

Hannah Barlow (Diocese of Worcester, Lay Candidate for General Synod)

Nominated by:

1. Christine Adshead (Greater Dudley Deanery Synod)
2. Jen Kerrison (Greater Dudley Deanery Synod)

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to read my election address.

Who am I?

My name is Hannah. For about the last four years, it has been my privilege to worship with S. Peter's church, Cradley, and S. Margaret's church, Hasbury. Both of these fantastic, and very different, churches are part of the Halas Parish in the Greater Dudley Deanery. For three years, I have also been a District Church Council member (Halas is one parish with five districts, so we have a PCC and five DCCs), and, more recently, have been elected to Deanery Synod.



I am currently studying, and hugely enjoying, a BA in Modern Languages (French, German, Russian) at the University of Birmingham, where I also work in a variety of roles, including as research intern, student ambassador, and receptionist. After completing my BA, my dream is to continue studying, doing an MA, PhD, and eventually working as a university academic.

In what do I believe and what do I want to bring to General Synod?

The Christian call to love...

1. Through inclusion of and "equality for all people, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality" (Together for the Church of England)



"Thy kingdom come". We pray it so often, but how often do we stop to think about what it would really mean if God's kingdom really did come on earth as it is in heaven?

Looking at our world now, it seems to me that the Christian call is pretty much to turn the world upside down. That is, to listen to those whom no one hears, to give voice to those who aren't allowed to speak, to stand up for those who are overlooked, ... I could go on, but, in essence, we are called to love. Our Lord tells us,

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34, GNT)

And that "one another" that we need to love, that's everyone - your friends... and everyone else.

I have moved house frequently, living in communities in varied areas and worshipping with a wide range of churches across the Birmingham and Worcester Dioceses. More recently, I have also spent time living abroad in Kazakhstan, Germany, France, and Estonia where I have learnt and seen much. All this has blessed me with opportunities to meet people from many different walks of life.

Jesus calls us to see him in those who are hungry, thirsty, sick, imprisoned, strangers, and not just to see, but to care for, and to welcome. God is Love and, as Christians, we are called to be people of that outrageous Love. I am proud that my parish, Halas, is part of the Inclusive Church Network, and am committed to working towards a Church that actively welcomes all, supporting all to flourish as who they are.

Image descriptions:

1. Headshot of me, a blond-haired woman in a black roll-neck with a cross necklace, smiling.
2. The Inclusive Church Logo. A rainbow arches over some buildings, including a church. Line drawing in white with a green and blue background.

2. Through safeguarding one another

Part of truly loving one another is safeguarding, and, consequently, this should be one of the highest priorities in the Church.

All must be welcome and all must be safe in Church. This relies on each and every person doing their bit. Our Lord says, “I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32, NIV) and sends us out to “feed [his] sheep” (John 21:17, NIV). We have a duty to look after one another, putting in place, and following, systems to ensure all are safe at Church each and every day.

3. Through caring for creation

And this call of love extends beyond loving and caring for one another to loving and caring for the world of which we have been given stewardship. It is our duty and privilege to care for it. And, frankly, as a human race, we aren’t doing a very good job.

Over the last weeks, our planet has been burning. People have lost their homes, their livelihoods, their belongings. Farmers have lost their crops. Animal habitats have been destroyed. These wildfires are one very obvious sign of the huge impact climate change is having, but so much is being affected, likely more than we even realise.

Recently, at S. Margaret’s, we became the second church in the Diocese of Worcester to have earned the Gold A Rocha Eco Award. This has required hard work, thinking around corners, and willingness to adapt, yes, but has enabled us to celebrate and better to care for the beauty of God’s creation and to encourage others to do the same. We have come a long way, as the Gold Award demonstrates, but can go yet further and are planning our next steps. This is our beautiful wildflower garden.



It is imperative that we all increase our efforts to fight climate change as individuals, and as a Church. I am committed to working towards this.

4. Through keeping God at the centre of all we do

And finally, most importantly, I am committed to a Church with God at its centre.

Today, many are worried about the future. The Church is no exception. Yet, whilst change is necessary, we must not change the heart of who we are as Christians, Christ’s people.

God must be at the centre of all that we do: the love behind our actions, the joy behind our smiles. There is nothing better than unapologetically following Love, following God. He is our hope, our strength, our renewal. “Do not be afraid,” he tells us. We must trust in him.



“if you have faith the size of a mustard seed [...] nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20, NRSV)

And that mustard seed grows into mustard plants which spread absolutely everywhere in Jesus’ day, leading to their planting being outlawed by rabbis. And, as for Christians, well, people used to complain that they just couldn’t stop the Christians singing. Let’s be like mustard and spread God’s song of love and hope everywhere, enabling growth and flourishing for all people and all of creation, by bringing all voices together to work as a diverse and unified Church. Amen.

Thank you for reading and considering voting for me.

If you have any questions, my email address is: barlow.hannahj@gmail.com

Image descriptions:

- 1. A colourful patch of wildflowers in the sunshine with the church wall behind.*
- 2. Field of mustard plants with their bright yellow flowers.*