

Election Address

The Revd Richard Parkinson

I am standing for election to the General Synod because I believe it should continue to include voices rooted in the everyday reality of parish ministry: voices that understand both the opportunities before us and the growing pressures faced by clergy, lay ministers, churchwardens, volunteers, and congregations.



I have served in the Diocese of York for almost thirteen years, first as Rector of St Michael's, Cherry Burton, and then as Priest-in-Charge of the churches of Etton and Dalton Holme. For the first eleven of those years, I was also Chaplain to Bishop Burton College. I have served as Area Dean of Beverley and am currently Acting Archdeacon of East Riding. I also serve as a trustee of Wonder Learning Partnership, a Multi-Academy Trust, which has further developed my experience of governance, strategic responsibility, and support for those who serve children, young people, and local communities. These roles have given me a deep appreciation of the commitment, skill, and faithfulness of those who serve the Church—often quietly and at considerable personal cost.

I am passionate about parish ministry and about enabling every minister, lay and ordained, paid and voluntary. The parish church remains a remarkable gift to our nation: present in every community, available at significant moments in people's lives, and called to bear faithful, generous Christian witness. Our task is not simply to preserve buildings or institutions, but to sustain living communities of discipleship, prayer, welcome, service, and mission.

I was raised in the Presbyterian Church in Northern Ireland and have served as a preacher and evangelist across a range of Christian traditions. Before ordination, I was deeply involved in children's and youth work, mission and evangelism, including ecumenical work in Ireland. That experience continues to shape my ministry: I value the breadth of the Church of England, believe in active partnership with other Christians, and remain convinced that the Church should communicate the good news of Jesus Christ with confidence, humility, and compassion.

If elected, I would focus on three closely connected priorities.

First, I want to see a stronger, more confident culture of lay ministry. With fewer stipendiary clergy available, we must not merely expect lay people to fill gaps. Rather, we should resource, affirm, train, and trust the whole people of God for the ministry to which they are called. Healthy parish ministry depends on clergy and lay people working together as partners, each offering their distinct gifts. General Synod should help create the conditions for this to flourish locally.

Secondly, I would be a clear advocate for rural and small-church ministry. I chair the Diocese of York's Rural Life and Faith Group, which aims to be a strategic and positive voice for our rural and village-based worshipping communities. Small churches are not simply a problem to be managed; they are places of deep faithfulness, local knowledge, relationships, and potential. National policy and funding need to recognise the

distinctiveness of rural ministry, rather than assuming that solutions designed for larger or urban contexts can be applied everywhere.

Thirdly, Synod must maintain a determined focus on reducing the administrative burden on parishes and clergy. The Church has committed itself to simplifying governance, processes, and functions. That commitment now needs to be delivered in a way that is tangible in parish life. Necessary safeguarding, financial, and legal responsibilities must be carried out well, but they should be proportionate, well-supported, and designed around the realities of local ministry. Too much clergy and volunteer energy is currently absorbed by systems that can feel remote from mission and pastoral care. We need governance that enables the Church's calling, rather than obscuring it.

Alongside these priorities, I will speak for the wellbeing of those who bear responsibility within the Church. Clergy, lay ministers, churchwardens, staff, and volunteers need more than warm words: they need clear expectations, effective support, proper encouragement, and a culture in which asking for help is recognised as a sign of wisdom rather than failure.

I would bring to General Synod experience across parish, deanery, diocesan, rural, educational, and ecumenical ministry. More importantly, I would bring a commitment to listen carefully, speak honestly, work collaboratively, and keep the needs of local worshipping communities at the centre of my contribution.

I would be honoured to serve the Diocese of York in this capacity.