

Jacob Fenton

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Rossendale team benefice

Proposer: Andy Ward

Seconder: Julia Robertson



About me

- I live in Rossendale, where I am a long-time committed member of St Nicholas Church, Newchurch, which is part of the larger Rossendale Team Benefice.
- The Church of England has always been a large part of my life, but I came to faith in Christ explicitly at age 15. This was life-changing for me, and I realised how much I wanted to be a part of my church community.
- I have been on my church's PCC for a little over a year now, along with being a sidesman and helping around the church wherever I am needed, whether that be cleaning cruets after communion or helping sort out the music books for a morning service. This has really helped me to appreciate the people around the church who make it run, as they are often overlooked.
- I also assist in running our seasonal toddler make-and-take group, which I very much enjoy.
- It gives me great joy to serve in parish life, especially in the context of traditional church services, which are unique in my benefice, as the majority of the other churches are more contemporary around Rossendale.
- While I was in sixth form, I founded and ran the whole school Christian Union which was very successful (having up to 20 members) and helped guide at least two people into the love of Christ and get baptised.
- I like to balance my church commitments with a variety of sporting activities. For example, I have fenced at a national level for England for a few years, along with being a purple belt in Japanese jujitsu, both of which have been very influential on my life, and I enjoy them both very much.
- I am a qualified lifeguard which has helped teach me how to think under pressure and be competent in times of stress. This was further assisted by my bronze Duke of Edinburgh expedition.
- I spent three years in the Royal Air Force Air Cadets, which was a fantastic experience, allowing me to have some amazing experiences such as flying a light aircraft, but also appreciate the armed forces.
- Christ has changed my life and provided a great level of stability and clarity for me, and has allowed me to help others in a capacity I did not know I had.



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Why I want to stand for General Synod

I have always had a saying, "Who am I to complain about something and then not do anything about it?" This was at the forefront of my decision to stand for General Synod. I hear in PCC meetings about both a lack of funding and a lack of real listening between different theological viewpoints, so I thought that I ought to try and make a difference in any way that I could. My main issues come down to the following six:

- Lack of funding reaching parish churches worries me - I see churches falling apart (including my own) and struggling to balance the books. I am hoping to properly represent struggling churches so that adequate funding reaches parish level, and I will push for that both within the Manchester diocese and from the national CofE. I am keen to make sure church funds are spent appropriately, with both the gospel of Christ and the welfare of local congregations in mind.
- In our diocese, the laity play a strong, collaborative role alongside clergy in leading church life and worship. Especially as a lay candidate, I will advocate for provision, opportunities, and training for laity, both in Manchester diocese and all dioceses within the CofE, to better assist them in having a leading role in local churches and congregations.
- We are an incredibly diverse diocese theologically, including evangelical, catholic, central, broad, and a whole host of other types of Anglican churches. I believe many groups struggle to feel listened to in the CofE, especially in General Synod, and I would be a firm promoter of dialogue and listening across the Anglican spectrum so all opinions may be heard and discussed.
- Sustainability is a significant issue facing General Synod, and I want to see the church lead well on care for Christ's creation. At the same time, I believe churches should not be told to meet quotas without adequate support in meeting them as I know this can cause stress amongst many congregations, and I will speak up to ensure no local church is left behind or expected to go further than is possible.
- As an 18 year old, I am very supportive of the Church of England's vision to become younger. In order for the church to appeal to this demographic, it is important that young people are represented at all levels of the church's decision-making bodies. As a young person myself, I feel I have much to contribute as the church works towards this goal.
- I welcome General Synod's decision in July to officially affirm the place of neurodivergent/neurodiverse individuals in the Church of England. I believe that it is incredibly important to further the work of including neurodivergent people in the church and helping parishes provide safe spaces for them to not only learn more but also express their love for God.

Thank you for taking the time to read my election address and I would be grateful if you could give me your first preference vote in these elections.