

Brandon Fletcher-James

Priest-in-charge of St Paul's West Hackney since July 2025

Standing for the House of Clergy of General Synod

Proposer: Revd Steve Gayle, Dean of Racial Justice and Vicar of St Michael and All Angels, Stoke Newington, Hackney deanery

Seconder: Revd Charis Enga, Vicar and Priest in Charge of St Mary's and St Andrews NI6, Hackney Deanery

My Life and Background

A cradle Anglican I came to faith in my hometown of Hackney, East London at St Barnabas Homerton. I went on to complete a bachelor's degree in Theology at Durham University and later a Masters qualification during training at Westcott House. I love traveling, arts and culture and cinema. At the age of thirty and now priest-in-charge of St Paul's West Hackney this stage of my life represents a homecoming in many ways as I serve the geography, culture, people and place that has been so formative to my sense of identity and vocation. Alongside my parish duties I am also heavily involved in the work of other charitable arms and organisations, such as the Hackney Joint Estate. Commission (HJEC), West Hackney Parochial Charity and the West Hackney Alms House where I stand as ex-officio and chair. Outside the four walls of church I love all things arts and culture and love travelling and cinema.



Parish Ministry

If elected to General Synod I would give hope to give voice to the distinct experience, interests and intrigues of parish ministry from the liberal catholic tradition. Prior to ordination training I had the great privilege of serving across varied missional contexts in both northern and southern provinces (CEMS participant in Sunderland with a four group benefice of churches and work as pastoral assistant at St Martin-in-the-fields) I wholeheartedly affirm the aims of the *Save the Parish network* because I believe that our greatest strength lies in our historic parochial model of church. I will:

- Broach difficult questions regarding parish financing and management of church resourcing/funding
- Ensure greater transparency across parish, diocesan and national level

Inclusion

The concern for inclusion is not an option, rather it informs an integral part of who I am and my sense of identity. As someone of dual heritage and a member of the LGBTQI+ community I am deeply attuned to the concerns for greater inclusion within the structures, administration and governance of the Church of England. For me this work goes beyond the conundrum we sometimes find ourselves in with regards to categories or the precision of terms used to identify people. It is not so much about containing someone's sense of self within a descriptor as it is about broadening the scope of our God-given humanity.

What I believe is required of us is a robust understanding of human identity and personhood, one that treats human beings with an *integral wholeness* and respects the complexity and difference of God's diverse creation. The touchstone for all of this I feel arises from our essential belief in the Incarnation. The fact that Christ, the Word made flesh, took on the fullness of our own humanity, should remind us that no one shape or form is beyond the mystery of God's love and grace.

What this looks like practically is:

- Creating intentional spaces of welcome that are open and accessible to all
- Open to mature and honest conversations which respect opposite views, convictions/beliefs
- Adopting an intersectional approach to matter of social justice, human identity and belonging

I have sought to address this at both a parish and diocesan level with my involvement with the LGBTQI+ Advisory group for London Diocese and connection with the Together Church Network and Inclusive Church.

Sacramental Ministry

There is no doubt to my mind that the true church at its best is holy, catholic and apostolic. As someone who came to the catholic Anglican way in my twenties and yet was raised in an open evangelical setting I have a deep affection with the Church of England understood at its most broadest. However even more so I am reminded of the ways in which the Church can so easily lose its ecclesial identity amidst the competing demands for strategies addressing managed decline, diocesan deficits and growing secularisation. As someone whose faith is rooted in the rhythm and daily pattern of the offices and the full sacramental life of the church, if elected I hope to join with our brothers and sisters not just in matters of administrative governance and policy but also to engender greater fellowship through prayer and faith in action. Synod is not just an administrative mechanism, it also says so much about who we are as a Church as a worshipful people. There is truth in the phrase 'lex orandi, lex credendi' hence if elected I hope to also bring to the fore how our liturgical and ministerial practices also speak to Synod.

Why I am standing for General Synod?

My realism, passion and commitment I believe are virtues best fit for general synod. At this stage in my life and ministry I think I have the energy and determination to fully serve synod in its proceedings and to represent the concerns not just of those elected but those longing for change beyond the chamber walls. While it would be fair to say that there have been times when I have been completely disillusioned by the politics of church, in order for there to be any future renewal or reform I must be the change I wish to see in the world. In all things I strive to speak with honesty and integrity, to foster genuine collegiality and friendship across theological divides and to help grow the spiritual and corporate life of the Church. To quote St Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, 'therefore encourage one another and build each other up, as indeed you are doing'. I would love to have your vote in these upcoming elections.

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