

**IAN HENRY EDGAR**

Priest-in-Charge of All Saints, Sidley (Bexhill-on-Sea).

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Nominated by: Thomas James Cotterill, Priest-in-Charge of St John the Divine, West Worthing and St Andrew the Apostle, Worthing.

Seconded by: Alice Elizabeth Smith, Vicar of The Good Shepherd, Brighton

**About me:** Born in Canada to British parents in 1978, I moved to England and was ordained deacon in 2018 and priest in 2019, serving my title in the Parishes of Durrington and Maybridge and West Tarring. I became Associate Vicar of the Parishes of Lancing with Coombes and South Lancing and Sompting from 2021 to 2023. In 2024 my two (then) teenage sons and I moved to All Saints, Sidley where I was licensed as priest-in-charge. Prior to ordination I worked in agriculture as well as with adults with learning disabilities, both of which continue to inform my concerns and my desire that the Church of England act practically and compassionately at every level.

**Where I live and minister:** Here in Sidley, we have seen the ministry and mission of the church grow in the last two years. New and deeper links with the church school (All Saints Primary) next door have grown. I visit the school once a week for assembly, and we run an after-school club in church which is based round the reading of The Chronicles of Narnia and ending with worship. We have seen an encouraging response from the community, including being blessed with a number of adult Baptisms and Confirmations, and two weddings of couples who have recently come to faith and become part of our community. The financial struggles are real in Sidley, and we are in one of the most deprived areas of Chichester Diocese, and indeed the whole of England. So much has changed since All Saints Church was completed in 1930, and there is a lot of cultural alienation and generational unemployment. Finding work is difficult and the centuries long pattern of Sunday as a day of rest, quiet, and recreation – as well as worship – has changed. Still the community knows the church is there for them praying and providing space, for our monthly coffee mornings, local community groups, and the occasional concert.

**My hopes for the future:** These rapidly changing times call for calm reflection and a holding firm to the catholic faith (that is “according to the whole church”) that the Church of England has received. We are faced with issues, questions, and problems that our forebears never imagined. It is my firm belief that the catholic faith handed down by the Apostles is an evangelical faith – that is, Good News, not bad news. Our call, our task, is to proclaim this faith with humility, courage and confidence. We are to meet people where they are, as they are, to let them know that their lives have meaning and purpose in Christ. The danger is in wanting to “water down” this proclamation, or to distil it so much that it cannot be received by anyone. Like our forebears we must be ready to discern who needs milk or meat.

We must also remember that the Church in her truest self is the Body of Christ, assembled to meet the Crucified and Risen Lord in opening of Scripture and breaking of Bread. The parish church must be the focus of institutional support, and support for the central bodies and the diocese must be in effect our support of other parish churches, or we are not being true to the Catholic and Apostolic faith. Just as the early Church grew by personal encounter, service, and invitation, so too will the Church in our day grow. Strategy, planning, and bureaucracy have some place, but only insofar as they are servants of the personal encounter between Christians and those to whom the Good News is being proclaimed. Likewise, the interior life of the Church must be of paramount importance, both on a community and individual level. The rightful concerns about safeguarding come down to the virtue of chastity, that is, not seeing others as “resources” to be exploited, but fellow human beings for whom Christ died. Putting things in their proper order, for example safeguarding mechanisms are an important bulwark against unvirtuous behaviour, we will begin to nurture real communities of welcome, communities in which the growth in holiness is the paramount concern.

## To sum up some of my key concerns:

- The parish: That the central bodies of the Church of England church should be primarily concerned to support the mission and ministry of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church in particular places. The more local presence Christians have, the more able we are to witness to Christ – ordained ministry is an important part of this, as are our church buildings.
- That safeguarding be taken seriously and seen as an extension of the virtues that Christian people willingly embrace, rather than an external discipline imposed upon us.
- That the “Seal of the Confessional” be preserved – that is, a completely confidential place for those whose consciences are troubled know they can come to “open their grief” as the Prayer Book says. It is my firm conviction that any person who comes to make a private confession comes out of a sense of contrition and a willingness to face and make amends for their sins – not as a way to get out of punishment.
- The Five Guiding Principles allow for genuine inclusivity in the Church of England and should be preserved as an example of charitable disagreement and waiting upon the Lord.

My hope as a member of the General Synod is to be part of the renewal of the Church of England, as we remember that her life is lived in the local communities that make her up. I also wish, as a theological conservative, to contribute to the wider discussions around identities – whether they be gender, national, ecclesial, in a charitable way and with much liberality. These are truly unprecedented times, and as Christians we need to hold fast to the faith we’ve received, as well as keeping our eyes, ears, and hearts open to where the Holy Spirit is moving and calling us. The Church of England is in many ways uniquely placed for this discernment in these times. I also wish to be a part of reminding ourselves that every person – no matter their age, ability, history, or identity – is called to be renewed, born again by water and the Holy Spirit, and turn from paths that lead only to sorrow – to following the true shepherd who lays His life down for His sheep, to the still waters where He will restore us.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or wish to discuss anything matters I have raised.

*With the "donkey" after All Saints' Primary Nativity in Church*

