

The Rev'd Simon McMurtary TSSF

Proposer: The Venerable Katherine Bagnall

Seconded: The Reverend Canon Dr Alan Bartlett

Thank you for taking the time to read my election statement. If you think I would be a good candidate for General Synod please consider putting me down as your **first choice, or highest possible vote**. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via revsimontssf@gmail.com



Who am I?

I am a Third Order **Franciscan**, the **Chaplain** and **Head of Religious Studies** at *Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation*, and a **Minor Canon** at Durham Cathedral. I have served as a priest in Durham Diocese since 2015 having previously worked in **parish ministry** in Winchester Diocese. Prior to ordination, I was a **Church Planter**, **Lay Reader**, **Theological Educator** and worked in accountancy as a **Charity Auditor**.

What do I stand for?

I stand for **prayerfulness, openness, integrity, responsibility, kindness, and inclusion**. I commit to **listening deeply and lovingly** to all voices in the Church, especially those who have been marginalised, and treating those I disagree with as siblings in Christ and never as enemies. I am committed to the *Inclusive Church* statement on **equality at all levels**. I have ministered for **over 30 years** across a huge **variety of traditions** within the Church of England (from Affirming Catholic and Traditional Catholic to Open Evangelical and Conservative Evangelical) in a wide range of contexts, and see good in every one of them. I love the Church of England and, for the first time, feel a strong sense of calling to serve on General Synod. I want to help the Church continue to be **good news** to those in our **local communities**, especially our **young people** and those who have been **historically marginalised**.

What experience do I bring to the role?

- Over 30 years of experience of **Lay and Ordained ministry** in parishes, schools, universities, cathedrals, and **church plants** across a huge range of church traditions. I have ministered in rural parishes, **council estates**, city centres, and suburban areas.
- A good understanding of the effects of addiction and **poverty** having worked for a charity supporting the homeless prior to ordination.
- A well-informed **theological mind** having graduated from both Wycliffe Hall (Oxford BA, MA in Theology) and Ripon College Cuddesdon (Oxford MTh in the field of **Pastoral Psychology**).
- A proven track record of successful ministry with **children and young people** as a full time Primary and Secondary School Chaplain for over a decade and the priest to one of the **largest, youngest, and most diverse congregations** in Durham Diocese.
- Good experience of **analysing theological arguments** having taught, and marked essays, in Theology, Religious Studies, and Christian Ethics at University and Sixth Form level. I previously served on the management team of the *Anvil Journal of Theology and Mission*.
- Lived experience of hidden **disability and neurodivergence** as well as experience teaching pupils with additional needs for over a decade. I am very aware of the importance of inclusion.
- Several years of experience campaigning for **Women Bishops and championing LGBTQ+ inclusion** in the Church, supporting Durham Cathedral at Pride, and working as a member of the North East England Rainbow Alliance.
- Extensive experience of **finance and accountancy**, including as an auditor of a Diocesan Board of Finance, with experience of **pensions and investments**. Former Student Governor of Cuddesdon.
- An acute awareness of the need for **rigorous safeguarding**, the harm caused when this goes wrong, and the need to **listen carefully to the voices of victims**. Solid safeguarding training and experience across different settings in Education and the Church.
- Keen commitment to **environmental responsibility** as a Franciscan and long-standing campaigner.
- In depth insight into **ecumenical and interfaith** matters, having ministered in other denominations prior to ordination, and working in interfaith dialogue and scriptural reasoning for over a decade.
- Experience of **Anglican Religious Life**. I have lived under vows as a Franciscan since my 20s. I have served as *Area Formation Guardian* and *Area Novice Guardian* and on Provincial Teams for **Formation** and **Contemplative Prayer**.
- Solid **experience of debate** as a life member of the Oxford Union Society, supporting school debate teams, and debating at the Durham Union Society.

What do others say?

"I have known Fr Simon for several years and in various capacities. These include a fellow parishioner, a Spiritual Director and a fellow Priest. As a Church in the world, we need people who are willing to act as a voice which comes from a deep sense of who they are. Fr Simon is one of such people, who **embodies what it means to stand up for others**, rather than being silent. In the light of this, I have no hesitation supporting his nomination to General Synod."

The Rev'd Canon Remi Omole
Former Diocesan Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Enabler



"I've known Simon in a personal and professional capacity for 16 years. I also have 9 years of my own experience of General Synod including on the Panel of Chairs for many. I understand the importance of choosing the right people to represent others in our Church. **I have no hesitation in commending Simon** as an ideal person to represent Durham. His whole way of life is shaped around his commitment to be part of **hopeful action for a better world and Church**. His integrity and dedication combined with his many gifts mean I have no hesitation in encouraging you to vote for him as your 1st or 2nd choice!"

The Rev'd Canon Zoe Heming
Canon for Mission, Newcastle Cathedral
Previous Synod Member



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"As Chair of Durham Pride and a member of the Church of England, I've seen firsthand how Father Simon's genuine support for the LGBT+ community has helped make Durham a kinder and more inclusive place. **His warmth and openness bring people together across differences**. Electing him to General Synod would send a strong message that our faith community truly welcomes and values everyone."

Mel Metcalf BEM
Chair, Durham Pride

"Simon is the Chaplain at my daughter's school, a congregant of the Church I attend, and I consider him to be a very good friend. He has a very strong sense of social justice, he cares about everyone he meets, he treats all pupils with **respect and kindness** and seeks to **make space for diverse opinions** in his ministry. I appreciate his honesty which is mindfully offered. I am a Spiritual Director who has also had a career in Disability Equality so I value Simon's constant desire to learn more in order to be as accessible as he can be, to find connections between people so that they can learn from each other, and I know that **Simon will stand up for people on the margins**."

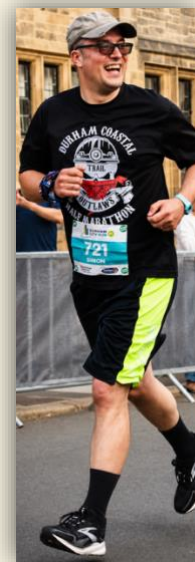
Dr Heather Mole
Spiritual Accompaniment Coordinator, St Antony's Priory

"Simon brings a distinctive perspective as a school chaplain, teacher and head of department who has worked at Durham School (now Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation) for more than a decade. As such, **he has a deep and up-to-date understanding of the spiritual lives of young people**. Simon is also a member of the Third Order of the Society of St Francis. He has strong links with Franciscans across the Durham Diocese as well as further afield. I believe General Synod will benefit from a Franciscan vision of a Church that is **humble, honest and joyful**."

The Rev'd Canon Gavin Wort
Lead Chaplain, Durham University

What to do now?

I am standing for election because **I have a sense that this is what God is asking me to do**, I am passionate about serving Christ in our local communities, and I believe that I have the skills to serve the Church of England well on General Synod over the next quinquennium. If you share my vision for a truly inclusive, kind, joyful and responsible church, please consider putting me down as your **first choice, put other inclusive candidates as high choice votes as well**, and ask your colleagues to do the same.



"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13a)