

Election Address: Rev'd Canon Matt Tarling

*Candidate for House of Clergy
(Proctorial Elections)*

Nominators: Rev'd Mahalha Wachepa, Billingham Team Ministry;
Rev'd Canon Alec Harding, St Mary Barnard Castle and St Mary Whorlton.

Thank you for taking time to read my election address! I believe I can represent Durham diocese well and would see it is a privilege to be one of your elected clergy members of General Synod.

I have served as an ordained person in Durham diocese since 2009 and have loved being a part of the life of the Church of England in the North East for the last 17 years. My wife Kate and I have raised our three daughters in Dunston, Gateshead (during curacy in Blaydon and Swalwell) and Spennymoor, County Durham. For the last 13 ½ years I have been vicar of St Paul's church in Spennymoor and Whitworth church.

I started life in Hertfordshire and after a short period in the Black Country my formative years were in rural Herefordshire. I worked for a little while building double glazed windows and conservatories before studying Civil Engineering at the University of Nottingham. In my mid-twenties I found myself following God's call to an ordained vocation. I have enjoyed living in rural, urban and small-town settings and have found that the experience I gained in work, study and community set me up well for parish ministry in the medium sized town of Spennymoor.

During my time in the diocese, I have served in the following ways:

- Area Dean of Auckland Deanery from 2018 to 2025
- Non-residentiary Canon of Durham Cathedral since 2024
- Member of the Strategic Mission Delivery Board since 2024
- Diocesan Synod
- Vacancy in See Committee

In Spennymoor I am actively involved in Spennymoor Churches Acting Together and seek ecumenical partnerships, for example our summer Holiday Club is a partnership with Trinity Methodist church and involves members of other churches. We welcomed over 100 children this year and have a volunteer team of 45 including a large 'junior team' of young people.



In the community I am a member of the 'Pride in Place' committee 'All Together for Spennymoor'. I represent faith communities and local concerns as that committee discerns how to spend £20m given to improve our town. I have been heavily involved in the civic life of the town

including with military veterans and the town council.



As a member of the House of Clergy I would seek to speak and vote on behalf of the whole diocese. The following are important concerns to raise at a national level for the benefit of our diocese and our local churches and clergy:

The Gospel for all

We need to ensure that national church strategy and funding streams are designed to enable parish churches in the North East to share the love and power of Jesus in word and deed. This includes the Church of England being aware of the *contexts* in which the gospel is being proclaimed. I would be willing to press for a greater 'regional literacy' so that we are offered support and resources which are fitting to our parishes.

In Spennymoor and Whitworth we have experienced growth in the size and diversity of our congregations in the last few years. As well as becoming more diverse ethnically and in other ways we have seen our under-18s increase to nearly 20 on a Sunday. We have welcomed retired newcomers who have found faith in later life or moved into the area. I believe this is possible because God works in and through small town churches in the North East. I am committed to vocalising the need for evangelism among older people and the specific needs of traditional ex-industrial towns (like Spennymoor and many other communities in Durham diocese) and rural settings.

Clergy wellbeing

With diminishing numbers of clergy and increasing parish responsibilities and pressures, I will speak up for stipendiary, salaried, self-supporting and retired clergy in the diocese. The pressures are varied and the cost is carried differently from clergy to clergy. Nevertheless, we need the national church to care for our local clergy if we are to thrive.

Realistic aims for caring for creation

I am committed to improving how our vicarages, churches and other property impact the environment. I think that the General Synod has agreed to some good goals for the near future. I'm aware that clergy and their parishes feel under significant pressure to meet those goals. I believe that we can continue this conversation towards realistic aims for the near future. We need to continue making good progress at a diocesan and parish level so that we care well for creation in ways which are achievable.

Godly governance

The General Synod, as part of the governance of the Church of England, has an unequalled opportunity to hold those with authority to account. We need to make the most of this chance to model and promote repentance for failures to lead well in the past, and godly leadership now and in the future. Good safeguarding and financial accountability need that. I believe in humble governance in which all who lead choose a Christlike compassion and willingness to listen to the whole church.

I believe that I have lots of good local experience and knowledge of the life and needs of our diocese. This would make me an ideal representative in the House of Clergy.

Please get in touch if you would like to ask about any of the above

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Please make me your first preference vote