

The Revd Vivian Sockett

Candidate, House of Clergy, General Synod 2026

Chaplain-designate, Christ Church Lille (licensing 10 Oct)

Currently Associate Chaplain (in transition), St Michael's Church Paris

Ordained deacon 2023 | priest 2024, Diocese in Europe

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Proposed by: Revd Canon Debbie Flach (Dean of Women's Ministry)

Seconded by: Revd Dr Christian Hofreiter (Chaplain, CityKirche Vienna)

Who am I and why am I standing?

For the past 35 years I have been involved in Christian ministry – teaching and training in local churches around the world, conducting research and advocacy connected with gender-based violence in countries where Christians are persecuted, and recently ordained in the Diocese in Europe, serving chaplaincies in France.

- I moved to France from the US in 1990 with a heart for missions.
- My British husband Geoff and I married in 1991; he's been churchwarden in Versailles for the past 10 years.
- Europe is home - we raised our daughter here; she and our new Dutch son-in-law now live in the Netherlands.

I love God's church and have spent a lifetime worshiping and serving in a variety of church roles:

- as a youth and later a student in leadership at Christian camps and student ministries;
- 2 decades leading and shaping youth & children's ministry in French churches in Nancy and Strasbourg;
- alongside persecuted churches with Open Doors – learning from and offering training to global church leaders
- 7 years lay ministry in Versailles, 2 years curacy in Maisons-Laffitte, 1 year curacy at St Michael's Paris.

Although I have had close ties to a wide range of different denominations and came to Anglicanism later in life, I chose to settle in the Church of England because of its breadth, history and liturgy. Overall, I deeply believe that **the local church matters enormously and healthy churches do not happen by accident.**

I considered theological college in 1990, but instead God had me develop unexpected professional skills:

- for a decade as a lecturer in French engineering schools (and an MA in Education to learn how to teach);
- learning care for others and independent management as a study abroad director for US university students;
- in parachurch work as a researcher, radio & TV presenter, manager, trauma care trainer and materials developer

Finally, in 2020, that former dream of theological study became a reality. During my MA courses, I realised that I am mainly a practical theologian, not abstract. I always ask, "What does this look like in the real world?" which is why the Open Doors training material we wrote is called Restorations IRL (In Real Life).

General Synod makes decisions about doctrine, legislation, finance and the ordering of our common life which impact the local church. **I would like to help ensure that those decisions strengthen rather than unintentionally burden** the Church's fundamental calling: to glorify God, show who Jesus is through how we love one another, make disciples and equip his people for works of service through Word and Sacrament.

A European Anglican perspective

The Diocese in Europe has something distinctive to contribute to that conversation. Our chaplaincies, with our rich tapestry of complexities, are adept in learning to live harmoniously amidst change and diversity.

During my 16 years with **Open Doors**, as the Global Gender Persecution Specialist, I travelled extensively to meet Christians where faith costs the most. My team and I eventually led pioneering ministry in understanding

the vulnerability of Christian communities and building their resilience. Some of the underlying questions faced by churches under pressure are ones we also encounter in everyday ministry, especially here.

It has been something of a natural transition, therefore, to become involved in the Diocese in Europe's **Healthy and Thriving Chaplaincies Working Group**, exploring what helps our very different chaplaincies flourish, what makes them vulnerable and how the Diocese can constructively come alongside. I have also enjoyed working closely with the Dean of **Women's Ministry** primarily analysing diocesan data in order to explore how the Diocese can reach its goals of ensuring equitable ministry opportunities for clergy across Europe.

What would I bring to Synod?

Governance structures are one of my comfort zones. My initial higher degree is in Economics and Political Science; with Open Doors I was active in advocacy with governments, the EU and the UN; and for three years, including the intense period of COVID, I was president of the student body at theological college.

Experience facilitating healthy disagreement across cultures and convictions.

From local French churches to international Christian networks, ecumenical conversations and government advocacy, I have learned to listen carefully, identify common ground, and foster mutual respect.

Good governance as good pastoral care.

Church structures are not themselves the Gospel, but they can either reflect Christ or not. Good governance should bless, not burden, and should help local churches love God, one another and their neighbours well.

A global perspective on freedom of religion and the persecuted Church.

Sixteen years alongside Christians facing persecution deepened my concern for freedom of religion or belief. As people of faith in the UK and Europe navigate in new ways the changing assumptions about the place of faith in public life, I would welcome the opportunity to bring global insights into the conversation.

Availability and proximity

Being an effective member of General Synod requires considerable time, attentiveness and energy. The part-time Chaplain's role in Lille will allow me the necessary time and energy to invest properly in General Synod without placing an undue burden on the chaplaincy.

If elected

I would seek to serve **all the clergy of the Diocese in Europe**. I long to see a Church of England confident in Jesus Christ, faithful to Scripture, making disciples and hopeful in the face of challenges before us, investing in local churches and releasing lay and ordained gifts rather than exhausting the faithful.

This coming quinquennium will include continued navigation of crucial questions. I would approach all issues **prepared to listen, willing to speak, ready to do the work, and conscious that our decisions affect real congregations and real people**. I am accustomed to analysing complex material, asking awkward questions when necessary, working collaboratively, and turning discussion towards constructive action.

I would value the opportunity to bring our European experience into the national Church — and its deliberations back into meaningful conversation with our chaplaincies.

As you prayerfully consider how to cast your vote, I would be very grateful for your first (or high-preference) vote. If you have any questions or concerns, please do contact me – I would love to chat.