

Andrew Hammond

Vicar of Wymondham

A BIT ABOUT ME

I've been in Wymondham for two years. I've served in one of the richest and one of the poorest parishes in the CofE, as well as being a minor canon at St Paul's Cathedral and chaplain in two Cambridge colleges.

Before ordination I worked in classical music: first as an opera singer, then in management (as well as many years as casting director at the Thursford Christmas shows!) I grew up in Nottinghamshire, where my father (a plumber) was churchwarden for many years. I was the first in our family to go to university.

This broad background underpins what I'd hope to bring to General Synod. So does the year I spent as its Chaplain (2021-22). That came to a bruising end, as a quick google search will tell you (only the Church Times article is worth reading!) But it really was an enjoyable and fascinating year.

I learned at Synod that between the noisy partisans (some of whom I agreed with, of course) was a quietly conscientious majority: a cross-section of the CofE's traditions meeting hospitably and constructively.



My pitch is to be an energetic member of that majority: faithful to my own views, but keen to move forward on all fronts consensually, generously and determined to discern and fulfil God's purposes for our Church. We face some huge challenges, so we need to pull together. And I'd be doing this as a colleague of yours: hearing from you, reporting back, and alert to the particular issues we face here.

SOME PRIORITIES

Mission and evangelism: our first priority is to tell of the saving love of God made known in Jesus, and to live that out in the world. We do this best when we speak humbly and hopefully, recognising the messy reality of life. My experience (especially with students) is that we face not resistance but indifference and unfamiliarity. If folk have a view, it's that our beliefs are mad, our services boring and our ethics repressive. Some will have had a bad, maybe very bad, experience of church.

And yet we can often detect in conversation – and in public discourse – a deep hunger for meaning and authenticity. Most green shoots of recovery are founded in ancient impulses: a sense that there is more to life than meets the eye, that truth and beauty and love are not just noble ideas but woven into the essence of being human together, that the very ground of our being is benevolent.

The challenge then is to recognise these contrasting realities and respond with the wisdom and gentleness Jesus recommended, as we look to share the gospel. For me this includes:

Celebrating the CofE's comprehensiveness, our diversity and breadth. This gift, if well represented in Synod, can make for collaborative and constructive discussion and decision-making.

Making best use of the CofE's unique inheritance, the parish system. Instead of vast top-down initiatives, resources should be devolved to parishes. There are difficult decisions to make about the care and maintenance of no few rural churches, but the care of every soul in every parish

Outreach, especially to young people and especially via social media, needs to be much more savvy. The one thing you can say about Gen Z is that there is no one thing you can say about Gen Z: except that they have sharp sincerity sensors. Every bit of outreach needs authenticity and personality. I know this from Tiktok, where I have nearly 32,000 followers. Our mission life must be set free, even if that means taking risks and making mistakes. Safe outreach is counter-productively boring.

There could be a richer provision of *prayer, worship and bible reflections*, and from different traditions within the Church. I had begun this as Chaplain, but it could go further, reminding us to be ever alert to the promptings of the Spirit in every debate and decision.

If elected I would hope to be your representative as assiduously as possible, taking seriously our shared concerns as Norwich clergy. Please also take advantage of the election process. Voting is by single transferable vote: if you're intending to vote for me, please put me high on your list, preferably number one. Chiefly, though, please do use your votes for the candidates you like. And I must say how grateful I am to Julie Boyd and Josh Whitnall for nominating me: that means a lot.

Andrew Hancock

Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Romans 12.10-17