

General Synod Elections

Revd Stella Bailey

Vicar: St Nicholas Kenilworth

Area Dean: St Nicholas Kenilworth

Nominated by: Revd Charlotte Gale, Pioneer Minister St Clares at the Cathedral

Seconded by: Revd Sarah Edmonds, Rector Shipston on Stour Benefice, Area Dean Shipston.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am writing to ask for your vote to elect me to serve the Diocese of Coventry on the General Synod of the Church of England.

About me:

Who I am and my experiences influence my revealed understanding of who God is and the lens through which I read scripture.

I am a 44 year old woman, I identify as gay and I am in a civil partnership. I was brought up on a council estate within a working-class family where academic success was never a value. I came to faith within a Liberal Catholic Church before we moved to Coventry when I was 12. My faith has been nurtured and developed across a whole spectrum of church traditions. During my life I have worshipped at Stoke St Michael's, St James Fletchamstead and St Thomas Kersley, and whilst at University I worshipped at a Forward in Faith parish. After a career as a Police Officer based in Coventry I trained for ordination at Cuddesdon. Since ordination my ministry has taken me from St Mary's Walsgrave to St Mary Magdalen's Chapelfields and presently to St Nicholas Kenilworth where in so many ways I am able to draw upon my rich background and understanding of the breadth of the church, as we worship and undertake Mission in ways that embrace a spectrum of spiritualities and doctrinal understandings from Liberal Catholic to Open Evangelical. I give priority in my ministry to working with families and children especially those who are unchurched or de-churched. I have an active ministry in our local schools and I am a governor of our local Church School having previously been Chair.

I have a heart for those who are marginalised in society. Therefore, I keep up to date with emerging social needs and seek ways that I can creatively respond. Sometimes this involves giving a voice to those who are voiceless, acting as an advocate or using my platform to highlight the issue and help bring about change so that the church can be more Christ like in its appearance.

So how will I vote?

Well for starters I would like to say, I do not know. We can not say what and how different proposal will come to Synod asking for a decision. Neither can we say how the Holy Spirit will move the church in the future. If we are to be open to the promptings of God then we have to allow the process of debate and discussion to shape and change our understanding of how God is moving the church, but there are opinions I will take into the room.

LLF:

As a gay person my plea is simple, don't talk about us, talk with us, give us agency in the decisions that deeply impact us. I am fully committed to the LLF process which enables us to have difficult conversations. But this also involves us being prepared to be vulnerable and move out of the bunkers we have created. A wise person once told me to always preach grace, and grace will always be my priority. I will always seek the option that draws our circles bigger to be inclusive. Welcome is not just a word. If we really mean 'all are welcome' then this means full inclusion and celebration. Therefore, I fully sign up to the inclusive church statement:

"I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health or sexuality."

My desire to be inclusive also means that I am fully committed to working out ways that we can hold the breadth of the church together. As a church we have extensive experience of this. It does not mean we have always got it right, but in so many ways we already hold together difference with canonical provision made for those who in conscience can not marry divorced people, and alternative episcopal oversight and the five guiding principles for those who hold traditional views around the ordination of Woman. My only caveat would be that these provisions should always be open to review and the drawing upon best examples of the words on paper being lived out in reality. Because we can always do better.

Reform of governance systems and structures:

We are a diocese of well trained and passionately mission minded clergy who want to see the kingdom of God grow. But far too often our time, finances and energy are drained away on governance or building issues. I will always vote in a way that frees us up, back into our vocational calling to be people who nurture disciples who make disciples. In a way that is Anglican in its nature and underpins the Parish system where there is a praying community embedded in every community.

Climate Change and Net Zero:

In February 2020, Synod called upon all parts of the Church of England, parishes, BMOs, education institutions, dioceses, cathedrals and the NCIs to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in emissions. Through Bishops Council our diocese has also committed ourselves to the policy of working towards Net Zero. Like me your first thought was probably one of looking up to your church roof and drafter stained glass windows and thought to yourself that it looks good on paper but with the structures and systems in our church the practical reality is another thing. I will do all I can to help re-shape our structures and systems to enable the changes needed for this to become a reality. I will also be an advocate for our investment funds to follow this principle and for us to withdraw investments in companies whose business model does not consider the environmental impact of their work.

I promise to serve all clergy in our diocese to the best of my ability and be an active and persistent voice for the diocese, its parishes and people.