

The Rev'd Paul Kennedy - General Synod Statement

I am standing for General Synod because I have over 30 years of parish ministry to offer and because I want to help the Church of England become more confident in faith, more compassionate in action and more creative in growth.

My own theological understanding is broadly inclusive, but my experience of the wider Church has taught me to be attentive to different traditions, insights and concerns. I will listen carefully, consider each question on its merits and seek faithfully to represent the Diocese of London in all its breadth. I am drawn to the Benedictine practice of listening with 'the ear of the heart'.

What I would bring

First, I would bring a deep and profound faith in God, revealed in Christ, and over 30 years' experience of ordained ministry. I came to faith in my 20s and have been formed by Anglo-Catholic and evangelical parishes. I believe God is revealed in both scripture and worship. My ministry has ranged from a high-rise estate in Romford to rural multi-parish villages in Hampshire and, for more than half of it, in and around London - including Southwark, Chelmsford and now the City. That breadth has shown me how the same questions can resonate differently in changing contexts.

I am now Rector of St Vedast-alias-Foster and Guild Vicar of St Mary Aldermary in the City of London. I have served on diocesan synods, been an Area Dean in Winchester, worked as an Assistant Area Director of Ordinands and served as a training incumbent. I understand some of the real pressures facing those discerning, beginning and sustaining ordained ministry - including safeguarding, formation, resourcing and continuing ministerial development.

A strong voice for parish ministry

I believe the parish is both the traditional and contemporary "coalface" of the Church. Chaplaincy and other expressions of church are important, but it is in a parish, rooted in a local community, that many people encounter faith and become disciples. A church building, priest and congregation all matter. Parish ministry sees no conflict between pastoral and missional; faith and community. I would speak for parishes while remaining open to the contribution of other forms of ministry.

Faith expressed in action

Sharing and deepening faith is the core of my ministry, but compassion and humanitarian action are important spiritual fruits. In London this has included work with people experiencing street homelessness and aid to Ukraine. Through our partnership with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church we have hosted refugees for over four years. I have made three aid trips, helping to take 17 vehicles, mainly ambulances, and aid towards the front line, in partnership with charities including Frontline Hospitals and Ukrainian Medical Charity. We now have parish-to-parish links with Kryvyi Rih in eastern Ukraine, from where I have recently returned. I would encourage General Synod to help the Church expand its humanitarian role within and beyond England.

Our churches are similarly engaged with the City of London. Our café supports people experiencing street homelessness and our hall hosts Twelve Step programmes. As chaplain to several livery companies and to the Aldermanic Sheriff, I have also reflected on justice and rehabilitation. I long to see London's churches use the capital's resources, institutions and expertise for the good of wider society.

Practical experience for difficult decisions

I am leading a major church building project which includes a move to carbon net zero. I understand the practical issues created by the ending of the Listed Places of Worship VAT scheme and its less generous replacement; fundraising including a major National Lottery Heritage Fund application; and business rates arising from our café and the commercial use of our churchyard. As a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, I bring an understanding of organisational as well as environmental sustainability. I would bring that combination of theological conviction and practical scrutiny to Synod's decisions.

My links with Anglican churches in Ghana, Uganda and New York have also shown me how decisions and practices in the Church of England can affect the wider Communion. I would keep those relationships and consequences in mind.

How I would serve

If elected, I would listen carefully, prepare thoroughly and speak independently. I would work for flourishing parish ministry; the training, resourcing and support of ministers; a credible response to environmental challenges; and a Church whose faith is visible in compassionate action. Retreat, spiritual direction and sacramental confession are important to my own maturity in faith. Nurtured by silence and tradition, I hope I would bring stillness and rootedness, as well as energy and experience, to Synod's debates.

It would be an honour to represent the Diocese of London, and I would be grateful for your support.