

The Reverend Canon Oliver Coss

Rector, All Saints and Holy Sepulchre, Northampton
Rural Dean of Greater Northampton



Proposer

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General Synod Election Address

Dear Elector,

Thank you for taking a few moments to read my election address. I am writing ahead of the General Synod elections in Autumn 2026 to ask for your highest preference vote, and to offer myself as a representative of Peterborough Diocese to the wider Church of England.

About me

I am 44 years old and married to Eleanor, who is a member of the Religious Society of Friends and a teacher in further education. We have two children, aged 15 and 12. We came to Northampton nearly a decade ago to minister at its historic heart, and to reconnect the church with a mission-field that extends far beyond the parochial, and across both town and county. In that time I have helped establish the church as a serious civic and spiritual presence, and shown ability to draw people together across religious, ethnic, and social difference. I am also Rural Dean of Greater Northampton, a Church of England nominee to Northamptonshire SACRE, a trustee of Northampton Interfaith Forum, and County Padre of Northamptonshire Royal British Legion.

Why send me to Synod?

- I have a proven ability to make partnerships across difference: of tradition, faith, prosperity, and ethnicity. I believe the Church of England is well placed to initiate this work in our communities, and to lead this sacrificially and never for its own gain. I would take to Synod a passion not only for the place where I minister, but for all our communities where many faiths and none are equally respected and valued. Our presence and engagement should reflect

the sacraments we celebrate, a means to becoming more fully what we are as members of the Body of Christ.

- I am committed to the Church of England's vocation to the nation: the outworking of that is in resisting diffidence about the gifts we have, and deploying them to proclaim the gospel afresh, enrich communities, and strengthen society.
- As priest of a church where music is an attractional force that draws and disciples young and old, I would bring to Synod a commitment to this ministry and to its proven capacity to grow churches and form disciples. The gospel speaks louder when we sing.
- I believe that building a safe and healthy culture in our church, with robust and sustainable safeguarding standards, is intrinsic to the theology of a healthy church. Local churches deserve independently accountable oversight that supports them and sets them free to draw others into the splendour of God's love.
- I will vigorously defend the Seal of the Confessional, as something deeply embedded in our historic formularies. Penitents need reassurance and those who practice as confessors need rigorous teaching, training, and oversight, so that ministry of reconciliation entrusted by Christ to the church is not impugned.
- As a Rural Dean, I believe in strengthened deaneries as places where dioceses can gather,

build, and equip the local church contextually. I will work for local Synods that share in the discernment and flourishing of the whole Church, Chapters that sustain clergy and lay ministers, and shared purpose and resourcing as the fruit of that. Decisions should be taken as close as possible to the communities they affect.

- I will encourage the Church to engage in inter-faith partnership: not conversation for its own sake, but hospitable, practical collaboration that can transform our neighbourhoods, bring people together, and set a peaceful path.
- I am a traditional catholic with a strong belief in the mutual flourishing of the whole Church, strengthened by the Five Guiding Principles contained in the House of Bishops' Declaration. Recognising my own dissent from the decision to permit women to be ordained as bishops, I nevertheless have a track record of working for the good of the whole Church and the mutual flourishing of everyone.
- As one half of an inter-church marriage, I will take a particular interest in ecumenism as the Church of England continues to seek the visible unity for which Jesus prayed.
- I will be a firm advocate for the Church's support of poorer parishes and for Christian ministry in communities that feel abandoned or undervalued. I will also work to ensure that those whose resources underwrite ministry in fragile areas are properly valued. Parishes everywhere need proper resourcing, and clergy and lay leaders need care. Ministry should be the making, not the breaking, of ministers and the people of God.
- I will seek to ensure that the Church of England's decision to become a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant is honoured, including by making it possible for parish clergy to join the reserve forces. Ministry among those who serve in the military is an essential contribution to the nation's moral compass.
- The difficult legacy of Living in Love and Faith has created hurt and harm across the hardened

divisions that now exist. We have ceased to seem like the bearers of Good News to far too many people who had hoped for better. Whatever our views, we need the opportunity to speak and be heard, across a myriad of differences. I do believe in upholding the doctrine of marriage that we have received, but in that there should be generous inclusion, meaningful pastoral care, and the vanquishing of the prejudice that too often diminishes human dignity.

- Our church buildings should be an opportunity and not a burden. I'll always vote for proposals that make this a reality, whether through simplifying the faculty system or helping the church to use its voice to point to the glory of, and the challenges that face, our buildings – both ancient and modern. I will play my part in lobbying the government of the day to continue to invest in places of worship (many of which are listed as national treasures), and to help realise the abundant spiritual, economic, and social benefits they demonstrably produce.
- I will tell the story of God's faithfulness to, and expressed in, our oft-forgotten (and so frequently overlooked) parts of middle-England. Knowing that our hopes, aspirations, and challenges are so often emblematic of the things that confront our whole nation, I will use my voice to draw attention to the positive example we can be to the Church.
- As someone who was ordained deacon aged 24, I'll always want the church to do more to nurture ordinands that are young, diverse, well trained, and well-resourced to work alongside all their fellow ministers. We need a sacred ministry that resembles and serves our church.

And finally...

I hope that when the election comes you will consider giving me the highest voting preference. I will endeavour to be a big voice for our church, and our people. If you have questions or queries, I'd be very glad to hear from you. You can find my contact details at the beginning of this document.