

The Revd Nicky Gumbel

Nominated by

Proposer: The Revd Annie Ellis

Seconder: The Revd Dr Kaosidi Redwood-Sawyers



I first encountered Jesus in a personal way at the age of eighteen. After a few years of practising as a lawyer, I was ordained in the Church of England in 1986. I had the privilege of serving as Curate under Bishop Sandy Millar for 19 years and then served as Vicar of HTB for 17 years. Now I have the joy of serving under Canon Archie Coates as Curate again, attending HTB Courtfield Garden where my proposer, The Revd Annie Ellis, and seconder, The Revd Dr Kaosidi Redwood-Sawyers, are both part of the leadership team.

Stepping down as Vicar, and being a fulltime Alpha Chaplain, has given my wife Pippa and I the opportunity to travel both in the UK and around the world. We have been inspired by the remarkable vibrancy in the church all over the world.

In the last year we have been to Nigeria, Sweden, Leeds, Manchester, Rome, Spain, Israel, USA, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Lithuania, Germany, Malaysia, Singapore, and more.

I love the church: the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, with its many expressions around the world. But, of course, I especially love the Church of England.

I am saddened that in the 40 years that I have been ordained in the Church of England, we have not seen the growth that we longed for (and, of course, I must take responsibility for my part in that failure). However, I am full of hope for the future. We have a new Archbishop. We will have a new Synod. It is a new season.

As Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa (Preacher to the previous three Popes) has often said, “What unites us is infinitely greater than what divides us.” I believe that the time has come for the Church of England to refocus on what unites us ... For example ... the vision which Jesus set out in Matthew 9:35-38.

³⁵ Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’

1. The need is urgent.

Jesus saw people who were “harassed [ἐσकुλμένοι] and helpless [ἐρριμμένοι], like sheep without a shepherd.”

Perhaps the best modern translation would be “they were anxious and depressed and lonely, like sheep who have separated as a result of losing touch with the shepherd.” This accurately describes so many young people growing up in England who have never had the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus. This should now be the focus of the episcopacy and the governance of the Church of England.

2. The motive is compassion.

The word 'ἐσπλαγγνίσθη' is the strongest word in the Greek language for compassion. It describes the white, hot, heartfelt passion that Jesus felt when he saw the needs of the people.

Jesus calls us to love one another as he has loved us. He made it possible because his love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

The love that has been poured into us is the same love with which the Father loved the Son, not a different love.

As Pope Francis pointed out, when the church becomes self-referential, it becomes sick. The time has come for us to unite in love for a whole generation that has never heard how much they are loved by God, who came to this earth in the person of his son, Jesus Christ, to die for them.

3. The potential is vast.

Jesus told his disciples to “ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field” (v.38).

The catalyst, of course, is prayer. On this occasion, Jesus called for a particular type of prayer – a prayer to raise up “workers”. Because “the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few”.

This is now increasingly the case in the Church of England ... vocations are down (partly as a result of the internal squabbles that have dominated the agenda for the last eight years).

There is ample evidence of a renewed interest in the Christian faith, especially among Generation Z and Generation Alpha, with young people searching for love, meaning, and belonging.

If we are to see the harvest Jesus spoke about, we will need more workers.

If elected to General Synod, I would campaign for the following:-

1. That the entire focus of the next five years is on the evangelisation of the nation, the revitalisation of the church, and the transformation of society.
2. That we prioritise a leadership pipeline with a specific focus on raising up a generation of younger ordinands who are already sensing a call to full-time ministry.
3. That the Peter Stream (the idea of Bishop Jill Duff) for those trapped underground by elitism, intellectualism, and racism be raised up nationally to reach a population which is highly diverse, ethnically, socially, and educationally.
4. We seek to raise up an ordained focal minister for every parish in the country. Research has shown that without a focal minister, churches tend to decline. With a focal minister, they tend to grow.
5. In order to achieve 4 above, in addition to the Elizabeth Pathway, we continue with the Caleb Ordination Stream, with the aim of raising up 1,000 new Calebs a year for the next five years ... A massive, underutilised resource of people, who have served the Lord wholeheartedly while in secular employment, and who are now ready, willing, and able to lead, especially in the village churches.
6. That no church building, church hall or vicarage be sold except to another part of the body of Christ.

The Church of England has the greatest infrastructure imaginable: around 12,500 parishes covering over 99% of the country. Our vast network of churches must be poised and ready to reach millions of sheep who come searching for the Shepherd.