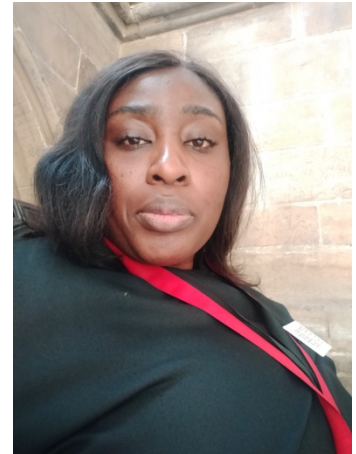


Why I am standing for General Synod

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am standing for election to the General Synod with a simple desire: **to serve Jesus, to serve His Church, and to listen well.** I have prayed about this, and I keep coming back to the same place — **Jesus.** I love Jesus. I love His Church. I love people. I believe the Church has an important role in helping people encounter the living God, especially at a time when so many are searching for hope, meaning, belonging and truth. I do not believe I have all the answers. I am still learning, growing and being shaped by God. But I know that I am a child of God, saved by grace, called to serve and dependent on the Holy Spirit. That is the place from which I want to serve.



Called to serve

I was born into a Christian family, with God's Word at the foundation of our home. At fourteen, my faith became personal. I came to know God for myself and sensed a call to ministry and leadership. I began serving and leading from that age and, by God's grace, that journey continues. Over the years I have had the privilege of serving in many different ways, pioneering new worshipping communities, working both within and beyond traditional church structures, and building bridges between them.

I currently serve as **Lay Chair for Nottingham South**, a role I have held since 2024. I am also a **Licensed Lay Minister and counsellor**, and I am in the process of completing my MA in Apologetics, alongside postgraduate and other training in theology, ministry, mission, youth, evangelism and pastoral ministry. But when I think about ministry, I think less about titles and more about people: the person who needed someone to listen; the young person who needed someone to believe in them; the person hurt by church; the person quietly serving and wondering if anyone had noticed; and the person longing to know God but unsure where to begin. These are the people who have shaped my understanding of leadership.

I have been privileged to help start and develop ministries including **Church Without Walls, The Disciples youth ministry, CAP in Nottingham Central and Mizpah Women**, as well as organising community events and creating opportunities for people to connect. I believe Kingdom leadership is not about being important; **it is about making room for others.** It is about helping people discover their gifts, find their voice and become all that God has called them to be.

Mission beyond the church building

My heart has always been for mission. I want people not simply to know about Jesus, but to encounter Him, discover His love and forgiveness, hear His Word and become His disciples. I have become increasingly convinced that we cannot simply wait for people to come into our churches. **We have to go where people are.** Through opportunities to work and engage outside the Church, including involvement with the Climate Assembly and contact with government and local council settings, I have seen again the mission field right in front of us. People are asking questions. People are searching. People are hurting.

For me, **the marketplace is mission. The community is mission. The workplace is mission. Our streets are mission. The whole of life belongs to God.** At the same time, I love and value our parish churches, Anglican heritage, worship, liturgy, buildings, traditions and the generations of faithful people who have gone before us. I also believe God is doing new things. I have seen people who would never enter a traditional church building find community, discover faith and begin following Jesus in new settings. **It does not have to be either/or. There is room for both.** We need to honour what God has given us while remaining open to where the Holy Spirit is leading. We need to be rooted, but not stuck; faithful to Scripture while willing to ask how we communicate the unchanging Gospel in a changing world.

Listening to every generation

Listening is especially important to me. I spend much of my time alongside young people and young adults. I hear their questions, hopes, frustrations and creativity. Sometimes we say that young people are *the future of the Church*. I believe we need to remember that **they are the Church now.**

We need to hear them, trust them, disciple them and give them opportunities to serve and lead. We also need to be willing to learn from them. I want to see a Church where a young person can walk through the door and know: **“There is a place for me here.”** But my concern for those who feel unheard does not stop with young people. I want to listen to the weak, vulnerable, lonely and overlooked; those who have been hurt by church; those who serve faithfully without recognition; and those who are waiting for something to change.

If elected to General Synod, I will not arrive believing I already know what everyone needs. **I want to arrive ready to listen, pray, learn, ask questions, speak when necessary and sometimes simply be quiet.** I want to bring the voices and experiences of ordinary people into the conversations that shape our Church. I want to be a bridge between people and places that do not always meet.

A voice shaped by prayer

General Synod will involve difficult conversations and significant decisions. I know I will not agree with everyone, and I do not expect everyone to agree with me. But I want to listen well, speak with grace and remember that we are called to love one another even when we see things differently. I want my voice to be shaped by **Scripture, prayer and the Holy Spirit — not simply by opinion.** My prayer is: **“Lord, what are You saying to Your Church?”**

I want us to be a Church that worships the true and living God; loves His Word; prays; makes disciples; sends people out; welcomes those who are searching; cares for those who are hurting; values and releases children and young people; and is not afraid to try new things when the Spirit leads. A Church that honours those who have gone before us while faithfully preparing for those who come after us.

And above all, **I want Jesus to be seen and glorified — not me, not our programmes, structures or personalities. Jesus.** I am not standing because I think I am the answer. I am standing because **I believe Jesus is the answer,** and I want to serve His Church faithfully in this season. I bring my experience, learning, questions, mistakes, passion for mission, love for people, heart for the generations to come and desire to see the Church flourish. But most of all, I bring a willing heart.

I am a worshipper. I am a prayer warrior. I am a learner. I am a pioneer. I am a leader who loves helping others become leaders. I am passionate about people, mission and the Church. But before any of those things, **I am a child of God.** And that is enough.

If entrusted with the privilege of serving on General Synod, I will seek to serve with humility, courage, prayer and joy. **I will listen to the unheard. I will advocate for the overlooked. I will champion the young. I will encourage mission. I will honour what God has entrusted to us. I will make space for what God is doing next. And I will keep learning.**

Most of all, **I will keep looking to Jesus.**

My prayer is that, in everything I do, Jesus would be revealed, Jesus would be known, Jesus would be loved and Jesus would be glorified.

May we be a Church that hears His voice, follows His leading and faithfully prepares the way for the generations still to come.

To God alone be the glory..

Amen.

Fola Sowunmi

LLM, Lay Chair Nottingham South