

General Synod Election Address - Matthew Duckett

Vicar of Saint Matthias, Colindale



The Parish

My experience of ministry over 17 years in north London is that congregations grow when the work of the parish is done faithfully and persistently. More than this, by its abiding presence and engagement the parish church builds friendships and networks of association, contributes to the common good, and shares with the wider community in its joys, sorrows and significant events.

The parish is the bedrock of the Church of England's ecclesiology. The visible church, in which "the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly ministered" (*Article XIX*), is embedded in the local community, with its unique story, through the parish. It has a commitment to place, and a mission towards the whole population, expressed in the liturgy which is its public duty, in the cure of souls which parish priests share with the bishop, and in the building which should be a place of sanctuary for all.

Increasingly, however, parishes are stretched and under financial pressure. Stipendiary clergy are down 28% since 2000. The Church Commissioners' historic endowment was intended primarily for parishes, but in 2018 this restriction was removed. £176 million was spent through the Strategic Development Fund, and £476 million has been spent on or allocated to the Diocesan Investment Programme, for time-limited projects which are not parishes. Meanwhile, alongside these new projects, parishes struggle with limited resources and stipends. In 2024 the net contribution to parishes nationally from the historic endowment was just 13% of the total amount available.

I support the manifesto of *Save the Parish* in this election. We need to rebalance spending and reprioritise the parish, ensure good training and support for stipendiary parish clergy, and reform the *Mission and Pastoral Measure* so that it is fit for its stated purpose, which is "to make better provision for the cure of souls".



Inclusion, Racial Justice and Sexuality

I believe in an inclusive vision for the Church, rooted in the common baptismal identity of all the faithful in Christ, and that God rejoices in our diversity.

General Synod must strengthen the church's commitment to racial justice by hearing the voices of minorities and the excluded, and holding power and privilege open to scrutiny. At the same time, we must not neglect those communities whose experience of poverty and alienation is being exploited by the far-right and framed as fear of the other. The Gospel of justice and reconciliation impels us to value all those who are marginalised, and to help build a better and more hopeful future for all.

I affirm the grace and goodness in faithful committed same-sex relationships. The votes in the last Synod in favour of stand-alone services using the *Prayers of Love and Faith*, and for an end to the bar on ministry for those in same-sex marriages, are unfinished business which must now be taken forward without further delay.



Community Cohesion and Solidarity

In seeking to be good neighbours and partners with other communities, I am particularly conscious of the Jewish communities in my own part of northwest London, and the rise in antisemitic attacks. These are our neighbours who live in the shadow of constant threat to their persons, businesses and places of worship as they go about their daily lives. Likewise, the rise in Islamophobia, and its weaponisation by various groups, is deeply concerning.

Christians have positive stories to tell of community organisation and shared values across differences of faith, and must help to counter the misinformation, fear and hostility being directed against our neighbours and friends.

At the same time, we stand in solidarity with Christians throughout the world, in particular those suffering persecution or adversity. Amongst them a particular place is held by the historic Churches of Israel and Palestine, the "living stones" of the Holy Land, who face ever-increasing violence, and even the threat of extinction, in the land where Christianity began.

In listening to communities under threat we may hear the language of trauma and fear, which can be unfiltered and harsh. But we must be prepared for difficult listening and conversations. Allowing people to tell their own stories in their own words is a necessary precondition for understanding, reconciliation and building a new future.

Thank you!

Thank you for reading this statement.

I am standing for General Synod in the hope of being able to make a positive contribution, from my particular experience of parish and community, to our common life as a Church, supporting parishes and helping us to move forward together as the pilgrim people of God.



With the many issues facing the Church of England I hope that you will vote for me in this election.

Matthew Duckett, 23rd August 2026
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Mutual Flourishing

The *Five Guiding Principles* established a way forward, without any time limit, for holding our diversity in unity, respecting conscience, and enabling all to flourish. This commitment must continue to be honoured. I would be impoverished without my colleagues of different theological convictions. Our witness is weakened when we are divided, and the gifts that different members of the Body bring enrich the whole. "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." (Acts 27.31)

Safeguarding

Diocesan safeguarding teams work hard in often challenging circumstances to deliver training, promote a safer Church, and respond to disclosures. There is however an intrinsic conflict of interest when the reputation of the institution is at stake, as safeguarding teams are employed by the institution. This can lead to victims and survivors of abuse finding that justice is elusive and the process of seeking it causes further trauma. Independent safeguarding is the way forward.

The Fund for Healing, Repair and Justice ("Project Spire")

The Body of Christ is wounded by the sins of the past, and the sins of slavery are part of our own history. It is right to acknowledge this and to seek the healing of those wounds. But the rationale of the *Fund* is unclear. *Healing* is about grace, and is non-transactional. *Repair* and *Justice* are more complex ideas which need further elucidation. Synod needs more detail and clarity to be sure that this will be an effective and focussed use of Church Commissioners' assets.