

Ven. Simon Fisher

Archdeacon of St Helens & Warrington

Candidate for General Synod –
House of Clergy, Diocese of Liverpool



*Nominator 1: Revd Canon Nicola Milford, Rector of All Hallows Allerton
& Area Dean of Liverpool South (Childwall)*

Nominator 2: Revd Canon Kate Wharton, Vicar of St Bartholomew's Roby

Dear friends,

Most of you know me, so I will spare you a lengthy biography. I have served in Liverpool Diocese since 2011, first as Vicar of St John's Tuebrook, and since 2020 as Archdeacon of St Helens & Warrington. I was briefly a member of the last General Synod from 2019–21, and now serve nationally on the Church Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee.

I am standing because I think the next Synod will have to make some hard and important decisions about what kind of Church of England we hand on.

I am traditional about what the Church is for, but not wedded to every way we have inherited of organising it. I believe deeply in parish, place, sacrament, the cure of souls and the Church of England's vocation to offer Christian presence to every community. But if we want to save the parish, we have to form a Church capable of sustaining that promise in the twenty-first century. That will sometimes require quite radical change.

Liverpool has taught me a great deal about that reality. We know what mission looks like in northern, post-industrial and resource-poor communities. We also know the pressures: fewer clergy, fewer volunteers, fragile finances and buildings, and increasing demands on those who remain. Realism about these things is not defeatism. Synod needs to hear the experience of dioceses like ours when national priorities and resources are decided.

In particular, I would want to contribute in five areas:

1. **Parishes, ministry and money.** The Church Commissioners' resources exist for the Church's mission. This is the rainy day. I want substantially more national funding reaching core diocesan and parish ministry, particularly where local communities cannot fund the Church they need. But alongside money, we need to face honestly the growing crisis in clergy vocations and lay volunteering and all the structural, vocational and wellbeing factors which are making that crisis harder to face.

2. **Laws and structures fit for today.** Legislation is one of General Synod's fundamental jobs, though perhaps its least glamorous. I know this territory well! The new Mission and Pastoral Measure and Clergy Conduct Measure matter; so do further reforms to faculty jurisdiction, episcopal appointment processes, burial rights (!) and some of the cumbersome processes which consume energy we need for mission. We still have too many complexities which assume a level of capacity and of public interest which is no longer the case, so legislative reform should and will be critical in the next synod.
3. **Safeguarding we can trust.** We are rightly paying a price for serious failures in the past. We need genuinely professional safeguarding, proper independence and scrutiny, and systems in which victims and survivors, clergy, parishes and the wider public can have confidence. But we also need processes which are proportionate, comprehensible and actually workable on the ground in parishes like ours.
4. **Unfinished business around sexuality.** I would not vote to change the Church's current doctrine and practice of marriage. But simply repeating our positions will not make our profound disagreements disappear. We need to work towards a durable settlement which acknowledges honestly where different people in the Church are, protects conscience and allows us to live and serve together. I don't pretend that I yet know how that could happen (no one does) but I have a track record of being a candid friend and a sympathetic advocate to people of all positions on this issue.
5. **A Synod which tells the truth hopefully.** I want us to be candid about the scale of the challenges facing the Church without becoming consumed by institutional anxiety. Our place in our society is different from the one we used to have, but our purpose has not changed and God has not stopped calling people, making disciples or giving his Church work to do. In our time we need both bravery to recognise what is, and confidence in our vocation to what God calls us to be.

I would bring to Synod long experience of parish ministry, diocesan strategy, finance and change; particular expertise in pastoral reorganisation and ecclesiastical structures; and experience of national governance and legislation. I listen, I work well with people with whom I disagree, and I am quite prepared to say when I think something needs changing.

If that sounds like a useful voice for Liverpool to send to General Synod, I would be very grateful for your vote.

Blessings,

Simon

Nicola Milford says:

I am very pleased to nominate Simon for General Synod, his Christ centred ministry has equipped Simon with vast, in depth understanding of parish life as both Incumbent and Archdeacon. Alongside this Simon's broader ministry across the Church of England and detailed knowledge of the legal complexities within which we minister and seek to build God's Kingdom will, I believe, enable Simon to be a strong advocate for equipping and encouraging parishes, clergy and laity across the Church of England, to fully embody their call and step forward in confidence in this season of ministry. As a member of General Synod, Simon will bring with him integrity, commitment, pastoral sensitivity and discretion as he prayerfully seeks and serves God and His people in both the bigger picture and detail of debates all the while ministering reassuringly for all God's people in this role.