



General Synod Election Address 2025
The Reverend David Hill SCP



Hello and sincere thanks for taking the time to have a look at my election address. The unbelievably cool looking person in the photo is me! I am the Rector of St John the Evangelist, Upper St Leonards in the Hastings Deanery and have been for the past eleven years. I am an active member of the SCP. I was previously in the Diocese of Norwich. I am married to Kate who is a psychiatrist, and we have two sons aged 16 and 20.



This is St John's. (It is a lovely worship space filled with wonderful people including quite a few retired clergy. For clarification they are wonderful too!). One very important aspect of our life together is that although on the surface we are a "smells and bells" church with a strong eucharistic spirituality, in reality people from all kinds of backgrounds and denominations worship here from Quakers to Baptists, various Anglican traditions and several Roman Catholics.

We exercise active children's ministry through Godly Play and Junior Choir. We minister to the nineteen residential care homes in the parish with mixed lay and ordained pastoral teams. I am the Honorary Chaplain of the Hospice. We have a growing LGBTQ+ prayer and support group and we are affiliated to Inclusive Church. **We are trying hard to enhance our care of God's creation.** We have beautiful gardens which the many people in flats and bedsits in the parish are encouraged to use as outdoor space. We are a venue for the community compost scheme and are currently trying to improve on our A Rocha Bronze Award church status. We have a community herb garden for people to come and take what they need.

I think it best to make a few comments about the things that excite me about being able to represent you on General Synod. Yes really, I am quite excited. My main concerns currently are contributing to creating a **genuinely warm, loving, kind and inclusive church** and ensuring that **the National Church genuinely supports parishes, their ministers and people** rather than pouring vast sums of money into projects with dubious outcomes. I have written recently in the Church Times in support of the Bishop of Hereford on this very issue. I am worried about the sustainability of our system. **I believe that the Church Commissioners should realise their central calling to be co-missioners with those of us seeking to build up the Kingdom of God in our nation for the good of all.** Jesus sent people out in twos to one place. The Church mainly seems happy to send people out in ones to numerous places all at once!

It seems to me that when many people think about inclusive churches they don't get far beyond issues of human sexuality. Although of crucial importance that is not the whole inclusive story. How does the church and indeed individual parishes approach racial justice and inclusion? How do we develop inclusion for those with mental health issues? At St John's we have a good number of adults with learning difficulties who are very important in our parish life. How does the wider church include them?

We are amongst the 9% most deprived parishes in the Church of England. One of the ways that we work to alleviate this is to work with charities which promote healthy eating and run courses to teach people to cook from fresh ingredients. We also work with a charity called Posh Club which supports isolated older people in the community through high tea, cabaret and dancing days. On a personal level I have developed very good relationships with Borough and County Councillors which allow me to seek solutions for individuals facing all kinds of issues which present in a community such as ours. This includes particularly housing and refugees. I also have a very positive relationship with our MP with similar positive results. However, deprivation is not the whole story. St Leonards is a culturally vibrant place and St John's is at the heart of all that. This is intentional. The power of the Arts to speak of God and beauty in a deprived place and in unsettling times is surely something the church needs to be at the centre of. This was very much the emphasis of Bishop George Bell and we are delighted to be called in this regard here and now. *So, if elected to General Synod I would hope to be a voice for creative engagement and outreach as well as issues of inclusion and financial justice for parishes.*

I don't come from a Christian background. When I was fourteen my parents separated, and I found myself trying to support them in very difficult times as well as my younger brother. The Parish Church was always open and so every day on the way home from school I would go in to steel myself for returning home. Gradually, the power of the beauty of the place got to me. God got to me through the mediums of flint, plaster, wood and glass. Then I discovered that several of my friends were members of the altar serving team. Then I met the Rector. He was brilliant in supporting me and my family. Over the next year or so it dawned on me that this was my calling too. *I believe to this day that the church should be there for absolutely everyone and that the church should be open in every sense of that word.* I can't imagine how my life would have worked out had that particular church been shut or did not have a parish priest. Prior to ordination I was a religious studies teacher in several secondary schools in various places, latterly being the head of department in one of the most radical and successful departments in the country.

Since then I have served at various points as a PCC and Deanery Synod member, as a churchwarden. I have been chair of governors in church schools and for several years was a chaplain in the Army Reserve. In both of the Dioceses in which I have exercised ordained ministry I have served on Diocesan Synod, parsonage committees, Ministry and Pastoral committees. I am very used to working in a committee system and to the puzzlement of many really enjoy being able to contribute in this way. Over the past couple of years I have stood back a little from these rôles whilst caring for elderly parents. That is something I no longer need to do so I am keen to get involved again with the task of making everything that we do as a Church, fit for purpose.

To summarise.

I am committed to building an Inclusive Church acknowledging the depth and breadth of what Inclusive means.

I am committed to the parish system and believe the Church as a whole should do much more to support us 'on the ground'.

I am committed to the Arts as way to enhance community and Faith.

I am committed to making the church open. So much of our legalism and defence mechanisms are counter-evangelistic.

It would be an honour to be elected.