

Steven Smart

Candidate for House of Laity, Portsmouth Diocese

Nominated by: Mark Coundley, Fareham Deanery
Cathy Juniper, Gosport Deanery



About Me

I am a member of Bridgemary & Elson in the Gosport Deanery, which I have been a member of for the past 18 years. 5 years ago I had the privilege of becoming the Children, Youth and Families Minister within the parish and was then later licensed as a Lay Pioneer Minister in June 2026. As a representative on Diocesan Synod and Bishops Council I have had the insights of conversations and debates along with important decisions that are made on behalf of the wider Diocese. I am a third year student at CMS studying for my theology degree which has helped to form my practice and spiritual life.

I am a member of the Inclusive Church Network as I believe the Church should be a place where everyone can encounter the love of God and know that they are welcomed, valued and belong.

Why am I standing?

I am not standing because I believe I have all the answers.

I am standing for election to General Synod because I believe passionately in the Church of England's calling to be a Christian presence in every community — a Church that is rooted in Christ, open to all, and willing to go beyond its walls to meet people where they are.

With a particular passion for mission among children, families and those who may find themselves on the edges of traditional church life. Experience has taught me that the Church does not always need to wait for people to cross our threshold. Sometimes we need to cross theirs.

My ministry has convinced me that some of the most important encounters between the Church and our communities happen outside our Sunday services: around tables, in schools, through community activities, over cups of coffee and simply by being present alongside people.

If elected to General Synod, I would bring that perspective with me: listening carefully, asking questions, speaking when necessary and seeking prayerfully to discern where God may already be leading us.

Children and families

One of the voices I particularly want to bring to General Synod is that of children and families. Children and young people are not simply the future of the Church. They are the Church today. We need to listen seriously to their experiences, questions and spirituality and ensure that decisions made nationally consider their impact upon them.

I want the Church to invest confidently in children, young people and families and to recognise the vocation and ministry of the lay people, clergy, pioneers, youth workers, children's workers, volunteers and schools who serve them.

The vocation of lay ministry

Being called to pioneer ministry has taught me that mission begins with listening.

The Church does not take God into the community; God is already there. Our task is to listen, notice and join in with what God is doing.

Through ministry with children and families, community cafés, feeding projects, schools and other forms of community engagement, I have seen relationships grow in unexpected places. People who might never initially attend a traditional church service can nevertheless begin exploring faith when we create spaces of genuine welcome, hospitality and belonging.

I want General Synod to continue supporting both our inherited parish churches and pioneering forms of mission. These should not be competitors. At our best, they enrich one another.

As a Lay Pioneer Minister I have led a team to initiate two new worshipping communities. I want to champion the vocation of lay people across the Church of England. At baptism, every Christian is called into the life and mission of Christ.

Our churches contain extraordinary gifts, experience and potential. The Church's mission cannot be something undertaken by clergy alone. Lay and ordained ministries are different, but they belong together as part of the ministry of the whole people of God.

Bringing the local Church to General Synod

Behind Synod's strategies, budgets, legislation and reports are real people: parish clergy, lay ministers, volunteers, churchwardens, pioneers, children, families and communities.

If elected, I would seek particularly to bring the experiences of parish ministry, lay ministry, pioneer ministry, children and families, inclusive church and communities experiencing social and economic challenges into those conversations.

But representation must work in both directions. I would also take seriously the responsibility to communicate what is happening at General Synod back to those I represent, making Synod understandable and accessible rather than something that feels distant from everyday parish life.

I stand as part of the Together campaign and am deeply committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and in all roles within the Church. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community I continue to strive for a church that is welcoming and inclusive, recognising and celebrating relationships of all God's people. On Synod, I would seek to listen to voices that are sometimes overlooked, contribute thoughtfully to difficult conversations and help build a Church where everyone fully belongs.

If you have a hope for a Church that is present in every community, welcoming to all and confident in its calling, I'd be grateful for your vote.

You can also contact me by email: stevensmart.synod@gmail.com

