

Gareth Thomas : Election address

I have been a minister in Manchester diocese for 16 years. I am married to Grace, also a priest in the diocese, and we have 3 children, aged 29, 24 and 19. I am an open evangelical, who has Jesus two great commandments at the heart of my faith and ministry - to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

I have found parish ministry to be a joy and a privilege for the most part, though certainly not without its challenges. In addition to my parish ministry, I am an ILG tutor, school governor and a member of the Diocesan deliverance team. These roles have given me further insights into the life, work and breadth of the CofE.

I have served on general synod for the last 3 years and been pleasantly surprised by the level of debate, and for the most part, the respect and consideration shown by members towards one another. While there are certainly some decisions the synod has made that I wish were different, I have felt that the topics have been properly and fully debated before those decisions were made and I would like to continue to be part of that process of seeking to understand each other better and make our church more in the likeness of Christ's teachings.

An important part of the role of General Synod is to discuss and wrestle with the parts of our faith and practice that we disagree on, in a healthy, respectful and productive way, as well as support each other as we participate in God's mission and serve God's people in our local communities and across the world. If re-elected, I would continue to take very seriously this commitment and would strive to contribute to debates, particularly around pastoral care and inclusion within the church, as well as some of the wider strategic decisions being made in the CofE. I see parish ministry as a real gift of the CofE and feel strongly that parish ministers, lay and ordained, should be valued and supported in their ongoing ministry.

Jesus said people will identify us as His followers because of how we love one another. I believe strongly that we are all loved and called by God, no matter our age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability or background, and it has been difficult to see people being othered and excluded from the church. On current issues, I support the development of blessings for same sex marriages and

want to see the CofE continue to be proactive in its anti-racism work and Net Zero ambitions.