

Richard Woods CNZM

Address for election to the House of Laity at General Synod 2026

If I am elected, this will be my first experience of General Synod, but I have had considerable involvement in parish and other church affairs. My professional career required me to make decisions on many difficult and contentious issues, including under complex legislation, often in the face of public and media criticism. The Synod considers and makes decisions on a variety of difficult and sensitive issues. My background should help me to make a useful contribution to its discussions.



My father was a vicar and archdeacon in New Zealand and I am a New Zealander by birth. But my late brother was a parish priest on Merseyside for over 25 years. One of his daughters, my niece, is rector of a parish in Cumbria.

In my diplomatic career, I was New Zealand ambassador in Tehran, Athens, Moscow and Paris. I was then appointed head of the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service for five years, extended to seven. This was followed by board roles in environmental risk management (chairman) and investigation of complaints about police conduct. Outside public service, I was a trustee of a trust whose object is the promotion of Anglican ministry among indigenous people in New Zealand and elsewhere. I also served on the vestry (PCC) of Wellington Cathedral.

In 2013 my wife and I moved to London to be close to our sons and their families who live here. We joined the parish of St Peter's Hammersmith and both became involved in voluntary parish activities. I was a member of the PCC and served as a warden for six years; this included leading an emergency effort to raise £50,000 for new downpipes, achieved in three months. Currently I bank cash and cheques for the parish. For nine years I was a trustee of the Overseas Bishoprics Fund, based at Church House, Westminster. I am a Friend of the Diocese of Iran (FDI), having lived in Iran for seven years and been active in the church there when that was still possible.

Through family connections and my own involvement, I am interested in parish affairs. In that context I support the goals of the Save the Parish movement. For many years my own parish paid more than its assessed diocesan share but currently, like many others, it has had to reduce its payment below the assessed share. Other parishes are in much more

difficult positions. Without functioning parishes it is difficult to see how the church can stem the decline in its membership. Therefore I would like to see more resources allocated to parishes and less to diocesan and other overheads. Specifically I would like more stipendiary priests to be financially supported from Church Commissioners' Funds.

I realise that General Synod has many important items on its agenda. But I hope it will give proper attention to the various thoughtful proposals in the Save the Parish Manifesto.

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