

Election Address – House of Clergy, General Synod



The Rev. Ben Somervell

Associate Minister at St Mary's Parish Church, Balderstone in Rochdale (Diocese of Manchester)

Who am I?

I studied Theology & Religion at Durham University before training for ordination at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. I served my Title Post at Holy Trinity Church, Old Hill in the West Midlands where I served as Assistant Curate. During this time, I served on the Diocesan Synod, as Diocesan Disability Advisor, and on the Diocesan Board of Patronage. My Curacy church received significant investment from the Strategic Mission & Ministry Investment Board and began a major building project and hired new staff.

In July, I was appointed Associate Minister at St Mary's Church, Balderstone in south Rochdale.

Why am I standing?

I am standing for election to General Synod because I care deeply about the future of parish ministry, the wellbeing of clergy, inclusion, and the mutual flourishing of every person made in the image of God within the life of the Church of England.

Aged 28, I bring the perspective of a younger priest formed in parish ministry during a period of significant challenge and change for our church. I am passionate about ensuring that the Church of England remains a place where children, young people, families, and single adults can encounter Christ, belong deeply, and grow in discipleship. Much of my ministry has focused on youth outreach, children's work, and supporting parents and families navigating complex modern pressures. I want Synod to keep asking how our structures, resources, and decisions serve the next generation at the parish, Diocesan, and national levels.

I am also personally committed to inclusion, particularly around singleness, neurodiversity, specific learning differences, and disability. As someone who is autistic and single, I care deeply that our churches are places where neurodivergent people, those with mental health challenges, and those who have often felt on the margins can feel welcome, cherished, included, and can then fully belong and contribute. I believe

this is not just an optional extra but is actually a central element of faithful pastoral ministry. I wrote my dissertation at Durham on autism and the church, and have subsequently written a journal article on this subject and given various talks on autism, formation and faith in the Church of England.

Clergy wellbeing is another priority. Many clergy carry heavy pastoral, administrative, and emotional loads. I want to advocate for realistic expectations, sustainable patterns of ministry, and cultures where clergy can be honest about struggle without fear. As a single clergyman, I am particularly passionate about this and about seeing how effective support networks and structures can be wisely developed and implemented.

I am committed to the flourishing of parish ministry specifically across the Church of England. I believe strongly that local churches, rooted in their own parish communities, remain central to our mission and distinctively Anglican calling. I want to support work that strengthens local congregations, supports smaller and stretched parishes, and enables faithful ministry in every context. I am especially passionate about parish ministry within urban deprived contexts. I have experience of this ministry from my Curacy parish, my current parish in south Rochdale, and a placement on the Shankill Road in west Belfast.

I am passionate about the development of Word-based women's ministry and about ensuring that women and men can flourish in their callings with mutual respect and generosity. Men and women are interdependent and mutually indispensable in church and society. We need each other to thrive.

Theologically, I stand within the Reformed evangelical and liturgical Anglican tradition (an unusual but vital combination in the Church of England today). I am a member of the *Prayer Book Society* and *Church Society*. I am committed to working constructively, prayerfully, and respectfully with colleagues across our theological breadth. Synod works best when we listen carefully, speak honestly, and seek the good of the whole Church, encouraging mutual flourishing for all.

If elected, I will aim to be prayerful, attentive, accessible, and diligent — representing parish realities and serving the mission of Christ's Church with integrity.

I hope you feel able to support me in this election. If you don't know me or have any questions, please email me at: benjamin.m.somervell2@outlook.com

I am asking for your "First Preference" vote, please. Thank you for your consideration and your prayers.