

Susanna Cooper
Save the Parish

Standing for the House of Laity, Diocese of Norwich

I am standing as a candidate for General Synod in the Diocese of Norwich because I believe that every parishioner in England should have access to parish ministry and pastoral care. I want the parish to have a stronger voice and to be heard.



My experience of the Church of England over the last 25 years has been in a small rural parish in south Norfolk as Churchwarden. I believe very strongly that the CofE is at its best when it is rooted in the communities it serves; when the church door is open, the bells are ringing, where people are welcomed to worship, children are baptised, couples are married, the bereaved are supported and Christians gather.

WHY AM I STANDING ?

My reasons for standing for election to General Synod are simple and sound. I appreciate that not everyone will agree with me and I will, with respect, listen to other people's opinions and always look for a pragmatic solution. Having worked in The City before getting married and raising children, I had to see the big picture whilst also keeping an eye on detail and being mindful of cost. The CofE does have considerable resources, they may not always be in the correct pot, and I will point this out ! I would endeavour to make the church accountable for the money it spends and try to ensure that good decisions are made with proper discussion.

I am standing because I want to push for a church which values the ordinary, faithful work taking place across the country every day of the year.

I will argue to strengthen our parishes, for

- a clear commitment to maintain a presence in local communities,
- greater recognition of the contribution made by volunteers, churchwardens, PCCs and clergy,
- decisions made with the realities of parish life firmly in mind,
- support for churches that are small, rural, historic or financially stretched, rather than assuming that bigger is always better,

I will argue to support a sustainable approach to church buildings, recognising their value. Closure should not be the default. We should be thinking about how to worship not can we afford to exist.

I will argue that the clergy need time to pray, teach, visit, administer the sacraments and act for their people. Each parish is different and clergy should not be bogged down by national strategies and constant organisational change.

I will argue for less bureaucracy and more ministry.

I will argue that the people in the pews matter and that we should listen to them. Too often national debates lose sight of the parishioner. The people who turn up week after week, whether worshipping, cleaning, flower arranging, and/or playing the organ deserve to be listened to.

I will encourage a conversation about

- sustainable funding for parish mission,
- fairness between richer and poorer areas,
- the long term cost of maintaining church buildings,
- supporting the next generation of clergy and lay leaders.

The Church of England should not be embarrassed about being Christian. We should not be moving away from this and becoming involved in areas which are not our concern - supporting net zero carbon emissions and project Spire, for example. Whilst we are apologetic about the slave trade we cannot change what happened nor should we try to make financial atonement, I think the latter is disgusting, it is putting a price on life and furthermore, capping that price. The £100 million allocated for project Spire should be used for strategies which will make a difference to the church moving forwards.

Most importantly I will argue that the CofE has a future. The future will not be built through reorganisations, targets, new structure and trying to atone for the past sins; it will be built through clergy ministering and Christians serving. The parish is where the church meets the nation. The parish is the jewel in the crown of the CofE.

If you agree with any of the above, please support my candidature and, in this preferential election, please give me a high preference vote. And, if you have any questions which you'd like me to answer, please email me - frittonsusanna@gmail.com