



The Reverend Stephen Trott

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Member of the Diocesan Board of Finance
Member of Cathedral Council
Chair of Church Buildings Committee*

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Church Commissioner since 1997
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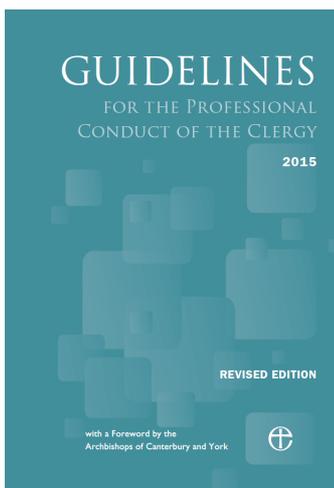
Dear Colleague

The General Synod of the Church of England is both a church assembly and a legislature, with the power to pass Acts of Parliament which are called *Measures*. This means that it is able to change literally anything it chooses, with the full authority of Parliament, and therefore its work can and does affect us all. Those who represent the clergy and laity of the Church must therefore be ready to deal with complex debates and decisions which require some understanding of both theology and law.

General Synod normally meets twice a year for a total of about nine days, into which is crammed a great diversity of tasks, many of which are arcane or require specialist knowledge. and Synod members are involved all year round through its boards and committees.

During the twenty years in which I have been a member I have set out to represent effectively ALL clergy in the many matters which affect us and our ministry and mission in the Church of England.

As a theology graduate I am concerned to ensure that decisions taken by General Synod are both theologically informed, and in accordance with an orthodox understanding of our calling as Christians in the Church of England, such as that set out in the Declaration of Assent. As a canon law graduate I have been involved in devising some of the important legal reforms of the past decade, and I hope to be involved in the *Reform and Renewal*, and *Simplification* programmes planned for the coming five years if I am elected again to Synod. These are intended to bring up to date the legislation which undergirds much of the parish system, to make it easier for us all to get on with our mission without the heavy hand of the past weighing down upon us.



During the last Synod I have been editing a new edition of the *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy* which is published by the Convocations (the House of Clergy) as a guide to some of the complexities and expectations which we bear as clergy, sharing our collective experience with every ordained minister in the Church of England. It was published on 1 September by Church House Publishing and is also available free online at the Church House website.

There is a great deal of new material, especially relating to Safeguarding, and to the practical ways in which we can exercise our ministry safely both for others and for ourselves. There is useful guidance on reconciliation and on healing and deliverance ministry. It is intended for everyone, from theological college to retirement ministry, and everyone in between!

Clergy Terms of Service, the Pastoral Measure, and our Mission as a Church

When I was first elected to General Synod in 1995, clergy serving as priests-in-charge had no security of tenure (they could be dismissed with three months' notice) and things were little better for curates or for a variety of other ministers serving with only a Licence. I met a number of clergy who had simultaneously lost their ministry, their stipend and their home, without any right of appeal. I worked long and hard to secure reforms to such an unfair system, and now Common Tenure is in place. It is not perfect, but it is a considerable improvement for the growing proportion of clergy who are not instituted to a benefice. There are proposals to weaken the current arrangements which will be debated during the new Synod, and I intend to do all I can to ensure that this does not happen.

As a Church Commissioner I represent the clergy in Board discussions about the way in which our historic endowments are best used for mission in the Church of England. My view is that *subsidiarity* is usually the best policy - enabling decisions to be taken at the level which is most directly concerned, which is almost always local - and putting resources into the local Church to support growth. The Board has devoted a great deal of time, energy and funds to a strategy of investigating as scientifically as possible, what actually works at local level, how growing churches work and what causes some churches to fail. The results have been published as *From Anecdote To Evidence* and indicate that many of the assumptions made in the past about pastoral reorganisation have been based on flawed ideas. The way to grow the church is to put more resources, not fewer, into the local church - and as we are now seeing in this diocese, it works!

Church and State

There are benefits to being an Established Church, conscious of its calling to serve every person in every parish, but the corollary is that the State expects us to adopt and bless its own actions, and that plainly can not happen where we must take a different stand as Christians.

Respect for human life itself is under constant challenge. The Abortion Act of 1968 was introduced ostensibly to allow hospitals to deal with medical emergencies, without facing prosecution. It has been exploited and abused so as to permit abortion almost on demand, so that even being the "wrong" gender is now sufficient for a pregnancy to be terminated. We now see massive pressure building up for a change in the law to permit people to commit suicide with the assistance of a doctor. But it has always been the case that "hard cases make bad laws", as we have seen with the Abortion Act.

The Church is, and must continue to be in the forefront of campaigning for better palliative care for those enduring extremes of illness, rather than the solution being proposed by some MPs and peers. Once assisted suicide becomes permissible, it will become a right, and having become a right, will become an expectation to be borne by the frailest in a society which is very much aware of the financial cost of medical care for the elderly and disabled. I will speak out in Synod for human life to remain precious, from beginning to end.

Civil Preliminaries to Marriage

It is unfortunate that marriage has been made by successive governments into a qualification for all kinds of rights and benefits which ought to be defined by other criteria. We are not qualified as clergy to make detailed inquiries into the circumstances of those who come to us seeking Christian marriage, but the law as it stands currently requires us to publish Banns for anyone who has resided in our parishes for a short time or has a Qualifying Connection. I am planning to put forward a change in the law in the new Synod, which will require all parties to obtain a civil licence to marry in church, as in Scotland, so that responsibility for legal preliminaries (which form no part of the Christian preparation for marriage) is borne directly by the civil registrars who are trained and resourced to deal with these matters.

Other Issues

There will inevitably be numerous other issues of concern to us all and I greatly value any opportunity to hear and discuss what Synod should be doing, so that I can be more effective as your representative there. Please telephone me at any time, write to me at home or by email and invite me to your PCC or Chapter, or Deanery Synod, to talk about General Synod or the Church Commissioners, or the *Guidelines*, or anything else. I am always pleased to help, and to support you in your ministry in any way I am able.

With your help and support I hope to be able to continue to serve you, the diocese and the national church with all the specialised knowledge and experience which I have gained along the way, and so I write to ask if you will kindly consider making me your first preference candidate, as someone who will speak up effectively for the clergy amidst the competing voices of the whole Synod.

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