

Candidate: Revd Graham Kirk-Spriggs

1 Describe your Anglican identity in three words.

Inclusive, Parochial, Present

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

Continued work in the Improvement of support for clergy, particularly disabled and neurodiverse clergy and ensuring good terms and conditions for all Clergy that work for the CofE, Stipendiary or Self-Supported.

Improvement in the way the Church of England treats LGBTQ+ people. The removal of enforced celibacy and prohibition of marriage for Same-Sex Coupled Clergy. LGBT clergy should not have expectations placed on them, that straight colleagues are not expected to live by.

Getting Safeguarding right, with continued scrutiny and a fully independent safeguarding service. And continuing the Governance Review work to make the Church more streamlined and collaborative.

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

I have been on General Synod for the past five years and have contributed to many debates through speeches. I hope to continue to be a voice for those who find it difficult to speak or are overlooked. General Synod needs to listen to those voices, as much as those who shout the loudest.

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

There are parts of the Church of England that are being asset stripped by already wealthy churches who have the resources that many of us dream of. There has also been a concentration on SMIB (Strategic Ministry Investment Board) on short term projects that have no longevity, and often don't have great outcomes. I believe that Parishes are the factory floor of mission, and that properly resourced and *innovative* parish ministry is the future.

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?

Too often the Church has put too much power in the hands of individuals in our hierarchy. We need to continue on what has already been done with safeguarding

professionals that understand and support clergy, but the structures need to be fully independent and not answerable to the hierarchy of the church.

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

I don't believe that rural churches are failing. I know many across the diocese that are active in service and love in their community. We need to recognise the good examples and stop using language about 'dwindling'. A far higher percentage of the population attend rural churches than in urban areas which often isn't recognised. For these churches to flourish they need to be resourced properly. Larger benefices are not tenable, we need to seriously look at equipping lay people and the rural church for the future through investment, particularly administrative and missional support.

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

I was happy to support the ambitious goal of Net Zero by 2030 in the last quinquennium. The resources and land that the Church has, the careful stewarding of both our agricultural land and church yards is vitally important. The Climate Crisis is both a moral and societal issue, and definitely something we can and should speak into. In the House of Lords and through the General Synod, we have done a lot in the last five years to put this high on the agenda. The church has a unique responsibility to encourage environmentalism.

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?

I was pleased to be able to attend various racial justice fringe meetings at General Synod, and my support for this work is unequivocal. Much of the rise in nationalism is down to people feeling overlooked and ignored. I think as a church we need to listen to those who feel ignored, and continue to have a strong presence in working class communities, where in some places the Church is the last public service left.

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)?

The Church of England has directly benefited from the enslavement of people. I believe Project Spire is a start. In matters of justice the Church should be setting an example, that many other institutions should and could follow. UKME/GMH people still face discrimination in both the Church and wider society, it's only right that the Church gives a proportion of its wealth to help combat this injustice. After all, the

fourth mark of mission is **“Transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.”**

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 cannot imagine a Church of England without women as full and integral parts of it. I think it's a huge shame that some don't feel that way. I have been blessed to work with many women clergy colleagues, encourage their vocations, and I fully affirm and support their ministry in full, from Lay Ministry to the Episcopate.

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 believe that breadth in the Church of England is a good thing, I have worked with FiF colleagues who were deeply supportive of women in the church. I believe that conscience of clergy should be respected. However, there have been times when the five guiding principles have been used as a blunt instrument and as an excuse for misogyny. The Church of England has discerned that women are priests. Theological conviction is one thing, misogyny is another. 'Taint' is deeply harmful to women colleagues and should be consigned to the history books.

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 am fully affirming of LGBTQ+ people and their right to marry. I would be overjoyed to be able to offer same-sex marriage in church, but that is not where the Church currently finds itself. I also recognise and understand some take the opposite view, and I affirm that they should be able to respond how their conscience guides them, much like marrying divorcees and women's ordination. We have made compromises over many other issues, I do not understand why we can't with this.

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?

Both should be supported and encouraged. We are in a vocations crisis and it's partly because some people have had their vocations squashed. There have been situations in other dioceses (not our diocese) where ordinands have been encouraged to get divorced in order to train for ordination. How can that possibly be in line with a view that marriage is permanent, faithful and stable? Clergy should be free to order their lives, and the church has no right to tell them they are not allowed to participate in a civil right under British law.

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

In the last quinquennium I wrote regular briefings to deanery colleagues about what happened at General Synod, with all my contact details on the document. I see myself as a rep who wants to act in the best interests of all the clergy of this diocese. If clergy email me I respond, and am always happy to ask questions on their behalf.