

FROM SCARCITY TO ABUNDANCE

Six Conversions for the Church

ROBERT THOMPSON

Candidate for General Synod

*"The Church is always being converted
into the likeness of Christ for the life of the world."*



I love the Church. Because Christ has not given up on it.

ROOTED IN PARISH AND PLACE

For nearly thirty years I have served as a parish priest and hospital chaplain. Today I serve as Vicar of St Mary's, Kilburn and St James', West Hampstead, in one of the Church of England's most diverse and poorest parishes.

Ministry here has taught me that the Church discovers its vocation not first in committees or strategies, but in neighborhoods, schools and chaplaincies where people encounter Christ in worship, service and friendship. It has also taught me that parish ministry is civic ministry: working with schools, local authorities, the NHS, community organisations, other churches and people of other faiths for the flourishing of our communities.

That experience has shaped my work in General Synod in the last five years. Whether speaking about safeguarding, governance, inclusion, poverty or parish ministry, I have tried to bring the lived experience of this ordinary parish and civic ministry into our national conversations.

I have, from my experience here, supported both **Together for the Church of England** in its work for a fully inclusive Church and **Save the Parish** in its work to strengthen and resource parish ministry. Both deeply matter for me and the people and the place that God has called me to serve. Under the present trajectory of the Church and diocese our mission in places like Kilburn is overlooked, and marginalised. Parishes like this need more support.

We live in a society often shaped by scarcity and fear. The Gospel of Jesus Christ tells a different story: a story of abundance and hope - the abundance of God's welcome, truth, grace, mission and life.

MY RECORD IN GENERAL SYNOD

SAFEGUARDING & ACCOUNTABILITY Brought a Motion calling for an independent review following the Soul Survivor scandal and later initiated the petition calling for Justin Welby's resignation after Makin.

LIVING IN LOVE AND FAITH & INCLUSION Contributed by supporting full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people, equal marriage, the full ministry of women and for disability, mental health and neurodiversity inclusion.

RACE, POVERTY & THE MARGINS Tabled amendments on poverty and social justice ensuring that those in our poorest parishes, those from BAME communities, and others often unheard can shape our common life.

GOVERNANCE & POWER Argued through that safeguarding cannot be separated from power, culture and accountability, and for more transparent and accountable episcopal and national leadership.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE Tabled amendments seeking to hold together repentance for Christian antisemitism and a commitment to Jewish-Christian dialogue, with justice for Palestinians, respect for international law and the ongoing work of facilitating dialogue and working towards peace.

PARISH MINISTRY & MISSION Brought the experience of one of the Church of England's most diverse parishes into debates about parish ministry, mission and public life.

I will continue to be more than a vote in General Synod: actively shaping debate, listening with humility, speaking with courage and conviction, and working generously across difference.

SIX CONVERSIONS

FOR THE CHURCH

Jesus calls us beyond fear into faith, exclusion into belonging, power into service and death into life.

1 EXCLUSION → BELONGING

Every baptised person is a gift to the Church.

I support the full ministry of women and the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people, including equal marriage. I will work for a Church in which people living in poverty, disabled and neurodivergent people, those experiencing mental ill-health, people of every culture, educational and social background, and people of every age are able to belong and flourish.

I will continue to work for full inclusion in the life of the Church.

3 POWER OVER → POWER FOR

Authority is given for service.

Christian leadership exists so that others may flourish. We need accountable episcopal leadership, accountable National Church Institutions, transparent governance from the top down, and power shared with stronger voices for parishes in the decisions that shape our common life.

I will continue to work for a devolution of power across all the various sections of the Church.

5 MAINTENANCE → MISSION

The Church exists for the life of the world.

Mission means following, embodying and proclaiming Christ but also finding Christ in the places that we are set. It means forming disciples, nurturing children and young people, serving those experiencing poverty, caring for creation, and working ecumenically, across faiths and with those of good-will for justice, peace and the common good.

I will continue to work for mission in its fullest breadth.

2 SECRECY → TRUTH

Truth is the beginning of healing.

The Church cannot proclaim the truth of Christ while refusing to tell the truth about itself. Survivors' experience must shape not only our procedures but the culture of the Church we become, with independent scrutiny, transparency and genuine accountability. I regard safeguarding and how we treat those abused in our communities as missional priority not an add on.

I will continue to work for justice for those who have been abused.

4 CENTRALISATION → PARISH

The parish is the primary place of the Church's life and mission.

The Church is formed in parishes, schools, chaplaincies and gathered around Word and Sacrament. National structures should listen to them, be formed by them and resource them - not replace them. It is the variety of life of the local that should shape our central life, not the other way round.

I will continue to work for the parish as the main organ of the Church's life and mission.

6 EXHAUSTION → FLOURISHING

Healthy ministers help build healthy churches.

Too many clergy and lay ministers carry increasing responsibility with diminishing resources. Faithfulness should never be measured by exhaustion: increased support, sabbath, retreat, continuing formation, healthy boundaries, pastoral care and realistic expectations are essential to sustainable ministry.

I will continue to work for the proper care, support and regard of clergy and lay ministers.

WHY I AM STANDING

I am standing because I love the Church and believe it can change - not by abandoning its deepest traditions, but by becoming more faithful to Jesus Christ. I want a Church that is less fearful and more hopeful; that tells the truth and shares power; that welcomes every baptised person; strengthens its parishes; serves its communities; and trusts the abundance of God's grace more than the scarcity of its fears.

FIRST PREFERENCE

If this is a vision you share, I would be honoured to receive your first-preference vote.

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Every Eucharist begins with ordinary gifts: bread, wine and ordinary people.

By God's grace they become signs of extraordinary abundance.

I believe God is still doing the same with the Church.

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