

## MARK IRELAND

Archdeacon of Blackburn

### *What can I offer?*

- **A confident voice for Blackburn diocese in the wider church** – I have served on Archbishops' Council, General Synod and the Business Committee, and have shown myself willing to speak out on things that matter.
- **A wide knowledge of the clergy and parishes of the diocese** – I was ordained in Blackburn cathedral and have served 19 years in the diocese, in posts in Lancaster, Accrington and Blackburn
- **A passion to see people become disciples of Jesus Christ** – in my writing and in parish ministry and my time as a prison chaplain I have always put the challenge of making new disciples and nurturing them in faith at the centre
- **A strategic mind with a focus on mission** – as a writer and former diocesan missionary, I have applied a prayerful approach to mission action planning at parish, diocesan and national level
- **A generous orthodoxy** – I seek to be rooted in Scripture and open to the renewal of the Holy Spirit, with a generous appreciation of traditions other than my own



### *What are my views on the issues facing Synod?*

**Renewal and Reform** – The Church is not a human organisation, but is called by God to be 'a community of missionary disciples'. Renewal and Reform needs to be rooted in a clearer theology of mission – seeking to save the lost rather than seeking to save the church – and have a greater reliance on prayer and the Holy Spirit.

**Finance** – My experience as a vicar has convinced me that maintaining parish clergy numbers is key to enabling the church to grow, rather than cutting parish posts and increasing middle management as other dioceses are doing. Growing leaders and releasing the gifts of the laity depends on having enough stipendiary clergy with time to train and mentor them.

**The priority of evangelism** – I am convinced that most fresh expressions of church that last are planted by local parishes. Synod need to be more intentional about resourcing parishes to start new local congregations, and to help parishes offer online courses to disciple those who have joined via online worship.

**Clergy wellbeing** – everyone agrees the CDM and capability processes are unwieldy, expensive and maximise clergy stress. We need to take on board the recommendations of the Sheldon Hub, so that the experience of clergy is listened to and reform isn't left to lawyers.

**Living in Love and Faith** – this is not a zero sum game – we have to work at Scripture together; I want to maintain the church's traditional doctrine of marriage, but also to belong to a church that truly welcomes and includes gay and lesbian people.

**Simplification** – building back well after Covid requires a more agile church. We need to reform the Mission and Pastoral Measure and the committee-bound governance of the Church of England, to make it easier to try new things, plant new congregations, and to wind things up when they don't work.

**Diversity in Appointments** – the progress in appointing women to senior posts over the last few years highlights how far we still have to go in recognising and releasing the leadership gifts of UK minority ethnic ordinands and clergy. However the recommendation of more paid advisers may not be the best way to achieve this.

**Climate Action** – meeting the Church of England's commitment to move towards net zero carbon emissions is going to require massive change. We need to learn lessons from the pandemic to rethink how we run the church with greener energy, less driving, leaner and simpler central structures, and fewer meetings in London.

### ***Who has nominated me and why?***



**Proposed by the Ven. David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster**

David writes, "It is my personal belief that it is helpful to have an archdeacon from a diocese on Synod. However, Mark's personal attributes are more important. He brings extensive knowledge and experience of synodical process and has a generosity and grace that means he will be attentive to the views of others he may not agree with whilst never being afraid to have his own mind."



**Seconded by Canon Brian McConkey, Rector of Ribchester and Vicar of Hurst Green and Mitton**

Brian writes, "I have known Mark Ireland now for over 30 years and his faithfulness to Christ and constancy is a gift to the Church."