

Rev'd Chantal Noppen for General Synod

Nominated Ven Katherine Bagnall (Archdeacon of Sunderland)

Seconded Fr Kyle McNeil (Area Dean, Easington)

Who am I?

I am...
A Blessed Charismatic
Dopamine-chasing Evangelical
Forgiving Gentle Holy Inclusive Just
Keen Loving Merciful Neurodivergent
Orthodox Prophetic Queer Radical
Spirit-filled Table-sharing Undeterred
Vulnerable Welcoming eXonerated
Young-at-Heart Zelos
me.

A few footnotes...

- D - 'cos brains are wonderfully diverse
- O - little "o": historic Christian faith
- Q - identity & creating space
- T - hospitality, communion, belonging
- X - grace received
- Z - Greek: wholehearted devotion



These words don't tell you everything about me. Some describe convictions or experiences; some identities. Some may make you wonder how they possibly coexist. But that's part of the point. None of us are just one thing. God doesn't make people in neat categories and who God has made me is a key part of what I bring to Synod...

“ I blur lines because I'm convinced God keeps showing up in the liminal spaces, & because the things we treat as separate are often profoundly connected ”

Why I'm standing

When I first stood for General Synod, I didn't really know what I was getting myself into. I only knew that God had been nudging me towards it for some time. Now, I understand that nudge better. I know much more about what Synod is; its possibilities, frustrations, politics, privilege and responsibility, where I fit in and how much I still have to learn. Synod has taught me more deeply how the Church works and how it can work better. It has highlighted the need to listen across difference, ask difficult questions, spot connections other people might miss, and, crucially, to proactively respond with compassion. Serving on Synod has been an enormous privilege. **Thank you** to everyone who gave me their support, whether as a first or second-choice vote, in 2021. I'm standing again to continue to speak up for the often overlooked.

Synod has taught me

See Free-range Priest for an audio version of this address

So many things! But the top three are:

Representation matters.

Decisions made at Synod, affect real people here in the Diocese of Durham, on estates and in pit villages, urban and rural. Their voices need to be heard in the room. Real stories, met with compassion and humility, lead to better decisions.

Everything is connected.

Disability, class, gender, vocation, sexuality, governance, safe-guarding, finance, ministry are not separate issues. They're different ways of asking the same questions; who belongs? Who's being heard? Who carries the cost when systems fail? Who isn't here?

Change requires work.

Speaking up matters, but so do research, evidence, relationships, organisation, persistence & the willingness to do the boring bits. When something needs attention, my instinct is to ask who needs to be involved, what we need to understand, and what we can actually do.

What I've done

Since being elected in 2021, I've tried to put those lessons into practice by being an active and engaged member of Synod, contributing both in the chamber and beyond it.

I speak up

I've spoken in debates, asked questions and proposed amendments on a issues including *Living in Love and Faith* (LLF), working-class vocations, estates ministry, women's ministry, finance and neurodiversity.

I build relationships

Much of the important work happens between meetings, through relationships, listening and collaboration. Increasingly, I'm invited into spaces where different perspectives need to meet, listen and work together.

As a member of the CofE's *Mission and Public Affairs Council*, I've contributed to conversations connecting faith, public life and Parliament. I've also represented the Church of England at the *URC's General Assembly* multiple times and now serve on a committee developing dialogue between our two denominations. I bring a proven ability to build relationships across traditions, find common ground & navigate difficult conversations well - essential in my day job as *National Coordinator of the Inclusive Church Network*.

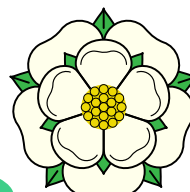
I turn concerns into action

Drawing on my own experience of neurodivergence, I founded *Fragmental*, an online support group for neurodivergent church leaders in 2022. It continues to grow as a vulnerably honest, encouraging ecumenical sacred community.

When I saw how inconsistent maternity provision was for clergy across the Church of England, I worked with others to research it, publishing the *Clergy Babies Maternity Audit* in 2024, helping turn its findings into national reform.

I create spaces

Through *Fragmental* and the *Motherhood and Ministry* webinars I helped to plan and lead with members of the national vocations team, I've created spaces where people's previously unheard experiences can be shared, explored and taken seriously.



The parish

I'm a priest with PTO, following 11 years' of stipendiary parish ministry on deprived **estates** in Byker and Sunderland. I remain deeply supportive of parish ministry and see my national work as another way of serving and enabling it. **People are the Church** and they need to know they are seen, heard, valued and represented, not just informed.

Decisions made nationally eventually become someone's lived experience in a parish, home, school or community. Synod must be **directly connected** to those realities. I want to help build a Church where decision-making and communication is characterised by **relationship**, listening and care. Based on Jesus' example.

Why now?

Five years on, I know much more about what Synod can do - and what it takes to make change happen. My parish experience, my work nationally and ecumenically, and the relationships I've built across the Church give me a perspective I want to keep bringing to Synod. There's still much work to do.

I want a Church confident enough to listen with compassion, humble enough to change where it must and courageous enough to address inequitable shortcomings. There should be room at the table for all of us.

I would be grateful for your first-preference vote.

THANK
YOU!

Rev'd Chantal x

