

Candidate for General Synod

Revd Dr Ian Paul

I would like to offer myself to serve the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham—and the wider Church—in standing for election to General Synod. I believe that, over the last 25 years, I have been fortunate enough to gain a wide range of experience in parochial ministry, theological education, and diocesan and national roles which could be of service to the Church.



Despite the headlines, I don't believe the C of E is finished yet! I believe passionately that God wants to use the Church to bless the nation and draw people to himself—and that, at its best, Synod can support the ministry of local churches to that end. As someone once said 'The local church—when it stewards the message of Christ—is the hope for the world.' This is what Synod needs to be focussing on, supporting and enabling.

I would be grateful for your support in the election (and if I am not your first choice candidate I would ask you to consider giving me your 2nd or 3rd vote).

Who Am I?

- Originally from London, I studied Maths at Oxford and Southampton and worked in business before training for ordination in Nottingham.
- I completed a PhD on metaphor in the Book of Revelation, and was then in church ministry for 10 years in Dorset before returning to Nottingham to teach at St John's theological college for nearly 10 years.
- Since 2013 I have worked as a freelance theologian and Managing Editor of Grove Books Ltd. I am Associate Minister at St Nic's, Nottingham, a member of the Deanery Finance Committee and Honorary Assistant Professor at the University of Nottingham.
- I am married to Maggie, a GP in Ilkeston, and we have three children and a dog called Barney. We share our house in Chilwell with Maggie's parents.

What are the Issues facing Synod?

- **Church Growth.** We cannot avoid the reality that church attendance is in decline—but also that there are parts of the church which are growing. We need to listen carefully and learn from them. Numbers matters, since numbers represent people. But church growth comes from church health, and I think it is much more helpful to focus on developing healthy churches than to be constantly worrying about numbers. Synod can encourage and give permission, though leadership most often needs to come from diocese and parishes.
- **Theological Training.** Steve Croft, Bishop of Sheffield, has proposed some radical changes to training and equipping for ministry in the Church, to which I want to give two hearty cheers. I think the proposals contain some great ideas, and suggest a very positive vision. But the report is also based on some very poor research, and we need to do better in our thinking about encouraging vocations and training for ministry—for the sake of both the ordained and licensed and the churches which they serve.

- **Management and Leadership.** A series of reports under the heading 'Reform and Renewal' have proposed significant changes to leadership development in the Church. Again, these have been something of a curate's egg. Having worked in business myself, I am aware of the benefits of the best of business thinking. But this needs to be appropriated with critical theological reflection, and adapted to the context of Church and ministry if it is to be useful.
- **Marriage and Sexuality.** We cannot avoid discussing the issues of same-sex relations and this is already happening through the process of Shared Discussions. It looks to many as though there will be no way through current disagreements. But the resolution on women bishops offers some hope, and my experience (of contributing to the formal process, speaking in debate and hosting discussions on my blog) is that there is progress to be made through careful and respectful listening on both sides.

How could I help?

1. I have previous experience on Synod in the Diocese of Salisbury from 2000 to 2005 and in diocesan structures. I was active in speaking in debates, involvement in subcommittees, and in engaging with the diocese in communicating Synod decisions and issues—a vital part of the role.

2. I bring significant experience of ministry. During my 10 years in Dorset, 8 were on the staff of St Mary's, Longfleet, where we saw significant numerical growth. This doesn't mean I have all the answers, but does mean I have learnt some important insights into mission and ministry in our current cultural context. I continued to be actively involved in local church ministry during my time in theological education, and as Associate Minister at St Nic's I currently serve on the Deanery Finance Committee along with a range of other involvements.

3. I also bring significant experience of the 'real world' to ministry and Synod processes. I have been a Personnel Manager and worked in production planning and market forecasting, and have managed a small publishing company (Grove Books) for a number of years.

4. One of my central concerns is to engage issues of ministry with issues of theology. The temptation in our current situation is either to focus on the pragmatic or retreat into the academic. But renewal of the Church and mission must involve renewal both of our encounter with God—our spirituality—and our thinking about and understanding of God—our theology. Through my speaking, writing, and my blog www.psephizo.com my aim is to make use of the best of theology and scholarship to serve, equip and renew approaches to ministry.

What do others say?

'I know Ian to be someone who takes serious amounts of time to think through the issues that are likely to come before the Synod, in a biblical and fair-minded way, whilst being rooted in serving the local church.' Revd Naomi Hill, St Christopher's, Sneinton (proposer).

'I am happy to second Ian not because I always agree with his conclusions but because he is clearly a priest of integrity, wisdom and learning who has many gifts—in particular, bringing biblical perspectives to the issues of the day. I think he will help to keep Synod focussed on what matters.' Father Wayne Plimmer, St John's Beeston (seconder)

You can find out more about me at my blog <http://www.psephizo.com/about/>.

Please also feel free to be in touch by email editor@grovebooks.co.uk