

General Synod Elections House of Clergy Candidate: Revd Simon Cawdell



**Team Rector of Bridgnorth & Morville Team
ministry
Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral & former
Chair of the House of Clergy**

*Proposed by Stephanie Fountain (Clun Forest
Deanery)*

*Seconded by Nick Armstrong (Hereford
Deanery)*



Family and Background

I am married to Sarah, who is Team Vicar in the same benefice, and we have three adult children one of whom is an ordinand.

I am local to this diocese, being born in Bridgnorth, where my late father was NFU secretary. I trained as an economist, and spent five years working in London as an investment analyst before training for ordination.

Following a curacy in southwest London I have been an incumbent in this diocese since 1998, was Rural Dean of Bridgnorth from 2009 – 2013 and served as Chair of Clergy in the Diocese from 2012 - 2021 which included four years when I was Convenor of the Diocesan Clergy Chairs Forum.

It has been a privilege to represent the diocese on General Synod over the last eleven years throughout which time I have served on the House of Clergy Standing Committee, and for the last five years served on the Business Committee which sets agendas and the Standing Orders Committee which oversees the rules by which Synod works.

These roles have given me many insights into the workings of the church, and revealed the levers by which they may be changed.

Post-pandemic they will need that change and Synod will need to judge wisely as it updates the structures of the church to make them fit for the 21st Century, not becoming managerial, but recognising that mission takes place locally and that the structures must facilitate mission where it happens so we continue to engage with the world around us as it changes rapidly.

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Clergy Wellbeing

During the last Synod I was part of the two working parties, which over four years brought forward the Clergy Covenant, and I am determined to see it implemented well, both in this diocese and nationally. I led the diocesan Senior Staff team through its questionnaire during my time as Assistant Archdeacon during the vacancy.

A particular focus during the forthcoming quinquennium will be around the replacement of the Clergy Discipline Measure, Safeguarding procedures and competence procedures all of which have been shown for some considerable time to be unfit for purpose, and causing real harm to all involved.

Procedures need to be careful, proportionate and respectful of all involved so harms can be addressed, discipline administered fairly, colleagues supported into good working practices, and vexatious complaints dismissed swiftly.

Human sexuality

I have played a full part in the 'Shared Conversations' on human sexuality and the Living in Love and Faith process. Synod at its best is capable of profound mutual respect and deep listening, which will be very necessary if we are to find a way forward which maintains our unity in mission.

I will work to my utmost to avoid divisive factionalism and seek to work with people across Synod to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the Church.

Renewal and Reform

The Reform and Renewal process includes streams on 'simplification' of church structure, on the encouragement of discipleship, lay training, vocations, and senior leadership needs to be pressed forwards, but with care. There are many good proposals within this but also some real dangers, and I have already made submissions highlighting areas of concern.

The parish system is at the core of our structure and where our mission needs to happen, promoting the Gospel through healthy communities, but it must not be allowed to ossify. Recent debates have shown the importance of this and our structures need to enable good local mission and discipleship without overbearing bureaucratic demands from above.

We must enable new expressions of church and discipleship to flourish and contribute at the same time as enhancing the best of our historic practices. This will require considerable attention to detail in legislation which I believe I can bring, and have done so already through amendments, for example in the faculty processes and church representation rules.

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Heritage and buildings

We are blessed(?!) with an extraordinary richness of historic assets, and whilst these can also be a considerable maintenance burden in time and money, I will be working to ensure our procedures enable them to be used in ways which enhance community life so that communities are not overwhelmed with red tape as they seek to use them in ways which glorify God and allows communities to flourish. Hereford Diocese has long been a leader in this and will seek to ensure our best practices are promoted and reflected in our modernisation.

Finances

COVID has caused serious harm to the finances of many of our parishes and dioceses. At the same time successful management of historic reserves by the Church Commissioners and Pensions Board has brought about the recovery of the pensions deficit and significant expansion of the resources available to us.

This bounty needs to be used wisely, and I would work to seek a fair balance of distribution, and one which includes rural communities. Presently these are excluded from applying for Strategic Development Fund monies, which is particularly discriminating against areas of rural poverty, which are often overlooked.

Anglican Communion

I believe profoundly that the wider communion is of great importance to us, and a source of great enrichment. I would seek to ensure that the church takes its responsibilities as the mother church of the Communion seriously, including in its financial assistance to the worldwide church through our partner dioceses.

Relevance

As member of the Business Committee during the last term I have worked to ensure the General Synod speaks into issues of concern in a relevant and timely manner. Too often its pronouncements has been too late to be effective and failed to take account of actual circumstances. Whilst this has improved during the last term we still have some way to go in this.

I am very willing to be challenged on my view on any of the above, or other matters which concern you, and would be happy to receive questions by phone 01746 761573 or email s.h.cawdell@btinternet.com. If elected I would expect to take account of the views which I hear in the diocese and represent them.

I hope you will trust me with your first preference vote and that we may look forward together to a lively future for the Church we serve.