



Jonathan Sharp - General Synod Election Address

"where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." 2 Cor 3:17

This wonderful assertion sums up the Church of England's foundation, and *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

RT Kendall famously observed 'God has an opinion about everything'. This is both challenging and comforting. It brings a sense of immediacy and concentrates the mind and heart on what God's opinion would be - for personal issues, for what our churches teach and of course at General Synod. He first points us to the Bible, helped by the Holy Spirit, and refined in discussion with others. We have to let the Word judge us and we have the foundational Canons and Formularies to help us.

General Synod's main roles are approving liturgy & doctrine changes, setting budgets and maintaining good relations with other churches. It also has influence, in different ways, over our church and country.

If elected, I'd join those who seek to follow the Church of England's orthodox biblical witness because God's way is always going to be best for us. His loving direction is sometimes a severe mercy but never to be scorned. *"if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

Liturgy & doctrine

The dominating issue is still a 7 year struggle to change doctrine in the area of who can marry who. In the new General Synod a return to orthodoxy is hoped for, but if not the main concern will be to put legal structures in place to support parishes that continue in orthodox faith. This could be a big change and some have already embarked on it. We then need to focus on our urgent responsibility to bring grace, repentance, hope and Godly wisdom to our nation.

What we spend money on

The Church's ample financial resources should be used principally to support parish ministry. We have to recognise that God is at work in the smallest gatherings as well as in festive crowds, so parishes need to be prioritised in financial support and in ministry resources. A strong long-term commitment to biblically-faithful parish communities will help restore confidence in those considering full-time ordained leadership. It will also encourage potential lay leaders to invest time and energy in training.

Many are aware of the huge costs of Project Spire, found to be historically [inaccurate](#) and opposed to CofE charitable objectives. Likewise the expensive 'net-zero' requirements which feel more like false-virtue than true benefit. Both need to be stopped. The 'racial justice' programmes, which turn out to be the [opposite](#), must also be dissolved.

External relationships

We also need to re-establish good relations with our fellow global majority Anglicans who no longer recognise the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This will only happen if the LLF measures are reversed or a separate structure established.

Thankful

There is a lot to be thankful for in our churches - God's presence in our lives, joyful worship, welcoming strangers, great children's and youth work, warm friendships, encouraging teaching, lives changed, support for those in need (Acts 2:42).

The recent CofE Youth Research report shows how authentic Christian faith attracts people. It's also not schemes or projects that give hope but the discovery of Jesus as a person, *'the answers I was seeking are found in the church down the road...'* [Carl Willers](#).

We need to nourish and build on this and see what God will do. This will not necessarily be a focus on numerical growth, though that will happen, but on building and strengthening us for the challenges to come.

Engaging Britain

It's also encouraging to see biblical principles for human flourishing being more confidently expressed in the wider media though often this is from other Christian groups. In the midst of many personal and collective challenges the words and grace of our Creator need to be heard. *Thy will be done on earth...*

Five priorities

I'd like the General Synod to encourage the following priorities for our churches:

- * **application** - in sermons - more reference to God's work in the world. *Not just what's there but what it's there-for.* We should be asking - Lord what are you saying to us right now? And hearing His answer.
- * **prayer** - for the nation - more focussed prayer for UK institutions/issues ([examples](#)). He cares for all of us and national decisions affect the people He loves. The Government is answerable to God so we need to advise it well. There is no left or right only up or down!
- * **history** – draw more on our Christian [history](#) - how God has amazingly blessed us, and through Him Britain has been a blessing to others (answering the prayers of generations of Anglicans). We look to Him doing that again.
- * **practical theology** – more organised, topic-based learning on key Christian themes, a similar role to catechisms - knowing what you believe. "In understanding be mature" 1 Cor 14:20.
- * **information** - more [help](#) on about how to handle the many vexing and divisive issues in our community, at work, with friends, for our nation, providing thoughtful Christian responses, initiating conversations. Young people are [asking](#) - why we are so silent?

My experience ...

I serve on PCC, Deanery and Diocesan Synod, and also Bishop's Council (ie a DBF trustee) so I'm aware of the general structure and workings of the Diocese and what it is seeking to do. I have actively contributed to these groups.

I have been part of a Church plant and also long-established congregations with different traditions in Plymouth and London but mostly in Brighton & Hove.

My background is in software development having worked for a British Telecom subsidiary and more recently for the UK branch of a New Zealand firm, building e-commerce and online learning systems. I now work on my cultural-apologetics [website](#). Recreationally, I enjoy sailing with family and friends.

If any of this resonates with you - please vote for me! Thank you