

Candidate: Revd Michael Windridge

1. Describe your Anglican identity in three words

mainstream liberal catholic

2. What would be your top three priorities for this coming General Synod if you were elected?

- a) 'Banging the drum for rural ministry' and supporting others in wishing to see restored Church Commissioners' funds to their primary purpose, namely stipendiary parish ministry.
- b) Highlighting the crisis in decline of stipendiary parish priests, especially in rural parishes.
- c) Articulating both the positive and potential dangers of AI development and its future impact on parish ministry.

3. What would you bring to the General Synod which will enhance its culture, reputation and work?

Substantial experience of rural ministry together with communication skills developed through previous business, local government and parliamentary research work.

4. How best do you think the National Church could use its significant financial resources to further the 5-marks of mission?

The first mark of mission is to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. The significant financial resources of the Church (of England) should be directed towards increasing the supply of better theologically trained stipendiary priests in more manageable parish environments.

5. What steps do you believe General Synod must take next to ensure robust independent and transparent safeguarding practices across every level of the Church?

As mentioned in my election address I agree with Professor Alexis Jay who chaired the Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse that the Church should transfer all responsibility for dealing with abuse and safeguarding issues to an entirely independent body.

6. What is your vision for the rural church and how its life and mission should be supported?

The Church of England has over 10,000 rural churches with 40% of churchgoers worshipping in rural churches. Approximately 68% of churches in Norfolk are based in rural areas. Rural churches are not merely custodians of heritage buildings but provide a mission opportunity to be embraced. Clergy resources at parish level are critical for inspiring and supporting the greater involvement of lay ministry.

7. What do you believe the Church's role is at this time of climate crisis.

To follow the example of Bishop Graham and proclaim from every pulpit that climate change is not simply a scientific or political question but is a matter of Christian moral responsibility and compassion.

8. In light of the Church of England's 'From Lament to Action' report, and recognising the increasing polarisation in UK public life around nationalism, identity and migration, what would your contribution be to fostering racial diversity and challenge discrimination in our church?

In matters relating to modern equality policy the Church needs to articulate more powerfully that policies governing racial diversity and discrimination flow from the Gospel's command to love God and our neighbours. It follows that racial prejudice has no place in the life of the Church.

I am proud to mention that in the Depwade Deanery there are two African priests holding senior stipendiary and priest-in-charge appointments, both of whom are universally loved by their generous-spirited congregations.

9. What are your views on Project Spire (the Church Commissioners' findings about transatlantic chattel slavery) and the proposal to create a fund for healing, repair and justice?

This question poses a huge moral challenge in my mind. I am aware that there has been substantial criticism from General Synod members, MPs and historians. I have also read that there is a serious legal challenge to the Commissioners' decision to apportion £100 million to the Project Spire cause. I am aware too that Project Spire does not take money from parish share or parish collections. However I do worry about the accountability and centralisation aspects of this 'Project' and would prefer to delay a final decision until at least the legal challenge has been addressed.

10. What is your view about the sacramental ministry of priests and bishops who are women, and do you personally receive their ministry in full?

I am an appreciative beneficiary of the wonderful sacramental ministry of women bishops and priests. The ordination of women to the priesthood and to the episcopacy has bestowed upon the Church of England (and the Diocese of Norwich, in particular) countless blessings.

11. What is your view on the current status of the 'House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests and the five guiding principles?

I support fully the current Bishops' Declaration, especially as it recognises the majority position that women can and should serve as bishops and priests. As part of the 'Declaration' I also approve of the Church enabling those who cannot accept women's ministry to "flourish within (the church's) life and structures".

12. What is your view about services of blessings in church after a civil same sex marriage at (1) a usual service (2) a stand alone service and (3) same sex marriage service conducted in churches (in all cases where the incumbent and PCC are supportive?

I am all in favour of blessings in church 1) at a usual service and also 2) at a stand alone service. However although I am sure that, in due course, the Holy Spirit will guide us to be able to conduct a same sex marriage service in Church, I do not believe the Bishops have yet worked out a theological justification for the departure from the traditional understanding of marriage being between husband and wife.

13. What is your view about the ordination of candidates who are in same sex marriages and the licensing of clergy who enter same sex marriage?

I support both the ordination of clergy who are in same sex marriages and the licensing of clergy who enter same sex marriage.

14. How do you plan to communicate and consult effectively with the wider electorate?

Following every General Synod meeting I would endeavour to email a short report of the business conducted to the following recipients:

Norwich Diocesan licensed clergy and those priests with PTO

All LLMs in Depwade Deanery

PCC secretaries in Depwade Deanery

Lay chairs of Depwade and Redenhall Deanery Synods

News Editor, EDP