



Richard Arens

Proposed by Emma Newton, Framland Deanery
Seconded by Les Mitchelmore, City of Leicester Deanery

My priorities in short:

- Resourcing parishes
- Supporting young people
- Encouraging vocations

My background:

I am 23 years old and, having grown up as a clergy child, have 23 years' experience of the Church of England across different contexts.

I sang as a chorister at Leicester Cathedral, and in 2020, we moved to St Andrew's, Jarrom Street, which I represent on Deanery Synod. Over the last five years, until the devastating fire earlier this summer, we have experienced strong growth in a highly diverse area.

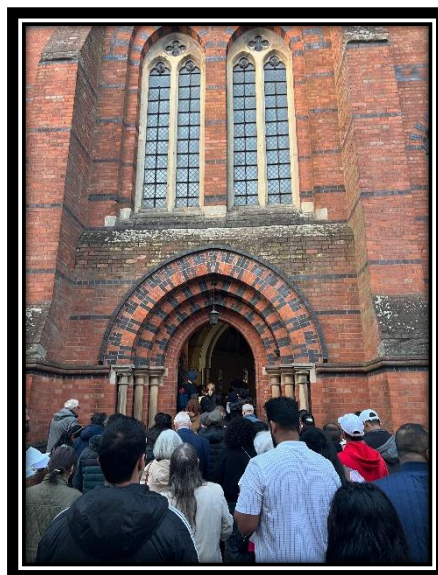
Since graduating from Durham University, I split my time between Leicester and London working as a Political and Legislative Adviser in the House of Lords. I feel confident drafting amendments to legislation, and hope this will be of use when scrutinising measures in Synod.

When in London, I attend Our Most Holy Redeemer, Clerkenwell, where I have helped run the Alpha course and volunteered as their representative for [Fidelium](#), a lay-led young adults network.

My contribution so far:

Since 2024, I have served on Leicester's Diocesan Synod and become familiar with the challenges our Diocese faces, particularly in supporting parish ministry and stipendiary posts in the rollout of Minster Communities.

On a national level, I am on the Steering Committee of Save the Parish, which seeks to resource the parish system and ensure the poorest communities are not abandoned. The Church was left a £11.6 billion endowment for 'the cure of souls in parishes where such assistance is most required', yet Church Action on Poverty shows that 40% of church closures occur within the 10% most deprived parishes.



None of this is just a hobby either. At work I have sought to raise awareness in Parliament about the new Places of Worship Renewal Fund. This replaced the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, and for most churches who previously benefitted, will likely result in building repairs becoming 20% more expensive.

My priorities:

I am committed to the causes set out in the [Save the Parish Manifesto](#) and **resourcing the parish system**. Whatever our disagreements on other issues, the parish system enables there to be diversity of traditions. Only 8% of the Church Commissioner's planned annual distribution is ringfenced for parish ministry, and dioceses have been left unable to pick up the bill.



Given my experience of Fidelium, I can offer meaningful insights as to how we can **better support young people coming to church**. The Church's recent report, 'Understanding Young Adult Journeys to Faith in the Church of England', demonstrates that parishes are effective units of mission, and offer a sense of belonging which is otherwise so lacking.

Bringing these two things together is the urgent need to **attract new vocations**. Currently, more clergy are resigning than retiring. By encouraging new ordinands, supporting proper training, and improving existing clergy well-being with a new covenant of care, the Church can supply our parishes with priests long-term.

Please do get in touch if you have any questions (r.arens02@gmail.com).

I would be very grateful for your support – a first or high preference vote would make all the difference – and for your prayers for all those of us who are standing.