

Tom Woolford

Candidate for the House of Clergy in General Synod

Proposed by the Rev'd Hannah Boyd, Seconded by Canon Andrew Sage



About me

I've been the vicar of New Longton since September 2020; following a curacy in Bispham and, prior to theological college, a couple of years as a lay church worker in Padiham. Before starting on my vocational journey, I completed a PhD in the history of theology and taught political philosophy to undergraduate students in Cambridge. I'm married to Julie and last month we welcomed our fifth daughter into the world (she's too young to have featured in the photo above). Alongside parish ministry, I'm also a part-time tutor in theology at the brand-new Emmanuel Theological College based here in the North West. I am into my second term on Diocesan Synod and have served on several diocesan projects including the *Routes of Faith* programme, the Advent and Lent devotional books, the IME planning group, the *Call to Pray and Give* campaign, and the *Hearts on Fire* homegrown diocesan conference.

Through the course of my life, I have worshipped in Church of England churches of varied traditions - central-choral, traditional catholic, and both conservative and charismatic evangelical. I appreciate different elements both theological, aesthetic, and practical from these different traditions and have incorporated features of each into my own spirituality and approach to parish ministry.

Outside of church and family life, I'm a keen, though very average, cricketer; and a keen, and reasonably-proficient, pub quizzer!

Why I'd like your vote

I love the Church of England. I love its Reformed and Catholic heritage; its Scriptural, liturgical, and sacramental worship; its commitment to pastor and evangelise through the parish system; its gift to the world of the Anglican Communion and the gift it receives back from the same; the clarity of its centre and the comprehensiveness of its circumference. I want to help preserve this precious inheritance, while helping to debate and decide ways in which the Church might adapt to meet the challenges of a changed and changing world.

Like every priest and layperson, I am concerned about the future of the Church of England. My knowledge of church history as well as my faith in God's providence prevents me from panic or despair, but decisions that will be taken in Synod in the next five years could certainly have serious and long-lasting consequences for the spiritual health of our church and nation - for good or ill. Synod will find itself trying to negotiate what will sometimes appear to be competing claims - between unity *or* faithfulness, relevance *or* distinctiveness, the convictions of the majority *or* the consciences of the minority, what the Tradition holds *or* what reason seems to tell us; even between a good ecumenical relationship with one historic church *or* with another! Those elected will need the Spirit's gifts of patience, love, and wisdom. I believe God has given me the experience, temperament, and training in history and theology, to be able to contribute usefully and prudently to such debates.

Of course, while I intend to enter into synodical debates in good faith, being prepared to listen to arguments and re-examine my beliefs wherever warranted, like everyone else who is standing, I have convictions that I expect to guide my approach and inform my priorities as a Proctor should I be elected.

In particular, on the matters likely to come before Synod, I will seek to:

- Argue for reprioritising and re-envisioning the parish in the Church's strategy for growth.
- Protect the rights of patrons as an important bulwark against the undue centralisation of power and dilution of theological distinctiveness.
- Uphold the Church's teaching that marriage is between one man and one woman.
- Discern how to keep the gains from what we have learnt about ministry during the pandemic without diminishing the intractably physical nature of gathered and sacramental Christian worship.
- Ensure that the provision in place for those who cannot in good conscience receive the ministry of female bishops and priests continues and is better understood.

Please feel free to get in touch to discuss these or other matters - email me at tomwoolford@gmail.com, or call me on 01772 613347.

I would be very grateful for your **first preference** vote, and almost as grateful for your second or third!

