



Madeleine Ridout

I am 24 years old, and a regular worshipper at St Chad Haggerston. Living so close that I can see the church from my bedroom window, I view St Chad's as my second home. Though I am young, I am involved in every aspect of church life, from cooking large quantities of curry for big events, to serving at the altar on Sundays, to sitting on deanery synod.

By voting for me, you will gain a representative who is committed to:

- Supporting vocations through further reforms to the discernment and ordination process, and advocating for greater opportunities for lay vocations beyond self-supporting ministry and youth work.
- Strengthening parishes by investing in people over ideas: addressing continuing issues with low clergy morale and well-being, and making our churches more accessible to everyone, regardless of background.
- Sustaining mission by empowering parishes to attain continuous growth, and uplifting the voices of young people who have found or returned to their faith through missional work, but who do not feel represented within the Church's governance.



My experience

- Born in Norfolk, I attended my local parish church my entire life. As one church out of 18 in a rural 'mega-benefice', I grew up thinking it was normal for my parish church to only be accessible once a month instead of once a week.
- I left Norfolk in 2020 to study at the University of Oxford, where I 're-found' my faith under the guidance of the chaplain. She encouraged me to be confirmed, and I went on to become Chapel Clerk for the last two years of my degree.
- As a student, I was actively involved in Oxford Global, an organisation that runs large-scale international Model United Nations conferences. I chaired committee meetings, and was on the board of five people that organised OxMUN 2023, with over 1000 delegates from around the world.
- I graduated in 2024, and began working as the College and Admissions Secretary at St Stephen's House, Oxford, a Theological Educational Institution.
- I moved to London in August 2025 to begin working as Parish Operations Officer across four parishes in Hackney and Islington. Alongside work, I am undertaking a part-time Master of Research degree in Social Anthropology, with a specialism in mental health and disability studies.

Supporting Vocations

With my past experience in TEI admissions, I am all too aware of the complexities in discernment and ordination training pathways, which create barriers to individuals with a genuine call to ministry, especially those from working-class, non-white or neurodiverse backgrounds. I welcome the change to ordinand funding from this year, but to ensure that the increasing numbers of young people seeking full-time training are enabled to fulfil their vocation, I believe that further reforms are needed within the Church of England's current model. Furthermore, I believe more needs to be done to support the vocations of lay-people beyond self-supporting ministry and youth work - all vocations are assets to the Church, not just ordained ones.

Strengthening Our Parishes

As I currently work on the front-line at four parishes in London, I see first-hand the difficulties faced by clergy and PCCs in the running of parish churches in London. Clergy especially have a workload that is unprecedented in the history of the Church of England, and I have witnessed the toll of unsustainable multi-parish responsibilities on the mental and physical health of priests. Equally, living in the impersonal, secular world as a young neurodiverse woman, I find refuge in the close community of parish life, and making that community accessible to others, regardless of socio-economic background, race, or disability is of the highest importance to me.

Sustaining Our Mission

The parish is the foundation that our evangelism flows from, and an under-resourced, unstable foundation cannot yield sustainable growth. Short-term mission projects might boost the numbers initially, but when the funding ends, it's all too common for the newcomers to disappear and the mission to falter - and that's if your church even figured out how to access a funding pot in the first place! In reality, it is the churches who need help the most that are the least likely to be able to access support designed for them.

I believe that for a church's mission to be sustainable, the call to action must be realised from within the community. One priest, leading one parish, knows their people and is known by them: they can inspire a congregation to give their skills, their time, and their charity towards a mission initiative that lasts, so that we can reach not just the people of today, but the people of tomorrow. That is why it is all the more important to empower young people to take up positions in church governance, and to prove the church takes seriously its commitment to young people, who are the future of the Church.

By voting for me, you are voting for a young representative who does not simply care about numerical growth, but one who supports a movement of revitalisation, a movement of hope.