

Candidate: Revd Charles Read

1 Describe your Anglican identity in three words.

Scripture, rootedness, local

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

- a. To make sure that financial and other resources were channelled towards frontline ministry in parishes and other localities
- b. to help move us forward on issues around same sex marriage
- c. to encourage the church to develop a realistic plan for vocations to ordained and lay ministry

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

I bring a broad understanding of the Church of England in all its diversity, including rural and urban settings and with a variety of church traditions . I also bring some experience of how Synod works and good skills in networking, listening to a variety of views and trying to find ways forward through contentious issues. I also bring a firm desire for justice and fairness and a certain determination not to let go of things that I think are important.

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

Chiefly it should do this by making sure we attend to all five of the mark submission I'm not just the first one or two, which I fear is what has been our national mission policy in recent years . Rebalancing national church funding for mission projects so that parishes and other localities get fair access to funding would be an important development which I would want to push. Pretty much everything else about mission could flow from this - research shows new expressions of church flourish best if they arise out of existing expressions of church.

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?

We need to find ways to ensure that the voices of survivors are clearly heard at national level and that there is no way that vested interests can obstruct safeguarding policy or practice. This means being willing to make changes to the way we do things and maybe even a letting go of power in some quarters. Some form of national independence safeguarding oversight seems to me to be highly

desirable. A key word in the question is the word transparent - so that it is clear why decisions have been made and that issues have been dealt with.

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

The rural church has much to teach other churches about collaborative ministry, genuine lay ministry and leadership and engagement with the local community. I long for the church to learn these lessons and others from churches in rural settings. I see much valuable gospel work going on in the rural churches I visit and despair to hear voices wanting to take resources away from the countryside. We therefore need to make sure that rural churches are realistically supported, which will include active valuing of new forms of ministry and especially of shared ministry.

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

We should be showing by example what can be done locally and nationally to ease the climate crisis and sharing good practice with our local communities. We should also be making the case for climate care out of our theological resources. This includes celebrating the wonder of creation.

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 am a privileged white man and I know it! I have therefore tried over a very long time to listen to the voices of those from different backgrounds, including Black and Asian Christians in the UK and from around the world. We have made this a priority in the shaping of ministry training through *Common Awards*. I therefore bring a lot of experience of being a white man listening to the experiences of others and trying to get those experiences heard - what feminist theologians sometimes call 'hearing into speech'.

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?

We cannot deny that the Church of England has benefited financially from the transatlantic slave trade. The gospel demands that we do something about it - the Hebrew word Shalom has as part of its root meaning the idea of putting things right or making reparation. But how? There is a further discussion to be

had here. We have not been good at having this conversation across the whole church and enabling people to see why we need to make reparation. The fund should be used to combat racism in a very clear way in church and society.

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 have campaigned for the ordination of women almost all my adult life and voted for women as bishops in both the General Synod votes (i.e. including the first vote, which failed in the house of Laity). I rejoice to minister alongside ordained women colleagues, have taught hundreds of women ordinands and believe that women clergy are just as much ordained as I am – i.e. really ordained not just ‘legally’ ordained. I rejoice to be able to receive the sacramental ministry of women clergy.

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 served on General Synod when this was all put together and I challenged some of it at the time. I think that the Five Guiding Principles are not working as those who drafted them hoped they would - there is no mutual flourishing in many places with the ministry of women being diminished. I think we need to revisit the Five Guiding Principles to see whether they can be revised so that they will actually work or whether in fact we need to start again with a new framework that will enable the ministry of women to flourish.

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 would support all three of the scenarios listed here and would also want to see a framework in place so that couples could have such a service somewhere if their own incumbent and PCC were not happy for it to happen in their own church. My basis for taking this view is that I think we should be able to affirm and celebrate same sex as well as opposite sex relationships but that we should respect the views of those who come to a different conclusion - but without marginalising gay people.

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 taught many gay ordinands, many of whom have been in faithful, long term partnerships. In the light of my answer to the question above, I would

support clergy and ordinance being able to enter into same sex and therefore that such clergy should be licenced on the same basis as clergy who are single or in opposite sex relationships.

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

In previous dioceses where I have briefly served as a General Synod member we divided deaneries up between us and each General Synod member both reported back to our allocated deaneries but also tried to maintain links with them above and beyond mere reporting. We should do this here. I would also want to make myself available by being present at Diocesan Synod and other events so that people could just come and talk to me. We also need better and fuller reporting back on General Synod at Diocesan Synod.