



John Brydon
Norwich East Deanery

PARISH

PRIEST

PEOPLE

It's hard to imagine that 5 years have passed since I wrote to many of you asking for your vote as I stood for General Synod under the then new Save the Parish (STP) manifesto and in support, particularly but not exclusively of the rural parishes, priests and people. Much has happened in this time but firstly and especially for new voters a little about me.

Since leaving school I have been and remain committed to working in the voluntary sector. As a lifelong Christian I continue to serve on various church committees, and am currently again a churchwarden and a member of both deanery and diocesan synod. I stood for General Synod following a period of criticism of the Church as I felt change was needed and that the rural church in particular was being sidelined. The newly formed STP provided a platform for like minded people to come together.

During the 5 years some things have changed. STP has grown as an organisation and last year we launched a Norfolk branch. We have a new Archbishop, a new and more sympathetic Chairman of the Archbishop's Finance Committee and most importantly, we are now beginning to see positive change. Many of us were new to synod and it has taken time for us to familiarise ourselves with what is a complex and bureaucratic organisation governed by 141 pages of Standing Orders and to begin to change entrenched views. STP is there to work with the church whilst at the same time challenging measures and being a catalyst for change. Slowly but surely we have changed the narrative and are now winning battles. For example, the Triennium Funding Group now has to consult with synod when it is looking at a new spending period and in the then proposed new Governance Measure (see below), we were able to insert words that made it obligatory for the Central Church to consider how money would be used for the 'Cure of Souls' when it was distributed. Change is going to take time but STP is in a good position to move it forward.

Since joining STP I have worked on financial matters including consolidating the finances of the 42 dioceses which the central church had not done. You can see our work and the individual diocesan accounts in a tabulated form on the STP website. This has enabled us to discern financial trends and has formed the basis of discussions with central church officers, debates at synod, as well as external presentations and discussions. I have raised various questions concerning the

church's finances and been called on a number of occasions to speak on admin, governance and financial matters. Along with others we worked on a plan to direct money to the parishes. Unfortunately, a delaying motion amendment was passed so the matter is now carried over to July 2027. A good reason for me wanting to stand again so I can hopefully speak as well as vote. I have formed a Norfolk STP branch, held an inaugural meeting last year and a conference this year on the 5 September entitled 'The Future of the Rural Parish.'

One thing I have not been able to do, is write at least annually to every voter. I have given reports to Norfolk STP members and at Diocesan Synod but Data Protection would not allow the diocese to give me individual contact details once the original election process had closed.

So, what of the future. I am standing again because, whilst all synods are important the next one will be even more so for the following reasons:-

- Financial Review – 35 dioceses have forecast deficit budgets for this year and it will only get worse. I and others are committed to trying to free up money so it can be directed where it is needed i.e. the dioceses and particularly the parishes. The Church Commissioners sit on £11.6bn of your money given originally to help poorer clergy and parishes. Unless we are successful we will continue to see cutbacks in clergy and ever larger benefices as well as minster groups.
- Mission and Pastoral Measure – the original proposed measure provoked an enormous and negative response given it sought to remove many of the safeguards a parish has. The new measure is line by line making its way back for debate and it remains to be seen what the proposed changes are.
- Safeguarding – My personal view is that the whole of Safeguarding should have been placed outside the church. However, synod agreed that we should initially move to independent oversight, which is in progress, whilst retaining control of the day-to-day operations.
- Living in Love and Faith – This item took up an enormous amount of synod time. In the end it was clear that synod was almost split down the middle and it was agreed this item should be closed at the July 26 synod meeting. In turn two groups chaired by a bishop will be formed to take the work forward and report back
- National Church Governance Measure – following queries by the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament this measure has currently been withdrawn. STP were able to have inserted consideration of the impact on 'the Cure of Souls' as a standing item whenever monies were to be distributed. It is important that we ensure these words are back in any revised document.

Space does not allow for more but I should be pleased to deal with any questions or give more information via johnmb@btinternet.com , telephone 01603 452701. In asking for your vote you are supporting both me and the work of STP. I shall continue to work to support the parish system, our priests and you the people, with a particular emphasis on the rural church.

Thank you, John Brydon