

General Synod Election address

Fr Alex Frost – Vicar St Matthew the Apostle with Habergham Eaves, Burnley



Hello everyone,

I'm Alex the vicar of St Matthew the Apostle with Holy Trinity Habergham Eaves, and I politely ask you to consider voting for me in the forthcoming clergy elections for General Synod.

After working in retail for Argos for twenty years I was ordained Deacon in 2015 and appointed Assistant Curate at St Matthew's Burnley. I am now the Vicar at the same church. I am married to Sarah who is an advanced Nurse practitioner, and we are parents to Joseph, Holly and Rachel, all of whom are young adults still living at home. I follow Burnley FC and love music.

I am very grateful to Rev Anne Beverley Vicar, Christ Church Wesham for proposing me and to Rev Chris Krawiec, Rector of Morecambe Parish Church for being my seconder.

I spent most of my secular life working as a Store manager for Argos, where I ran a number of high performing stores across the Northwest. Notably, Manchester, Blackburn and Burnley. The Blackburn shop was the busiest store in the North of England, and I was Store manager for 9 years dealing with all aspects of running a busy shop. Prior to ordination I was in charge of the Burnley store and represented the Northwest Store Managers at Board level, ensuring their voice was heard in the highest places. Among other life experiences, I was a Class One football referee, semi-professional stand-up comedian and finalist on 'The Weakest Link' with Anne Robinson. My role representing my colleagues, gave me confidence to challenge structures and be a voice for change whilst supporting my colleagues to the best of my ability. I did that to a high standard which allowed me to serve for the maximum period of four years.

My Christian faith is at the heart of everything I am and everything I aim to do. Being ordained was a difficult but delightful experience and I've enjoyed every minute being a member of the clergy. I am proud to represent, and be part of the Inclusive church network and I'm confident to speak about God's people who might be considered on the fringes of our society. St Matthew's church unanimously voted in favour of signing up to the Inclusive church Mission statement and are very proud to welcome everyone, without exclusion or cross-examination. Our curate Rev Kat Gregory-Witham is our fantastic curate and a great supporter in implementing our vision.

In December 2020 myself and our church in partnership with Church on the Street Ministries, featured in a BBC News item focusing on the effects of Covid 19 on those people living in poverty. It has been viewed over 12 million times and recently won the Sandford St Martins Trustees award for the awareness it has raised.

I also host The God Cast, an online media channel which interviews people from numerous backgrounds which offer interesting discussion, much of which is on faith matters. My guests have included ++ Stephen Cottrell, Alastair Campbell, Edwina Currie, George Galloway, and the comedian Jimmy Cricket.

Why do I wish to serve on General Synod? God calls us to serve the poor, and I believe the urban estates and areas with poor social housing are severely underrepresented in our church structures. In my work on these estates and with these people, it is apparent to me they have little knowledge of the love of Jesus and feel unrepresented or cared for by society or the church. I also feel places like Burnley, Blackpool, Preston, Blackburn, need a voice at Synod to challenge the language of a 'sandwiches on the lawn' mentality and encouraging more language of 'chip butties and a brew' thinking, particularly with a voice of experience. An experience which I believe can offer. It would be my intention to pastorally represent inclusively people of all backgrounds regardless of their circumstances, identity, disability and build excellent relationships.

As your Synod representative, I would respectfully accept and value other theological positions, but I do have the strength of character that will ensure I will respectfully speak up for those I represent without fear or trepidation. I believe it important, to be good at listening to discussion, and accepting difference, and being prepared to change. I support the LLF process and pray it offers some hope for brighter clergy relationships but remain committed to supporting a place of acceptance, tolerance and opportunity for all. It should be made clear I am 100% in support of same sex relationships, female ordination and unequivocally support the Inclusive church mission statement, "We believe in inclusive church – a church which celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate.

We will continue to challenge the church where it continues to discriminate against people on grounds of disability, economic power, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality.

We believe in a Church which welcomes and serves all people in the name of Jesus Christ; which is scripturally faithful; which seeks to proclaim the Gospel afresh for each generation; and which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, allows all people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus Christ."

Therefore, I would not ordinarily expect to be supported by those of a differing position that of Inclusive church. If elected, I will serve General Synod, respectfully, robustly and honestly, and if you feel you can offer me your vote, I assure you I will do my very best to serve you and Christ to the very best of my ability.

Yours,

Fr Alex, Vicar St Matthew's Burnley

