

CATHERINE TURNER

Rector of the United Parish of West Buckrose

As the Rector of a united parish, I support 8 churches and 9 villages set in 100 square miles on the edge of the Wolds. We have a single, large PCC with local DCCs to help us manage our parish and its churches. I have held this post for just over 3 years. Previously I served my title in a rural benefice in the Diocese of Norwich.

My roots are in North Yorkshire, where my mother's family have lived for so many generations that some of my forebears are buried in my own churchyards, but so far down I have yet to find them.

My parish includes three schools all of which have warmly welcomed me including a country primary where we run our toddler group. I currently serve as the nominated safeguarding governor in our church school.



Prior to ordination I worked in human resources for various organisations ranging from retail companies to the NHS giving me a range of experience in different industries. Latterly I worked in a FTSE 100 global company where my work included management training and development, employee engagement, team building, human rights and change management. When I left, I set up my own business, consulting with several large businesses to provide advice and support in everything from health and safety to employee wellbeing and diversity. I trained part time in parallel to consulting.

Why I am standing

I feel called to stand for synod firstly to ensure that the voices of rural ministry and our rural parishes are heard. 78% of our parishes in the Diocese of York are classified as rural, but within this number we see a range of contexts from those in small market towns to parishes more like my own, where all the churches have electricity, but few have running water. Initiatives that work in urban settings and even small towns often aren't possible in our rural parishes and so we need to make sure that a realistic rural lens is always applied. We want all churches to thrive and for rural churches this sometimes means a different approach to ensure they are doing more than just surviving.

Although we may be fortunate to live in beautiful areas, the beauty often conceals poverty, poor access to services through a complete lack of public transport and connectivity, as well as social isolation and health inequalities. This is not just about older people but everyone who lives in a rural area. In North Yorkshire for example, the reduction in maternity services has led to significant problems for new mothers and young families, especially those living on some of our more isolated farms. Synod needs to lend its voice to these issues too.

Secondly, during my time in human resources, I trained as a specialist paralegal in employment law and later took a Master of Laws degree with the Open University. My dissertation in completion of this explored intersectional diversity so it will not surprise you to know that I am also committed to ensuring equality at all levels and roles within the Church, for everyone, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity or sexuality and that includes intersections of those characteristics. I believe that God loves and welcomes us all and being passionate about inclusion, I have taught classes on it at my TEI.

What I bring

I would hope to bring **the voice of rural churches, ministry and communities** to Synod whilst holding in parallel the needs of our urban mission. General Synod should hear a diversity of voices of all characteristics and from all contexts and traditions.

I would also bring my **skills in HR, a passion for diversity and experience in change management**. For me it isn't just the issues discussed that matter, it is how we translate decisions for the parishes and put them into action. This includes consideration of implementation. Change is hard and we need to plan for it.

My work in **employee engagement speaks directly to the need for clergy care** and I understand why it matters and the impact it has. With increasing demands on our time and fewer full-time clergy, this issue must remain front of mind at Synod.

I have an interest in **communication** and feel it is important that we ensure there is no disconnect between the decisions of Synod and those at grass roots level who are expected to enact them. I would work to bridge this gap wherever possible.

I enjoy the **study of laws and interrogation of legislation**. I feel strongly that just as secular law should reflect society and its needs, so canon law should reflect our church as it is today. Law should always be relevant and enabling, helping us to grow as the body of Christ and to be welcoming to all.

About me



I have been a Christian all my life and throughout my childhood experienced a range of different churches before finding my way back to the Church of England via the Church of Scotland and Methodism.

I am married to Iain, a former head teacher who supports me in my role in many very practical ways.

We have two adult sons and three grandchildren. My sons were adopted as young children and through them we have experience of the care system and the resilience needed to care for previously looked after children.