The Revd Dr Helen Dawes

Principal of Westcott House, Cambridge

Nominated by the Revd Dr Sean Doherty, Trinity College Bristol,
and the Revd Dr Sam Hole, Durham University

TL;DR

Been on General Synod before

Good at numbers and policy

Inclusive

Works well with others

Loves the Church of England

Please consider giving me your first preference vote

Thank you for reading past the TL;DR! I hope you will consider giving me your first preference vote in these General Synod elections. I also hope if your first vote is committed elsewhere, you will nonetheless consider giving me one of your other high preference votes, as you feel able.

I'm Helen and I have the great joy (and occasional challenge!) of being Principal of Westcott House. I've been ordained since 2002, and before coming to Westcott as Principal over five years ago I served in parish ministry in the dioceses of Ely, St Albans, and Salisbury, and as an advisor at Lambeth Palace. I never expected to work in theological education and formation, but I find I love it. **Working with ordinands as they respond to God's call on their lives is a delight and a privilege.** In addition, I find it hugely rewarding to share in resourcing local churches, chaplaincies and other contexts with fabulous clergy who will contribute to God's work in each place they are called.

I'm standing for General Synod because I believe it has critical work to do over the coming quinquennium, and because I have skills that I think would be useful. There are conversations taking place now about theological education and formation that will **impact the resourcing of local ministry and mission for decades to come**, to which I would bring direct expertise as a TEI Principal with substantial parish experience. Those conversations will further impact the theological resourcing of our church in the years ahead, and I am passionate about the need for good theology underpinning the work of the church at every level. As a representative of the Universities and TEIs constituency, I would seek to support the theological engagement of Synod, including by drawing on my theological work as an **ethicist with interests including economic life and the moral anthropology of trust**.

Across my ministry, and in the time I worked in business consulting before training for ordination, I have worked in diverse contexts and developed a range of different skills. As well as bringing experience from theological education and parish ministry, I would bring **the ability to read financial accounts**, and to work through the details to see what story the numbers tell and what values they reveal. **I know how to interrogate a policy document** to see how far it will deliver its intended aims, and how many unintended consequences could be expected to follow. I already bring these skills to the TEI Principals' Steering Group, and to the engagement that the Principals as a group have with the National Church, it would be a privilege to use them on Synod.

I am proud to be standing as an inclusive candidate for Synod and am firmly committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality. I am likewise committed to listening to those who have other views and working for the good of the whole church across areas of disagreement.

Sean Doherty and I might have surprised you by cross-nominating each other despite significant differences of view on some subjects, not least human sexuality. But we know we work well together for the benefit of theological education and of the Church that we serve in the Principals' group, despite those differences, and we would expect to work well together for the whole church if we were both elected to General Synod.

Sean and I nominating each other is a sign of our **commitment to work across difference**, and is indicative of how I would want to work with people I disagree with on Synod. I will always be clear about my position, and will vote as I am called by conscience, reason, and prayerful discernment. I will also always listen carefully to others and seek the good of the whole church.

I am very grateful to Sam Hole for nominating me as well. Sam is a trustee of Westcott House, as well as one of our alumni, and knows me in that capacity.

Thank you for reading this far. **If there is anything you would like to ask me**, you are welcome to call me on 01223 272964 or to email me at principal@westcott.cam.ac.uk

I hope you will feel able to vote for me, we are a small constituency and just one or two votes can make a difference to who represents us on Synod.

With every good wish,

Helen

Revd Dr Sean Doherty

Principal, Trinity College Bristol and St Mellitus College

Synodical and national church experience

- General Synod 2015-19 (London Diocese) during which time I served on the Mission & Public Affairs Council as an elected member.
- General Synod 2021-2026 (Universities and TEIs) during which time I have been an ex officio member of the Principals' Steering Group (of which I became convenor earlier this year).
- TEI representative on the Quality in Formation Panel 2020-2026.

Track record of representing TEIs

- I have worked in theological education since 2010, with experience of delivering residential, context-based, and part-time ordination training as well as research degrees, and training for LLMs and youth ministers so I am well-placed to represent the breadth of the sector in Synod.
- As a TEI representative in the last quinquennium, I spoke regularly at Synod to promote our work, to advocate for TEIs, and to comment on how particular proposals might affect us and our students.
- Recently, as convenor of the Principals' Steering Group I have joined the Ministry Development Board and have good relationships with the Board, the TEI reviewers, and national MDT staff.
- As part of the Steering Group, in 2023 we advocated for a fee rise more in keeping with inflation when a rise of just 3% was proposed. The increase that year was revised to 9.2%.
- Each year of the past quinquennium I have co-ordinated an annual Synod fringe on theological education to build awareness amongst Synod members of the work of TEIs.

Other contributions at Synod

- Most recently, proposing to amend the Kairos Palestine motion from 'receive' to 'hear,' helping to ensure the motion would gain enough consensus to pass.
- Working behind the scenes to agree wording which would be accepted across the spectrum of views in the landmark motion which got *Issues in Human Sexuality* removed from the discernment process with virtually unanimous support.
- Speaking several times on the Clergy Conduct Measure and submitting amendments to the Revision Committee to protect clergy wellbeing, informed by my experience of training clergy.
- Supporting an independent inquiry into abuse in the Soul Survivor network.
- Membership since 2014 of various working groups in the Living in Love and Faith process, including the Theological and Ethics Group and most recently the Pastoral Reassurance Working Group.

In my work on Synod and in the Steering Group I have particularly valued working across different traditions and perspectives, which is – of course – how the greatest impact is made.

Other information and experience

- My doctorate was on economic ethics, and I have written and taught on a range of other ethical issues including medical ethics, sex and relationships, and more recently gender and AI.
- During my time at Trinity we have successfully improved the diversity of our trustees and teaching faculty in line with the recommendations of *From Lament to Action*.
- I have served as a chair of governors at a voluntary aided school, and am a registered foster carer.

Please get in touch if you'd like any more information: sean.doherty@trinitycollegebristol.ac.uk.

Proposer: Revd Dr Helen Dawes, Westcott House Seconder: Revd Helen Johnson, Trinity College Bristol

Revd Dr Steffan Mathias

Tutor in Biblical Studies and Academic Dean, College of the Resurrection, Mirfield

Proposer: Revd Dr Erica Longfellow, New College, Oxford
Seconder: Revd Dr Sam Hole, University College, Durham

Background:
As a teenager, I became a Christian at a small charismatic Church in Wales parish, because a friend took the risk of inviting me to Church. While an encounter with Jesus Christ was at the core, my early faith was sustained by a Church that was confident in reaching out, serving the community, taking teaching and Scripture seriously, and deeply rooted in prayer. This experience of Church still informs my understanding of what the Church can be at its best, and I am standing for Synod with a vision of the Church of England that loves and celebrates the parish, theological education, and Christ.

To do this, the Church (and Synod) needs to listen carefully to the voices of those it seeks to represent. Despite the riches of our parishes, congregations, and theological education sector, attentive listening to the voices of those we are called to serve requires honesty about the sense of **anxiety**, pressures on **resources** both in terms of time and finance, the crisis in clergy **wellbeing**, the hurt felt by both **GMH** and **LGBTQIA+** people, and uncertainty for **TEIs** about their viability and future.

I stand for Synod with an academic background in biblical studies and extensive experience in parish and vocational work, and as a Tutor at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, dedicated to its commitment as a theological and spiritual resource in the Northern Province. I have ministered in congregations that reflect the wonderful diversity of the people of God, and in parishes that creatively use limited resources to reach out to their communities in love and service. I am committed to being a voice for parishes where there is a growing awareness that they are generously giving their time and money to support their ministry, while vast resources are directed to other projects and churches. During this time, I have worked with those testing a vocation and am immensely humbled by the diversity and calibre of those going forward for lay and ordained ministry, and by their hunger for a solid grounding in theology and ministry. But I am alive to how our current system can hold back candidates, particularly from diverse backgrounds. I have seen this same desire for a solid grounding in experience of those I have taught in residential and non-residential TEIs, matched by the energy and enthusiasm of tutors and staff, despite a backdrop of a lack of resources inhibiting proper formation and a general sense of uncertainty for the University-TEI sector; a strong voice for University-TEIs is needed now more than ever as the review of theological education takes place. Across various areas of ministry, I have been deeply struck by people calling out for honesty, and by how the actions and culture of the national Church have inhibited the confidence with which we proclaim the gospel.

Priorities:
Therefore, I understand the priorities for the next Synod to be:

- A proper and fair distribution of resources that enables parishes and clergy to flourish in ministry and mission, particularly those that serve our most deprived communities, and a shift in culture to ensure the national and diocesan Church supports parishes rather than burdening them with endless projects and targets.
- Build trust in the institution by ensuring the highest standards of safeguarding culture, putting survivors and victims at the centre of our response, and recognising that our failures have jeopardised our mission and place in the public square.
- Supporting TEIs and the vocational process, encouraging vocations that reflect the people of God and offering a strong voice for theological education across our diverse pathways. It is vital that Synod, and our ordinands, are properly resourced theologically, including in our finances – this is not a distraction from 'real issues', but vital in ensuring that our discussions and decisions are rooted in Scripture and Christian tradition. Serving on Synod would also allow me to represent the voices of ordinands in national debates.
- Ensuring that the Church is a safe and inclusive space for all people, regardless of disability, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, or sexuality. I support Prayers of Love and Faith, and the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in the life of the Church.
- Being honest about our past, and ensuring the Church takes a clear and visible step towards a just response to its historical involvement in colonialism, racism, and the slave trade.
- Modelling the Church and its governance on the person and example of Jesus Christ, ready to fulfil its calling to minister to and evangelise our communities.

Experience and what I offer:

- Nine years' parish ministry, as curate and then incumbent, and a love of our parish system, working alongside chaplaincy to minister to the whole community.
- Experience of theological education in both residential and non-residential, part-time or mixed-mode settings, at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, St Augustine's College, Southeast, and within the Diocese of Southwark.
- A deep understanding of the vocations process as an Area Director of Ordinands and Examining Chaplain in the Diocese of Southwark, and what matters to those going through the process.
- A robust theological background, with a BA and MA in theology, and PhD in Biblical studies, with academic publishing in biblical studies, liturgy and missiology.
- Additional roles working in clergy wellbeing, interfaith work, Diocesan Synod, and as a school governor.

Please consider giving me your 1st-preference or high-preference vote.
I am happy to answer any questions or hear your concerns about issues going forward. You can contact me at smathias@mirfield.org.uk

The Rev'd Dr Mark Smith

Standing for re-election

Dean & Fellow, Clare College, Cambridge

Lecturer, Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge

It's been a privilege to serve as one of your Universities and TEIs reps on General Synod from 2021 to 2026, and I'm delighted to be standing for re-election for the new quinquennium.

Over the last five years on General Synod, I've worked hard to ensure that **rich theology** (not anecdote or political expediency, not mere pragmatism, not bureaucratic fiat) is closer to the centre of our decision-making. Unless the Church's self-reflection is being continually renewed by the vision of her crucified and risen Lord, and the Church's identity rests in God's faithfulness, not our cleverness, we will be in danger of going astray.

On LLF, I've argued that until the depth of our different theological convictions is taken seriously, the process will continue to cause deep harm, especially to LGBT people (you can watch my full speech to Synod here). I've spoken up for the rights of parishes and patrons, as the Ministry and Pastoral Measure undergoes revision. I've been committed to serious, doctrinally-informed ecumenical engagement, serving on the Council for Christian Unity, and on the Anglican Communion's new dialogue group with the Assyrian Church of the East. I've advised on the Church of England's resources for 2025's Nicaea commemorations, and been part of the Revision Committee for the Festival of Creation in Christ and Commemoration of the 21 Martyrs of Libya.

Throughout the quinquennium, I've been actively liaising with TEI staff, stakeholders and students, as we have worked through a major review of the sector. This has been informed by my role as a current trustee of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, and by my passion for seeing renewed and revitalised TEIs, which train, form and teach men and women for contemporary ministry. Essential to this future landscape must be a flourishing academy, with University departments of Theology that are well-resourced and diverse, and that irrigate the Church's wider life. As a member of the Divinity Faculty in Cambridge, I'm keenly aware of the pressures, challenges and opportunities facing Theology & Religious Studies departments, and, if re-elected, I will continue, clearly and boldly, to speak up on their behalf.

I've been really encouraged by much of what I've experienced of Synod life, as people profoundly committed to the good of the Church have given their giftings, wisdom and time to committees, strategy, and discussion. However, I've also been troubled by the tenor of many of our debates, and by the worrying deficit of trust, transparency and goodwill that has so often become apparent. I want to see Synod's next five years characterised by a new spirit of decency and kindness, where surprising friendships are forged across divides, and where we discover how good and pleasant it is to dwell together in unity.

Beyond Synod, I continue to serve as the Dean of Clare College, Cambridge, combining priestly ministry with lecturing, supervising and researching in patristics at the Faculty. An energetic Chapel life engaging with students helps me to understand first-hand the questions that young people have about the Church, as well as their deep yearning for truth, beauty and meaning that only God can satisfy. Meanwhile, my work in patristics never feels abstract, but always surprisingly contemporary – see here for my recent Oxford keynote on Nicaea.

I'm conscious that there is so much more to say! Please do drop me a line (mss53@cam.ac.uk) if you would like to discuss anything further, or share your own thoughts on how Synod can best support our constituency. I very much hope that you will be able to give me a **first** or **high-preference vote** in the forthcoming elections.