

Candidate: Jennie Cummings-Knight

1 Describe your Anglican identity in three words.

Christ, Community, Discipleship

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

- a) Commitment to the teachings of Christ as expounded in the Bible
- b) Relevance of church to the unchurched without compromise on articles of faith – being in touch with needs and challenges
- c) A return to family values and committed relationships

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

I would bring my experience as a psychotherapist over 22 years, where I engage with deep need in real time, as a resource for engaging with people of all faiths or none. I would bring my expertise in the study of male identity issues and their impact in healthy and unhealthy relationships.

I would bring my knowledge of safeguarding in practise, and in particular the erosion of parental rights under the guise of “children’s rights”. I would demonstrate how we are failing children in not being sufficiently aware of online grooming and in allowing them to make adult decisions.

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

Points 1-3, Tell, Teach and Tend, and Treasure (5) should be our main focus, and discipleship should be a hall mark of a mature church community. This is going to look different in practise in urban vs rural communities. My sense is that Mark 4, Transform, could be an area that takes over and dominates the first three in an unhealthy way. For example, the church could be infiltrated by political ideologies such as Critical Social Justice, an approach that lacks nuance and can create a “victim mentality”.

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?

I think that the Church of England has been slow to implement changes in schools even after the government has issued updated guidance, on issues that arise from children’s exposure to social media. In addition, I think that it is essential that the specific safeguarding needs of children and adults need to be differentiated, following child

developmental stage guidance (e.g Piaget, 1936 onwards, Vygotsky, 1926 onwards), particularly with regard to trans ideation.

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

The rural church (to which I belong) often with small elderly populations, struggles with engaging with families except for at weddings, baptisms and funerals. More can be made of these occasions. Greater engagement with social media would also be an advantage.

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

Churchyards could become beacons of good practise with regard to conservation and diversity. Many churches lack the funds to run in an eco-friendly manner, but on the other hand stone buildings have been made to last and whilst needing repair, are essentially more sustainable over time than modern buildings. Heating is the biggest challenge in an old building.

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?

Whilst it is of course essential that we strive to welcome all people to our churches, it is also respectful to understand that some groups prefer particular styles of worship and will gravitate towards churches that provide that. Members of some ethnic groups also prefer to worship with each other. Where discrimination is found I believe that it is often best to address this on an individual basis, but preaching the gospel and engaging with its teaching, will always tackle discrimination on a regular basis, as this is what Christ did himself.

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)?

I have concerns that the lifelong efforts of certain prominent churchmen and women who worked towards the abolition of slavery and were instrumental in the passing of the 1833 Abolition of Slavery Act, effective across the British Empire, are not publicly acknowledged by the Church of England.

Signatures were collected and collated in the village of Northrepps where I currently live. The descendants of Thomas Fowell Buxton and Anna Gurney for example, still live

here and are active in the Church. Reparations: my understanding is that African slave traders were financially compensated along with British ones, around 1837.¹

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 personally receive full sacramental ministry from the female Rector of the 7 churches of the Deanery of Repps in Poppyland, and also from Bishop Jane and Archdeacon Catherine. Our lay reader at Northrepps (aged 86) is also female.

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?

Because of Biblical principles of headship, I think that the House of Bishops' Declaration, providing a formal mechanism for those who cannot accept female leadership, is wise and practical.

The Five Guiding Principles, which are committed to mutual flourishing, also seem to be a sensible way to navigate potential difficulties.

12 What is your view about services of blessing in church after a civil same-sex marriage at (i) a usual service, or (ii) a standalone service, and (iii) same sex marriage conducted in churches (in all cases where the incumbent and PCC are supportive)?

I think that a service of blessing for a same sex couple who are close friends and companions, needs to be understood as something separate to the Sacrament of Marriage, which was created to safeguard the family unit and protect children born into that relationship.

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 have personal reservations about same sex marriage for members of the clergy, although I fully support consenting adults to make their own decisions with regard to their personal relationships.

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

I plan to communicate and consult effectively with the wider electorate by attending church services and events, liaising with those who do not attend church, participating in Deanery Synod events and generally listening to what others have to say.

¹ Emeritus Professor Robert Tombs, University of Cambridge