanery Synod



I am standing for General Synod because I believe in the vocation and witness of the parish and the national church. My life in the Church of England began after graduating in English from London University, where immersion in medieval and Reformation literature led me to explore theology more seriously. I was confirmed by Bishop Graham Leonard, and since then have been an active church member, serving on PCCs, and always seeking to strengthen the life of the local church.

My life has been shaped by faith, by family, and by long experience in public service. I hope to bring perspective, compassion, and a commitment to listening - especially to those who are often overlooked.

Personal Background and Experience

Family and Formation: My son, born with severe disabilities has been my greatest teacher and has profoundly shaped my faith. Through him I learned what persistence, courage, and cheerfulness in the face of immense challenge truly look like.

He led me to help establish an independent support service for families in North Yorkshire-still thriving thirty years later. Because of him, I gained experience in advocacy, speaking publicly, campaigning, and writing. Most importantly, I learned the importance of giving voice to the voiceless, respecting lived experience, and listening for what is unsaid rather than simply the loudest voices in the room.

Professional Life: For the past nineteen years I have worked for York's public libraries in roles ranging from library manager to governance support, board administration, PR and communications. I now work as administrator for the ABC Parishes – a group of churches in rural west York.

I am also chair of a charity doing Christian work in South India and trustee of an alms-house charity and have been a board member on other charitable bodies, large and small where I learned how vital good

governance is. My work has consistently centred on enabling others to flourish.

Evangelism: At St Lawrence's Church in York - where I serve on the PCC - I have witnessed remarkable renewal. When I moved into the parish in the 1990s, the church was marked for demolition. Over the past decade, it has been transformed with many people - including 18-25s - discovering the Christian faith, the Church's traditions, and the riches of the Book of Common Prayer. They are breathing new life into traditional forms and sharing them with confidence and joy. This renewal has convinced me that evangelism rooted in Scripture, sacrament, and tradition is both possible and powerful.

The Parish: I love the Church of England and am hopeful that it can recover its purpose by focusing more attention on the transformational work happening daily in parishes. But experience has shown me how easy it is for the most needy to be denied resources. This is why I support the work and mission of **Save the Parish**. If we are bold enough to alter the structures and release more funding for parish clergy, then the good news will be able to flow to so many more people.

The draft replacement for the 2011 Mission and Pastoral Measure must protect parishioners' rights to object to diocesan pastoral reorganisation. My experience advocating for disabled children and as a volunteer in a parish has taught me how easily large institutions can seek to overrule the views of small groups.

Church Finances and Stewardship: The Church Commissioners have a duty to ensure resources reach the parishes where assistance is most required. I will work to ensure that duty is honoured.

Safeguarding: It is vital that the Church gets safeguarding right for survivors and those attending churches now. I am committed to proper safeguarding at every level of church life and would work to ensure that the experiences of survivors drive deeper change to our structures.

There is pressure to abolish the **Seal of the Confessional**. This would interfere with a sacrament explicitly referenced in the Book of Common Prayer. I support the Catholic Group's defence of the seal.

Conclusion: A lifetime of faith, and the experience with my disabled son, have taught me that grace is always personal. Every person is a mystery known to God alone, and the Church's mission is to meet each one with reverence and compassion. This is the spirit in which I seek to serve on Synod. **I would be very grateful for your first (or high preference) vote at the General Synod Election.**