

Candidate: Revd Samuel Lees

- 1 Describe your Anglican identity in three words.**
 - a. Broad
 - b. Missional
 - c. Local
- 2 What would be your top three priorities for this coming General Synod if you were elected?**
 - a. Restoration and Reconciliation following the division of recent years
 - b. The thriving of all ministers, especially those from working-class and low-income backgrounds
 - c. The continuation of the discussion and research into neurodivergence and the Church.
- 3 What would you bring to the General Synod which will enhance its culture, reputation and work?**
 - a. Synod has been blessed over the years with many representatives of different backgrounds and cultures, and so my specific background is probably not the ultimate USP – but what this next synod needs is peacemakers. Talks of schism were thrown around towards the end of last synod and this should break all of our hearts. We need a synod that despite difference can work hard for a united, varied and stronger Church of England.
- 4 How best do you think the National Church could use its significant financial resources to further the 5-marks of mission?**
 - a. Equipping local churches. The importance of the parish is immeasurable. With the reduction in clergy numbers, we have seen a correlating drop in people's connectedness to the church. We need to champion local churches serving local people and make sure they have the resources to continue doing so.
- 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?**
 - a. To continue with independent audit and oversight, and to build a culture of true transparency... not being transparent until the point a reputation is at risk – but fully and unrelentingly transparent that we as a church might be able to begin to recover our credibility after a long history of failings.
- 6 What is your vision for the rural church and how its life and mission should be supported?**
 - a. Firstly, I think that there is a widely held perception that rural churches serve the 'wealthy village-dwellers' and this means that a lot of resources are diverted to more obvious places of deprivation like estates and city-

centres – this leads to a lot of rural and coastal poverty being missed – rural benefices are often left with one incumbent between 5-6-7 churches and this brings a limitation to the local impact possible. Rural parishes are as vital as any other and the resources and rhetoric need to recognise this.

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

- a. To lament. But also to turn that lament to action, and by effective and collaborative action; bring hope. The church is often unique in it's ability to be a voice of hope in hopeless times... I believe that is very important right now.

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?

- a. I believe that on the whole, the Church of England remains united in being a church that celebrates its diversity – this message is something that the wider population sorely needs. Yet it cannot be ignored that stories exist of discrimination and polarisation even within our churches – we need to be ready to listen to the voices that dare to speak up and much like with our response to safeguarding, be ready to act on what we hear rather than sweeping things under the carpet that threaten image or reputation.

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?

- a. The Church of England's involvement with slavery is truly reprehensible, and project spire simply brings to light some of the shadowy past of our church. Though I don't think throwing money at things is necessarily the answer – I do have real hope in the projects that will come out of the funding helping to make sure that our future is much, much brighter than our past.

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?

- a. I believe women should be present in all roles of ministry – I would not be a priest today without the witness of some truly anointed female priests, and our church would be in a much worse place without the inclusion of their ministry. I support, receive and champion their continued ministry in full.

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?

- a. As mentioned in my electoral statement, my heart is for reconciliation and working well in difference, and to that end I believe the five guiding principles are a good attempt to allow mutual flourishing in a broad and varied church.

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)?

- a. Fittingly following a question on the five guiding principles this is a question that is never going to have a single agreed answer. There should be provision for local conscience – so that those who don't believe in any of the above on theological grounds do not feel pressured to do so, but equally those whose theology encompasses a broader view of love are able to carry out such ministry. If the incumbent and PCC are supportive of such things, (subject to the canons and doctrines of the Church of England) there is sufficient supportive theology in place to allow it to proceed.

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?

- a. Our rich diversity is a marker of the creativity of God, to gatekeep those who are called to minister in God's church is a painful mistake I have seen the damage of close to home. I believe ordination should be open to all of the above.

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

- a. I don't believe it is the place of general synod member to solely push their own agenda, but to raise and report on the concerns and hopes of the wider electorate, I will always be contactable to raise or report on any such things – and make sure the voice of the diocese is heard.