

**Diocese of Oxford  
General Synod Elections 2021**

**Questions to Candidates**

<b>Name of Candidate</b> (please enter name in full)	<b>Dr Andrew Robert Bell</b>
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***Questions and Replies***

<b>Question 1:</b>	How do you think General Synod can promote engagement with the recommendations of the <i>From Lament to Action</i> report published in April this year?
<b>Reply:</b> 120 word limit applies	<p>This is a spiritual imperative: we are one body in Christ; in heaven we will be part of <i>every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne</i> - the church should model that now.</p> <p><i>From Lament to Action</i> highlights the need for “significant cultural and structural change” to combat institutional racism, and catalogues our lamentable failure to act on previous recommendations. From General Synod to local churches, we must act on the far-reaching, sometimes uncomfortable, recommendations of the report. Regarding just one set of proposals: I confess to unease about quotas of UKME/GMH membership in governance bodies and shortlists. However, “good intentions” have not delivered the diversity that we all seek so I accept and support such quotas.</p>

<b>Question 2:</b>	What are your views on the place of the parish in the Church of England, bearing in mind concerns raised by the ‘Save the Parish’ campaign, concerns about availability of resources for the rural church and opportunities for new mission initiatives outside the usual parochial structure?
<b>Reply:</b> 120 word limit applies	<p>We should not compromise the centrality of the parish, which is the foundation of the Church of England’s “Christian presence in every community”. I believe that we must make every effort to direct resources and funding towards local churches - both parish churches (including the rural church) and new mission initiatives which can increase opportunities to reach communities with the good news of Jesus.</p>

<b>Question 3:</b>	If a motion was presented for a change in the law to permit same sex marriage in the Church of England, would you support it and, in any event, what outcomes would you like to see from the <i>Living in Love and Faith</i> conversations?
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<p><b>Reply:</b> 120 word limit applies</p>	<p>I should like to see the LLF journey leading us to be better at welcoming all in the name of Jesus. We have not always been good at that and we need to repent and learn.</p> <p>I will seek to listen carefully and contribute graciously to the ongoing discussions in this area, but I could not in conscience vote to support same sex marriage in the Church. The New Testament church was called to be countercultural (e.g. Rom 12:2). In today's world I believe we are still called to be distinct; the marriage of a man and a woman as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church limits what we can endorse.</p>
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<p><b>Question 4:</b></p>	<p>Would you support any further proposals for 'Church of England' financial resources to disinvest from fossil fuel industries and what other actions do you think could be taken in the Church of England in order to promote the Fifth Mark of Mission?</p>
<p><b>Reply:</b> 120 word limit applies</p>	<p>Although understanding the argument for retaining investments in order to have "a voice at the table", I do support the moves to disinvest from fossil fuels and the Church's part in the Transition Pathway Initiative.</p> <p>It was wise to add, in 1990, the 5th mark of mission to the original four. The climate crisis and threats to biodiversity have become even more urgent and it is right that the church should speak out, and set an example. We must remember that the five marks of mission hang on the first two, ("evangelism" and "response and initiation") which reflect Jesus' great commission to <i>make disciples of all nations</i> (Matt 28:18-20); concern for God's world cannot eclipse concern for people's souls.</p>