

THE REVD CHRIS HUTTON

Rector of the Earsham (Ditchingham) Benefice
Rural Dean for Redenhall Deanery

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Proposed: The Revd Jonathan Richardson (Harleston)

Seconded: The Revd Tony Heywood (Thetford)



Dear Clergy Friends and Colleagues, I would be most grateful for your support and high preference vote as I seek election to General Synod.

My Story and Ministry Experience

My story is I am 45 years old, married to Caroline, and we have three children: Rosie (18), Flossie (16), Teddy (13). I grew up in Mattishall in central Norfolk (where my parents still live) and attended the parish church as a child which gave me a wonderful start, but my attendance became less frequent as I moved into my teenage years. However, the school I attended had an amazing Christian Union and a friend took me along and that was where my faith was reignited.

University took me to Sussex University in Brighton where I studied Natural Sciences. During this time, I attended a large Evangelical CofE church in Hove. On finishing university, I elected to stay in Brighton (Brighton being a slightly more exciting place to live for a young person over Mattishall) and spent three years working as a youth worker for my church in Hove, alongside work in Toys 'R' Us and Clarks Shoes, while I explored a call to Ministry.

Following three years at Wycliffe Hall in Oxford, I returned to Chichester Diocese to serve a curacy in South Crawley Team Ministry, a parish of 34,000 with large areas of deprivation. During this time I developed my call to Rural Ministry and also wanting to be closer to both my family and Caroline's family as well as avoiding the M25, so at the end of my curacy applied to be the new Rector at Earsham, and moved back to Norwich Diocese in 2014.

Rural Parish Ministry

I am a believer in both city, town and rural Parish Ministry and each is different and I often feel we have a lack of Rural Rectors on General Synod. One of the Church of England's strengths is the rural church. While it has its challenges, e.g. how we manage the system we have inherited, paying for individual parish ministry and care of buildings, the fact that everybody has a local parish church is hugely important for ministry, especially in a Rural context. I long to see the Church of England unashamed of the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe, and that starts with parish ministry. More encouragement needs to be given to local rural parish churches active in evangelism and ministry to all people. I will argue that more support is needed from the church commissioners to go on frontline Ministry and help release some of the burden of parish share on individual congregations.

As Rector of a multi parish benefice of six rural churches (including some with no water or electricity), it is a joy to serve the local community. In Rural communities you still have the local links where the Rector is there for all. I am confident that the rural churches is a real snapshot of what the CofE should be like, with people from all socio-economic backgrounds and across the whole theological spectrum worshipping together because it is the local parish church. We must do what we can to preserve this. On General Synod I would speak out on behalf of our Rural Churches.

Schools

Another strength of the Church of England is our work with and in schools. I am passionate about schools' work and reaching young people with the gospel. The church is in a unique position with the role it has within the education system of our country and on General Synod I would encourage the church's work in our local schools.

Within the Earsham Benefice we take weekly Collective Worship at four church primary schools, and it is a privilege to be involved. I also have the privilege of serving as Chair of Governors at the Harleston Sancroft Academy, the diocese MAT all through school serving 800 pupils and supporting the Christian ethos of the school. My wife, Caroline, is also Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education and is also involved in many schools within the diocese and works closely with the diocese schools' team.

Other important Issues

As always, this synod will deal with some big issues facing the church and there will be a need to respect our differences of opinions and live well together. This is the model of the Rural Church where we are the church for the community, and not our individual tribes.

Marriage: I personally believe that the church's historic understanding of marriage and that the current liturgical provision is sufficient.

Safeguarding: My own evangelical constituency has been shake by the abuse carried out by those who are part of it and I believe the national church as a whole needs to learn from its failures and reform its safeguarding practices so that people may have confidence in them, and so that justice may be done for victims, and they may receive the care they need.

Racism: The gospel of Jesus Christ leaves no place for racism in the church. In eliminating this, the church needs to push back on political ideologies that will cause further division.

Care of Creation: This is good in and of itself and as a church we should be striving to do all we can. However, the church needs to be careful not to support solutions to environmental problems that cause harm in other ways.

Thank you for taking the time to read this address.