

Charlotte Dodson – Election address, September 2026

I firmly believe that our primary mission as Christians is to bring God's kingdom to Earth. The Bible describes God's Kingdom as a state where we exist in communion with God, we live in love and harmony with each other, we look after each other, and all are accepted and welcomed.

Whilst the Church and many people do a great job of embodying this spirit very well, it seems as though we are too often wrapped up in the rituals and routines of Religion, rather than carrying out our roles in this ambition. We work on precise liturgy and standards of service and protecting traditions and heritage values, to maintain consistency and comfort. But we lose out on spreading the Kingdom, on carrying the Good News message, and loving everyone, in favour of keeping our comfort and pleasing our congregations with familiarity.

Jesus didn't call us to be comfortable, he called us to be challenged. God wants to develop our characters and embrace all of our fellow humans, with peace, love and forgiveness. Instead we are excluding the young, the LGBTQ+, the neurodivergent, the minorities, with our fanciful words and old-fashioned liturgy that alienates newcomers and pampers the ego of the old-timers. We have chosen to follow the legacy of patriarchy and put heterosexual marriage on a pedestal instead of spreading Jesus' message of equality and love to all.

In an age of global change and confusing times, people are looking for a spiritual meaning and purpose to their lives. People want real human connection and authenticity. They want to know, more than ever, what we should all be doing with our efforts and resources, and how we fix the divisions and reunite communities and populations.

Jesus has these answers, and more besides, but people can't find them in fancy buildings with closed doors and services that they don't understand. They don't feel the warmth of God's grace and love or hear the Holy Spirit in their lives when they enter a church and people are unwelcoming to the gay, the disabled, the different.

We need to encourage our clergy and lay leaders to know how to promote inclusivity, to spread beyond the walls, to touch the people with real spirituality instead of social media. We need to focus on whether or not we are really bringing God's Kingdom to Earth in every part of our lives and conversations and interactions, and not cosying down to wallow in our old-fashioned values.