

The Revd Chris Hodder – 2015 Election Address



Currently: Vicar of St Paul's, Wilford Hill.

<http://www.stpauls-boundaryroad.org.uk/>

Previously: 2005-2010 - Anglican Chaplain & Pastoral Services Co-ordinator at the University of Derby, and Chaplain to Derby Cathedral; including 12 months as Chaplain to the leadership team to St Alkmund's in Derby during a time of leadership transition.
2001-2005 – Curate at Emmanuel & St Mary's, Loughborough

Trained at St John's, Nottingham; University of Nottingham BTh (Hons) Class I. Prior to ordination I worked as an Assistant Portfolio Manager at Barclays Stockbrokers, spent a year doing youth work in the Republic of Ireland, and obtained a 2:1 degree in History & Politics from Huddersfield, majoring in football.

What fires me in ministry is transformation – seeing the penny drop for people as they encounter the love of God in Christ, and move forward in their faith journey. I think our Diocesan values embody this in a holistic way – holding Living worship, growing disciples & seeking justice together as three strands of God's transforming mission. Proclamation and acts of kindness/service are not opposites, and need to be held together if we are to fulfil our remit as the church of God.

My previous experiences in ministry have been varied – from witnessing to the Gospel in sector ministry in the vibrant atmosphere of a modern University, co-ordinating an ecumenical team that worked in partnership with members of other faiths, to being attached to a Diocesan Cathedral Church. My parish experience has included being connected to churches more openly linked to the charismatic movement, as well as my current parish, which is probably described as “central” in theology and worship, with services that are both “Quiet & Traditional” and “Contemporary & Relaxed”. I am positive about Fresh Expressions, but also adamant that good, creative parish ministry, rooted and incarnational, needs to be central to the life of the Church of England. I love being a vicar! We serve a God of relationships, and building relationships with people is central to the flourishing of any mission and ministry endeavour.

I would describe myself as “Open Evangelical” if you need a tidy shorthand – although I recognise that labels can be a problematic sometimes, and don't tell the whole story. Although securely rooted in my evangelicalism it is important that there are good relationships between different traditions, and I have always been a bridge builder in that regard. We must engage properly with people who differ from us, rather than parodying their position from a distance. It is perfectly possible to listen, learn and be open to others while remaining faithful to our own traditions and core values – and it is also a better, more graceful and prayerful model for mature debate in a diverse church. I have always been active both in the Deanery Leadership Teams where I have served, and participated actively ecumenically, and within the civic life of the towns and cities where I have been able to. I have served on Diocesan boards and committees (including over five years on Derby Diocesan Board of Education) and on Diocesan Synod. It is often on the edges of the church where I feel most alive though, and this has been true whether I have been engaged in politics or work in social justice, or involved in evangelism. I also have a research interest in the use of Branding in helping people come to faith, and am currently writing up a PhD in Practical Theology which focuses on that.

I am standing for Synod because I believe in the vocation of the Church of England to witness to the gospel of Christ in this country; as well as its role within the worldwide Anglican communion. I want to be part of a healthy, confident church that is a good steward of all that God has given it, and is aware and joining in with what the Holy Spirit is doing in our world. It is vital that the C of E maintains a credible, engaged but faithful witness to Christ in the public square – balancing grace and truth. I am committed to be a part of that, and to engage in the kind of “double listening” – both to culture and the Scriptures – which such debates need. Society does have things to say to the church – but we must not forget our prophetic role either, because the church also has much to say to society.