Gemma Foster

Rector of Cove, Area Dean of Aldershot

Background:

I have over 20 years of experience in church leadership, beginning as an employed senior lay leader within a large church—an experience that deeply shaped my passion for empowering lay ministry alongside ordained ministry. I was ordained in 2015 in the Diocese of St Albans, where I served my curacy. I now serve as Rector of Cove and Area Dean of Aldershot.

In Cove, I have led the parish through significant pastoral reorganisation—moving from three churches to two—and reimagining mission and ministry in this new context. Leading through such change has given me practical insight into both the challenges and the opportunities of reorganisation at parish level.

I am naturally visionary and often described as strategic. I enjoy complexity, thrive on problem-solving, and am rarely fazed by a challenge. These qualities have led to various strategic leadership roles, including serving as a founding trustee for a Bishop's Mission Order (Hub Church Hitchin) and currently on the Member Board of the Prospect Trust Multi-Academy Trust.

I did not grow up in the Church but came to faith as a teenager thanks to the boldness of a friend who invited me along. I'm married to J (Jonathan) and mum to Imogen, Joel, and Jasmine. I've recently completed a PhD exploring discipleship among emerging adults—a subject that remains central to my heart and ministry. Over the past decade, I have been involved in training both ordinands and lay leaders, particularly in discipleship, digital theology, evangelism, and young adult engagement.

Priorities:

A Church that reflects its community
I long for a Church that truly reflects the diversity and vibrancy of the communities it serves. This includes the urgent call to grow younger and more diverse (GS 2358). My focus is on mission to emerging generations—not just welcoming them into faith, but encouraging and equipping them into leadership.

This conviction has been shaped by more than two decades of hands-on ministry experience and deepened through academic research. It compels me to work toward churches that are not only present in their communities but feel like home to those who live there. As Area Dean of Aldershot, I am actively involved in conversations with clergy and lay leaders about the complex realities of racial and political tensions in our context. Together, we are seeking to build churches that are genuinely welcoming— places of belonging, healing, and hope for all.

Clergy wellbeing and support
We are seeing growing demands placed on clergy: administrative burden, financial strain, increasing governance, and the emotional toll of change and uncertainty. These challenges risk disheartening those already in ministry and becoming a barrier for those discerning a call.

I will be a strong advocate for clergy wellbeing—spiritually, emotionally, and practically. I support restoring clergy pensions to pre-2011 levels and ensuring fair and sustainable remuneration so that finances and pension provisions do not cause a barrier to vocations or jeopardise the flourishing of those who serve.

Theological convictions:

I am committed to the Five Guiding Principles. Although I personally affirm the equal calling of men and women, I wholeheartedly believe in a Church that, out of generosity, continues to make space for those who hold a different theological conviction and ensures meaningful provision remains.

On human sexuality, I hold to an orthodox theological position, while offering a radical pastoral welcome. This welcome includes those who think or live differently, and I have consistently worked alongside and supported clergy and lay leaders across the theological spectrum.

The LLF process is a vital conversation—not only because of its subject matter, but because of how we engage in it. I believe we are called to model a Christlike way of navigating disagreement—with careful listening, truthfulness, integrity, and love.

Please do get in touch if you would like to ask anything specific:
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