

General Synod Election Address 2026

Candidate: **Debra Walker** (Pauline Debra Walker)

Proposer: Jean Cropper

Secunder: Geoff Almond

Dear Electors

I have been privileged to serve on General Synod since 2010 and am seeking re-election. General Synod plays an important and influential role in the life of our church and I have set out below some of my beliefs concerning matters of faith and topical issues. I would be grateful for your continued support and your first-preference vote.

Mission and Parish Life

Mission is fundamental to the Church's identity and purpose. It belongs at every level of Church life, from individual Christians and local congregations to our national and international witness. I believe that everything debated at General Synod ultimately has implications for mission. Whatever the issue for debate, consideration should be given to: 'How will this help us make disciples?', 'How will this strengthen and sustain our Christian communities?' Alongside the wider issues considered by Synod, I am conscious of the very real challenges facing our local churches and parishes. I will seek to ensure that those local voices and concerns are heard in national discussions, and seek to support decisions that enable our parishes to flourish and sustain a Christian presence in every community.

Leadership and Ministry

I believe that God calls many different types of people to serve him in different ways. Effective leadership is important for any organisation and our local churches are no different. Strong leadership comes in many forms and as we face a decline in clergy numbers, a strengthening of leadership is required at all levels, both ordained and lay. I would like to see local church communities intentionally discerning and recognising the gifts of individuals, providing appropriate support and training, and empowering people to use their gifts and skills effectively to serve their communities and further the Kingdom of God.

A Church For All

Jesus called **all** people to follow him. This is a demanding challenge for the Church, but one we must embrace. For Liverpool Diocese, being a Church for all encompasses sustaining a Christian presence in every community, including those facing the greatest social and economic challenges. Our ability to fulfil that commitment is currently supported by national Church funding, including financial allocations specifically intended for our lowest-income communities. This funding is particularly important in a Diocese serving communities with some of the highest levels of disadvantage in the country and which, unlike some other dioceses, does not have the financial resilience afforded by significant historical assets. I see this continued central Church funding as being vital to sustaining a meaningful Christian presence across our Diocese, enabling us to remain present, active and serving in every parish and every community. Similarly, the Church must respond to the reality of modern Britain, with its rich diversity of race, ability, age, sexuality, culture and social background. I believe in a Church that welcomes and serves all people. To become that Church, we must be willing to make the changes needed to remove barriers to participation and belonging — whether those barriers are physical or structural, or found in our attitudes, culture and ways of working. The Church itself must also learn to live well with difference. I don't have all the answers, and there will inevitably be difficult conversations that call for generosity of spirit. I am committed to approaching those conversations with love, prayer, respect, trust and forgiveness, seeking ways to move forward together even where we may not always agree.

Church Schools and Young People

Liverpool has 119 Church schools, serving nearly 35,000 pupils. I am a strong supporter of Church schools and serve as Vice-Chair of Governors at my local Church primary school. I believe our schools should not only provide an excellent education, but also offer an environment in which young people can encounter Jesus, develop the confidence and resilience to navigate the uncertainties of life, and build foundations for a lifetime of Christian faith and discipleship. I am committed to growing a younger Church and to strengthening our ministry with children and young people across our parishes, youth hubs and wider

initiatives. I am particularly supportive of our annual Diocesan youth pilgrimage, where I have the privilege of serving as a leader. Young people are not simply the Church of tomorrow; they are a vital part of the Church today. We need to listen to their voices, encourage their gifts and create opportunities for them to participate fully in the life and mission of the Church. In doing so, they will help shape our shared ambition to become a younger and more diverse Church — and the Church God is calling us to be.

Safeguarding

A number of shameful examples of unacceptable behaviour and poor safeguarding governance within the Church have been reported by the national press/media and our objective of being ‘a church for all’ cannot become a reality until the need for rigorous safeguarding is addressed at all levels. In recent times we have seen some commendable work carried out at parish level, and our parish safeguarding officers have been key to this change in culture. However, the Church still has a long way to go to embed this culture change at all levels. This change will require transparent pathways of accountability, a readiness to listen to victims and survivors, and processes that can be seen to be fair and to be trusted. I will pursue these changes and am in favour of an independent, external scrutiny body at national level.

The Environment

Creation is a gift from our loving Father, entrusted to our care. As Christians, we have a responsibility to be faithful stewards of that gift, recognising that care for creation is also care for our neighbour. We must be particularly mindful of those communities around the world already experiencing the devastating consequences of climate change, often despite having contributed least to its causes. Our response must involve us all — as individuals, parishes and Dioceses, as well as the wider Church. I will seek to make it easier for our churches to take practical and meaningful action, whilst also encouraging the national Church to demonstrate leadership and accountability through its own actions, commitments and investments.

The World-Wide Church

We are blessed by our brothers and sisters throughout the Anglican communion. Sometimes our approach to faith and life are very different but in my experience of working as part of the Triangle of Hope (in particular with Ghana and the USA) an attitude of love, respect and honesty can enrich faith and learning across cultural, geographical and generational boundaries. I am therefore keen to encourage international dialogue, friendship and faith.

Social Responsibility

Christ brought good news to the poor and dispossessed and we must do likewise. In addition to mission, the church must actively engage to meet the needs of the vulnerable in society. In Liverpool our churches do an amazing job running foodbanks, credit unions, community food pantries and many other initiatives. General Synod has an additional role in directly challenging the Government on policies that could disadvantage weaker members of society. I am keen to actively engage with this role and to encourage the church to make socially responsible investments.

Other Information

I have lived in Lydiate and attended my local Parish Church for over 40 years. I sing in the church choir, serve on the PCC and sit on both Deanery and Diocesan synods. I am actively involved with the Triangle of Hope and am Chair of Trustees for Tsedaqah House - a house in Cathedral Close where 3 young people from Ghana, Virginia and Liverpool, live for a year, serving God together. I have also been privileged to serve as Lay Chair of the Diocese and as a Lay Canon of our much loved Cathedral.

The above are my views on some of the important issues facing our church today. I pray that God will bless each of us as together we seek to follow Him. I look forward to serving again on General Synod and appreciate all your prayers and encouragement.

Debra Walker

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