

## **The Revd Gavin Rushton -Vicar of Hope Family Church, Washington | Diocese of Durham**

It's a joy to serve as Vicar of Hope Family Church, Washington, a resource church in the Diocese of Durham committed to being a growing, generous, and Spirit-led community. I long to see the renewal of the Church in Christ, and I believe the local Church is God's primary means of transformation.

Before ordination, I managed a children's home, working with some of the most vulnerable young people in society. That experience profoundly shaped my pastoral outlook, my commitment to safeguarding, and my belief in the power of a redemptive community. I now lead a team that shares those same values as we grow disciples, raise up leaders, and partner in gospel mission across our region.

I'm standing for General Synod to be a voice for churches like ours—churches rooted in their communities, passionate about Jesus, and committed to serving people with compassion, creativity, and conviction.

### **A Church Shaped by the Gospel**

I am profoundly shaped by the evangelical tradition. I believe in the power of collaboration across traditions and that we are stronger in our witness as the church when we walk together in grace.

At Hope Family Church, people encounter Christ, explore faith, and grow as disciples. This is not unique to us—God works throughout the Church of England in diverse ways. We need a General Synod that supports the theological and missional breadth of our Church while centring on Jesus Christ and the historic Christian faith.

### **Mission-Focused, Partnership-Oriented**

Hope Family Church is a resource church, and this identity shapes our vision. We are not only growing our own mission and ministry in Washington but are also actively partnering with others across the Diocese of Durham to support fresh expressions of church, revitalisation, and outreach.

This includes:

- Working with the Diocese to revitalise Christ Church New Seaham, a church with great potential in an area of social need.
- Leading a major youth engagement initiative through the Ten10 Bus, which is helping us connect with hundreds of young people each month in schools and community spaces.
- Investing in local partnerships with other parishes and ministries to support sustainable growth and gospel witness.

I believe that Synod must prioritise the renewal of the local Church within national priorities—resourcing leaders, enabling innovation, and removing unnecessary barriers to mission.

### **Safeguarding: A Gospel Imperative**

My background in residential care has instilled in me an unshakable commitment to safeguarding. I have witnessed the long-term costs of abuse and neglect, as well as the healing that can come through a safe, accountable, and grace-filled community. Safeguarding is not a box to tick—it is core to who we are as the Church. If elected to Synod, I will support:

- Strong, independent safeguarding processes
- Listening well to survivors and centring their voices
- Equipping leaders at all levels to foster cultures of trust, transparency, and care

We must be a Church that protects the vulnerable and models the love of Christ in both word and action.

### **Living in Love and Faith (LLF)**

The ongoing LLF process has surfaced deep questions and real pain in our Church. I remain committed to the biblical and historic teaching on marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman, and I believe this is good news for all people. At the same time, I recognise that faithful Christians hold differing convictions, and I want to approach these conversations with humility, grace, and a genuine desire to listen well. I am committed to:

- Upholding biblical teaching with clarity and compassion
- Creating space for honest theological disagreement without personal vilification
- Seeking outcomes that honour conscience and maintain visible unity where possible

The path ahead will require wisdom, courage, and love. We must remain in conversations, not retreat, bringing a witness that is rooted in Christ and rich in grace.

### **Leadership That is Accountable and Collaborative**

I believe in a Church with accountable, collaborative, and Spirit-led leadership. We must foster cultures of trust, transparency, and empowerment in safeguarding, governance, strategy, and pastoral life. If elected to Synod, I will bring local parish leaders' voices into national discussions, ensuring central decisions reflect on-the-ground realities.

### **A Generous Orthodoxy for a Diverse Church**

I envision a Church that balances conviction and kindness—orthodox in belief, generous in spirit, and passionate in mission. I seek a Synod that prioritises unity in Christ over cultural uniformity, enabling the Church to speak confidently and compassionately to a world needing genuine hope.

### **In Summary**

If elected to the General Synod, I will:

- Champion local churches as the heartbeat of mission and renewal
- Uphold the gospel with clarity, humility, and grace
- Support safeguarding as a non-negotiable part of faithful ministry
- Work in partnership to see growth across the Church, especially among young people.

I will listen well, speak graciously, and serve prayerfully. Thank you for considering me as your representative.