

Andrew Gray



Who am I?

I am a 40-year-old entrepreneur and a lifelong Anglican, born and brought up in rural mid-Suffolk. After school in Ipswich, I taught English as a volunteer in Kenya for the De la Salle Brothers before reading History at Cambridge. After working in TV, I had a Norwich based company which produced documentaries many of which covered local subjects (using footage from the East Anglian Film Archive). At present I run a technology start-up and I am a founding member of *Christian Aid's* SALT business network.

In my spare time I enjoy rowing, theatre and mountain climbing and like to spend time with my family and friends. I am an uncle to five children and a godfather of two.

In 2015, I was elected to General Synod representing the Diocese of Norwich. Having recently moved to Ipswich I seek re-election in this Diocese.

Homeless Task Force – Practical Action

Reducing homelessness in the UK is something about which I am passionate. In 2019, I put forward a Private Member's Motion to General Synod calling for the formation of a Homeless Task Force (<https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/news-and-statements/general-synod-backs-call-homelessness-task-force>) This was endorsed unanimously.

Since then, the Task Force (under the auspices of the Mission and Public Affairs Council) has liaised with major and local homeless charities to understand how best the Church can alleviate this problem. We have also worked closely with the Archbishop of Canterbury's Housing Commission.

Despite the interruptions of Covid, we have assembled a coalition of charities, pension funds, private finance and property experts who are willing to assist the Church in creating new housing for the vulnerable. This would involve investing in Church land without selling it off. Such new housing will not only put the Word into action (***James, 1:22-24***) but will also generate income for the Church at a time when it is desperately needed.

By voting for me, you will be enabling this work to continue.

Re-endowing our Church

The unique nature of the Church of England is its claim to have a Christian presence in every community. This is rapidly being threatened – Covid has damaged Church finances, and many Dioceses are making cuts to clergy posts and merging parishes into ever larger benefices.

The Church Commissioners have an asset portfolio of £9.1 Billion. While this wealth is invested for the good of the Church, we face a situation where frontline clergy are already being fired in some dioceses and parishes are continually squeezed for unrealistic amounts of money to pay the Parish Share.

In the 1970s, parish land and assets endowed over previous centuries were taken by the central Church to remove inequalities in the parish system. I believe it is time to re-endow England's parishes in a new way, relieving Dioceses and parishes of financial pressure and ensuring our claim to be a Christian presence in every community remains true.

Without radical action, parishes and benefices will continue a spiral of decline, expending time, energy and money on keeping afloat without having the ability to grow.

If elected, I will put forward a motion through Synod calling on the Church Commissioners to re-endow parishes with enough income to ensure that parishes and benefices are properly equipped for growth.

At the National Level

General Synod is seen by many outside as a remote talking shop with little or no relevance to the ordinary person in the pew. However, where the C of E continues to believe firmly in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (and puts that belief into practice) it continues to play a meaningful part in public life. For this reason, I have supported motions in Synod calling on HM Government to limit Fixed-Odds Betting Terminals, and as a member of the Mission and Public Affairs Council have contributed to the Church's work in numerous areas including its recent statement on highlighting the role of religious persecution. I have also contributed ideas around carbon offsetting to the National Environment Officer as a way of assisting the Church's move towards Net Zero emissions, and I believe the C of E has a stronger role to play in the Climate Crisis.

I believe my record shows I prefer to put words and prayer into action. Our nation still needs the Church – and if it can focus less on its internal divisions, it can and should be far more proactive in tackling a number of threats, including:

◆ Euthanasia

◆ Secularism

◆ Militant Atheism

Fresh Ideas

As a young candidate with six years' experience of the General Synod, I believe I can continue to play a role in helping the Church turn itself round, under God's guidance, to proclaim the Gospel in strong and vibrant ways, blending the best parts of tradition with modernity.

Why I am standing again for General Synod

For too long, the Church has been riven by divisions and too willing to water down what it believes in a desperate effort to attract new people. Now is the time to work together, keeping liturgy which works without marginalising faithful members, while being prepared to experiment with new ways of mission.

As Managing Director of a business, I am familiar with the challenges of making things happen. It requires energy, drive and commitment and the ability to inspire and lead people and above all, faith and vision. This I am sure I can do, as I hope I have demonstrated by taking a lead on homelessness.

Thank you for reading this.

If you feel that, on your behalf, I could make a difference, please give me your first, or high preference vote.

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