Alison Coulter Address for General Synod Election September 2026

About me

I live in Winchester, and worship at Christ Church Winchester and at Winchester Cathedral, where I am an honorary Lay Canon. I was Lay Chair of Winchester Diocesan Synod from 2015 to 2021 and have been a member of General Synod since 2015. I have a background in the NHS, most recently as Director of Organisation Development for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight NHS Integrated Care Board until 2023. I currently work freelance as a coach and facilitator. From 2017 to 2021, I was a founder Director of Thrive Worldwide, which offers specialist health services to many dioceses and to other NGOs and charities. I am married to Ian, and we have 4 adult children and 5 grandchildren.

Why I am standing for re-election

Thank you very much for electing me to General Synod in 2015 and in 2021. It has been a privilege to serve as a member of General Synod for the past 11 years and, having prayed about this, I am standing for re-election. Whilst it's important to have new, fresh voices on Synod, I also think it's also important to have continuity and to have experienced people who know how the Synod works. I would seek to use my experience to bring continuity to the work I have been involved with, which includes:

Vice Chair of the House of Laity and Chair of the Archbishops' Council:

In 2021, I was elected Vice Chair of the House of Laity for General Synod. This has allowed me to shape the Synod agenda as part of the Business Committee, to be called to speak regularly in our debates, and to become a member of the Archbishops' Council. My colleagues on the Council asked me to Chair the Council from March 2025, and I have worked to ensure greater openness, accountability, and good governance.

Leading debates

I had the privilege at the July 2025 General Synod to represent Winchester Diocese by bringing our Diocesan Synod motion for debate, requesting a formal increase in clergy rest time to 36 hours a week. This was strongly approved, there was lots of good media coverage and this is now in the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy.

Member of the Safeguarding Structures Programme Board

I am the Archbishops' Council representative on this Board setting up the new independent safeguarding authority for the Church of England. I will ensure that General Synod continues to prioritise safeguarding, that an independent oversight organisation is set up and also ensure that safeguarding continues to be embedded in the life of Parishes and Dioceses.

Lay leadership

In 2017, I co-authored the Setting God's People Free report on lay leadership and lay ministry. In 2027, it will be 10 years since the publication of this report, an opportunity to mark this anniversary and to think again about how we equip and empower the 98% of the church who are lay for our ministries in the church and in the world. I want to make sure we take this opportunity.

Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board

I am a member of this Board, which distributes about £190 million each year to Dioceses. Some of the funding also goes to lowest-income communities, and some is for partner organisations, including Messy Church and Bubble Church. I want to use this experience as we will be thinking in the next Synod about how best to distribute funding to Dioceses and Parishes.

Why vote for me?

To continue the work I have started: I would be very grateful to be re-elected so I can use my experience from the past 11 years and continue the work I have started. There are significant agenda items for this coming quinquennium, including establishing a new independent safeguarding authority for the Church, the ongoing work on human sexuality, and the National Funding for Diocesan Ministry Review, looking at how we can best distribute the significant funding from the Church Commissioners to Dioceses and Parishes. Issues around lay leadership and everyday faith, I believe, are still very important, and I want to make sure those are not forgotten. I will bring my experience and understanding to ensure continuity.

My willingness to listen, build relationships, and build consensus: There are areas in our Church life where differences of opinion threaten the unity of the church. I am strongly committed to building relationships, listening to and respecting different voices and views and to processes that build consensus. Through the process of Living in Love and Faith, I engaged with both sides of the debate and worked as a member of the Programme Board to ensure we heard different concerns. Above all, I want our church to be a welcoming and inclusive place for everyone, whatever their gender or sexuality, and whatever their views on these issues: I hope we can be a Church that loves and serves one another.

My desire for the flourishing of the whole church. Although I would describe myself as an open evangelical, I love and respect the breadth of the Anglican Church. I love the variety of worship styles and communities. I lead a worship band at Christ Church Winchester, but I also love to worship regularly at the Cathedral; I have experience as a member of both a Hampshire village Parish church and an inner-city London Parish church before moving to Winchester. I believe we need both traditional Parish and fresh expressions of church.

My commitment to becoming a younger church: I mentor several young church leaders; I believe that encouraging younger leaders is essential to the future of the church. As a mother of 4 young adult children, with 4 sons and daughters-in-law and 5 grandchildren, I understand that the church needs to be relevant and flourishing for the next generations, and this needs to be a priority as so many congregations now have no children or young people. As Vice Chair of the House of Laity, I have ensured mothers with babies are able to attend Synod and we have facilities available for them.

My governance and director experience. I bring to this role my experience as an NHS leader, a founder Director of Thrive Worldwide, and a Lay Leader in the Church. As former Lay Chair of Winchester Diocesan Synod, I helped resolve a very difficult situation in the Diocese. I understand how the Diocesan Board of Finance works, and I understand the governance of the Church of England as Chair of the Archbishops' Council and Vice Chair of the House of Laity. I will use my experience to ensure good governance, which I believe is important for the church to flourish.

My positivity and energy: I am not afraid to speak up and challenge when I see that things are not as they could or should be, and I have been an active and regular contributor to our Synod debates. However, I believe as Christians how we say things is as important as what we say, and I will continue to do my best to speak and challenge positively and graciously.

Thank you for reading this far! I will continue to pray and work for the flourishing of Winchester Diocese and for our life together as the Church of England. Please vote for me and I will work hard to continue to be a positive presence on the General Synod.