

Candidate: John Hooper

1 Describe your Anglican identity in three words.

Scripture – experience-tradition

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

1. Campaign to direct more money directly to Parish ministry so as to enable no Priest to have to care for more than 5 churches.
2. Encourage new and different thinking on the vexed question of sexual orientation. I believe there is confusion between specific actions (whether, marriage, blessing etc) and what inclusivity really means.
3. To press for a significant reduction in Diocesan Office costs. This can be done, as has been done in other large public organisations by creating combining the back-office functions of several diocese into single units and direct savings to parish ministry.

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

Apart from my experience of cultural change in other large organisations including the NHS and skills gained in other areas particularly communication of messages and finance, my deep passion to enable people to hear and receive the Good News of Jesus and a loving God.

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

The Christian Church at a pivotal moment. No longer is it realistic to look to those ordained alone to do the work to fulfil the Great Commission handed down to us by Jesus. The working out of the 5 marks of mission lies primarily with those working at local levels i.e our congregations. By directing for the benefit of local ministry, we can spend time and money “training” empowering and encouraging all Christians to share their faith, share the good news and use their skills and faith to help transform society.

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 a Parish Safeguarding Officer, I have read widely on this subject including the full Makin, Jay and other reports and followed the debate. Few of us are experts in this area but the church needs to carefully consider all the recommendations and implement changes. Such changes must demonstrate clear lines of accountability. Much more needs to be done in demonstrating concern, compassion, care and support for survivors of abuse.

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

In part see my answer to Q3. Most rural congregations are few and elderly. We need to grow congregations by sharing faith, bringing others to a knowledge of Jesus and God. We need leaders who together with ordinary lay Christians can build real and strong collaborative ministry teams to take forward the diocesan strategy of telling stories, sharing faith and giving tangible support to rural congregations. Surely this is what the early disciples and followers of Jesus did. Let us shake off the fear of “putting people off”, recognise that often faith = risk

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

First practise what we believe is necessary to do. Second educate and support. It is small actions by millions that have effect. I have found that few people know how much electricity, how much water and how the consumption of other things affecting the climate and environment. I'd like to see our congregations making a cultural change in attitude to these matters and influencing others. That apart church initiatives of zero carbon and the “environmentalisation” of church property underpins the churches culture. and policies.

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 strongly endorse much of what is recommended in the report and would give support to that at General Synod. There will no doubt be considerations around costs and budgets in implementing but that must stop us doing what is right. At a local level I would seek to ensure that Deanery Synods and PCCs consider the implication of the report. As individuals we start by examining our own hearts and to challenge any incidents and wrong thinking about people they think of “as not the same”

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 speak to quite a number of people who object to money being used in this way. Many would like to draw a line under history. Once again education is key. Having seen accounts of the archbishops' visit to West Africa and the suffering which is a legacy of slavery I am sympathetic to doing what we can to recognise the suffering, the hurt and the injustice. We need to act to fully recognise this and continue the work of healing 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 personally am comfortable with the ministry of women priests and bishops. "in full?" opens up a deep theological debate which with respect few really grasp. The view that sacramental ministry is the preserve of men is largely a matter of tradition for many. I have yet to be theologically convinced that women should not exercise such ministry. I am left wondering if this is a fundamental matter of doctrine. I understand and have compassion for the feelings of those unable to accept such ministry.

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

This relates in part to Q10. I would be sad and opposed to any prejudice against ordaining men who hold traditionalist views and cannot accept the ministry of female priests or bishops. I don't believe that the requirement to respect the church's decision to ordain women, is a compromise of that belief and need be a barrier to seeking ordination.

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 believe God welcomes all into His loving care and grace and is prepared to give his blessing to all who seek it. Therefore, I am comfortable with blessings following a civil ceremony whichever form it takes. The whole debate on same sex marriage in church (and see also Q13) has a long way to go. To some extent I share the unease of many and ponder over a situation where the church still has a marriage service that says marriage is between a man and a woman.

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 think my response to Q12 indicates my feeling at the present time.

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

I regularly report on Deanery and Diocesan Synods to my PCC and since being a member of diocesan synod, likewise circulate to Deanery Synod members not only diocesan matters but also General Synod news because that features on the DS agenda. Through the agendas of both synods, I encourage discussion. I have recently asked that the PCC agenda relating to synods is widened to include "national church news". My final answer "I talk to people and listen."