The parish is at the heart of the Church of England. It informs every aspect of our mission and our vision of ourselves. It is prized well beyond those who attend church on a Sunday, and is spoken of passionately by bishops and archbishops. And yet, over many decades parishes have been starved of priests and money, their assets used to make good the mistakes of others. Matters are reaching a critical point and so I have chosen to stand as part of the Save the Parish movement and pledge to focus my energies on these pledges. You can read the full manifesto here: www.savetheparish.com

- To support the archbishops in keeping their pledge to support the parish as the best means of evangelism.
- To put the “frontline first”, ensuring that resources that properly belong to and are generated by the parishes remain at parish level, freeing up laity and clergy for mission.
- To ensure that law and projects which initiate from the centre all support and enhance the parochial system by integrating the Strategic Development Fund into the parish and opposing the revision to the Mission & Pastoral Measure which would make it easier and quicker for the dioceses to close churches, make priests redundant, and evict them from their homes.

We believe that effective mission requires the prioritisation of spending on good theological education as a crucial investment.

- We will call for a Church-State commission to agree a national plan to protect and preserve historic parish buildings.

This isn’t a cause for only one part of the church. It’s one which is shared by Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics, the High Church, the Middle of the Road... anyone, really, who values the system which has been gifted to us in its wonderful diversity of expressions. I pledge to work together with all those of goodwill, whatever their position on all of the other matters which vex the church, to Save the Parish.

I am the Rector of Great St Bartholomew in the City of London. Having been baptized and confirmed in Jerusalem and raised in the Holy Land, Egypt and the USSR, I am a child of the Anglican Communion as much as a child of the CofE, and have made working for persecuted Christians in the Middle East one of my personal priorities – not just by writing about their plight, but practically as a trustee of the Ankawa Foundation, which was created to support Christians driven from their homes in Iraq and Syria by ISIS.

I used to work in politics and hope that the skills honed there - of understanding proposed legislation and working together with people across political dividing lines - would be useful in the General Synod as we discuss the major issues of the day.

Before coming to St Bart’s, I was curate in North London and Deputy Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome - the Anglican Communion’s official representation to the Holy See. I have a deep love of the Prayer Book, and of the wonderful network of parishes, cathedrals, and chaplaincies which make up our church.
Having grown up around Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and Protestants (of a vast variety of denominations) in countries which are often hostile to Christianity – and then having worked as Deputy Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome – the importance of Christ’s prayer “that they may all be one” is written in my heart. I would work to maximise the level of unity we can enjoy with our Christian brothers and sisters – both outside and within the Anglican Communion.

We have our own hierarchies in the Church of England, but ultimately it is our churches and our clergy on the ground that are its lifeblood. In the last six months, it has been them to whom we owe our deep gratitude. So here’s our challenge for the next phase of this complex, painful and hugely challenging time: let’s place our trust in the local, and make sure it is resourced, trained, informed and empowered. Some places will get things wrong – but that is true of central leadership too.

The Church’s response to the Covid pandemic highlighted the need to trust the clergy and laity responsible for the cure of souls of each parish as they make decisions that are right for those parishes. In their article following the first lockdown, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London pledged to respect the proper decision-making processes of parishes and dioceses in future and not to try to impose a one-size-fits-all response in the future. This is greatly to be welcomed! Measures such as the proposed revision to the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 (GS2222) would completely undermine this, removing a vast number of the rights of local parishes, clergy, and communities. I would oppose this, and any other proposal which centralises power and authority.

Ensuring that the Church of England is a safe place to grow up in, grow old in, and be vulnerable in is essential, as is ensuring that our safeguarding procedures are credible and just. We have to pay very careful attention to what has gone wrong in the past, heed the voices of the survivors of abuse, and ensure the system is one everyone feels confident putting their trust in.

The pandemic has been a torrid time for clergy and has shone a light into many of the weaknesses in the way the church looks after its clergy. The Clergy Disciplinary Measure is not just unjust, it is cruel and needs root and branch reform. We cannot talk about charity and forgiveness to a world in desperate need of both if we refuse to model it ourselves.

These are some of the issues which will be important over the next five years. As for the others I will listen to the debates and pray as I try to discern the will of God for our church. What I can offer you is a strong voice that isn’t afraid to speak up, publicly, on issues, and a pledge to represent you, diligently and vocally.

As decisions are taken which will shape how the Church of England engages with the remaining three quarters of the 21st century, it is hugely important that General Synod has people in it who aren’t afraid to challenge, test, and (at times) contest proposals from the central church. Should I be elected, I promise to be one of those representatives.