



The Diocese of
Southwark

Diocesan Secretary

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To: Honorary Secretaries of
Parochial Church Councils,
District Church Councils
(Copied to Incumbents and Deanery Synod
Secretaries)

15 January 2024

Dear Colleagues,

In advance of this annual request for information and briefing on the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) and Electoral Roll and other important aspects of parish life, I would like to take the opportunity of wishing you a happy New Year. I also want to thank you for all the work that you do for your church, which is greatly appreciated. Please remember that the Diocesan Office is here to help parishes in their mission, so if you have any enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Southwark Vision 2024-2035

Throughout 2023, the team has been working hard with our parishes and Diocesan leadership to develop the vision for our life as a Diocese.

Southwark Vision 2024-2035 is Christ Centred | Outward Focused. This next evolution of our Vision comes as we continue to walk together, discerning God's wisdom and guidance in our shared pilgrimage of faith. Keeping Christ as our centre and the focus of unity, we will continue to turn outwards - seeking to support, encourage, resource and learn from one another as we serve our parishes and God's world.

In November 2023, our Diocesan Synod approved this Vision - alongside plans to develop our Diocesan Investment Programme which will resource and support specific streams of work around our six priorities:

1. Valuing all our parishes
2. Maintaining the highest possible number of stipendiary clergy and growing our lay ministries
3. Growing existing churches and establishing new worshipping communities
4. Becoming a younger and more diverse diocese
5. Deepening our discipleship
6. Seeking God's healing for our communities and our world

You can find out more about the Vision and download the core vision document [here](#) - more resources will be made available in 2024 as our Vision becomes ever more embedded in our Diocesan life.

PCC Secretaries' Handbook

The new PCC Secretaries' Handbook has been completed and is available on our [website](#). Hard copy Handbooks are being designed and will be sent to all the PCC Secretaries in our parishes. The Handbook contains a wealth of information that we hope you will find useful.

**Christ
Centred
Outward
Focused**

The Diocese of Southwark

The South London Church Fund and Southwark Diocesan Board of Finance is a company limited by guarantee (No 236594)

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Company Secretary: Nicola Thomas



PCC Secretaries' & Parish Administrators' Training and Conference:

Following the continuing success of the PCC Secretaries' & Parish Administrators' conferences, we are pleased to let you know that the next conference dates have been confirmed. This will be held on Saturday 6 July 2024, with an online option hosted on Tuesday 9 July 2024. Please do add these dates to your diaries, and further information will be circulated nearer the time. There will be contributions from staff at Trinity House who will be there to answer any of your queries regarding your roles as PCC Secretaries and Parish Administrators. There will be additional speakers covering a range of topics from HR and the Safer Recruitment Guidelines to Finance.

Church Representation Rules 2022

As many of you will be aware, a new edition of the Church Representation Rules was published in 2022. The edition includes new rules which aim to simplify parochial church governance and enable parishes to adapt the rules to best serve ministry and mission in their contexts. The new PCC Secretaries' Handbook is linked to, and updated with, these rules.

The full text of the rules is available to view online: [Church Representation Rules | The Church of England](#) and hard copies are available for purchase from [Church House Bookshop](#) and other online retailers.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

In line with the Church Representation Rules, your APCM must now take place by **31 May 2024** (former deadline was 30 April).

APCMs are to be held in-person and there is no permission available for meetings to be held virtually or in mixed-mode. This said, you are welcome to livestream the meeting; however, this is for observation only and those viewing online will not be able to vote, regardless of eligibility.

You are reminded that under the Charities Act 2011, members of the PCC and those elected to Deanery Synods by PCCs are "Charity Trustees" in law. This means that *anyone disqualified under section 178 of the Charities Act 2011, for example because of bankruptcy or conviction for an offence of dishonesty or deception is not eligible*. This is clearly a sensitive issue, and we would advise that when you are seeking nominations for PCC members, you print the statement in italics above on all nomination forms and read this statement out at the APCM when the item is taken.

To help you plan your APCMs, we have developed an [APCM Date Tool](#) available on the website which will give the dates of various tasks that are undertaken once you know the date of your APCM. We hope this is helpful.

The screenshot shows a web-based calculator titled "APCM Timetable". It is described as an "Annual Parochial Church Meeting Timetable Calculator for a year in which an existing Electoral Roll is being revised". The tool features a form with the following elements:

- A text input field labeled "Enter APCM date" with a placeholder "dd / mm / yyyy".
- A horizontal line separating the input from the calculation results.
- Three rows of calculation results, each with a text label, a date input field, and a connector phrase followed by another date input field:
 - Row 1: "Revision of roll notice posted by must be at least 14 days before revision starts" followed by "and not later than".
 - Row 2: "Notice of APCM posted on or by the OUTSIDE of the church door" followed by "notice must be in place for two Sundays before APCM".
 - Row 3: "Complete revised roll and post on or by the church door by" followed by "but not before".
- A red horizontal line below the results.
- A note in italics: "New roll remains posted for at least 14 days. During this period errors & omissions may be corrected (but not new names added if no form had been completed before posting). Additional names may not be added until after the APCM".
- A footer: "Diocese of Southwark".

Electoral Roll Return

I attach three copies of the Annual Return. On two of these you are required to give the names of and a form of contact for your Deanery Synod representatives following the 2023 elections.

Parish copy - for display on your Church Noticeboard
Deanery copy - to send to your Deanery Synod Secretary
Diocesan copy - to return to the Diocesan Office

It is vital that this information is kept up to date as the Deanery Synod representatives are the electors for various bodies including both General Synod and Diocesan Synod (who will be elected this year).

We would be grateful if you could help us in this process by ensuring that these forms are returned as soon as possible after your APCM and no later than **1 July 2024**, as outlined in the Church Representation Rules 2022. If you require hard copies of these forms please do not hesitate to get in touch, and they are also available to download from the [website](#). Forms can either be returned via the post to The Diocesan Secretary, Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London, SE1 1HW or e-Mailed to governance@southwark.anglican.org. They can either be filled in digitally (with an electronic signature) or scanned in and sent.

Diocesan Synod Elections

This year, Deanery Synods will be electing representatives to the Diocesan Synod in time for the new Triennium beginning in November 2024. Further details will be sent to Deanery Secretaries shortly regarding the time on the processes and rules for these elections.

If you feel called to become one of your Deanery's representatives on Diocesan Synod, talk to your current representatives, Deanery Lay Chair, Vicar, Area Dean or contact charles.hudson-beddows@southwark.anglican.org ahead of the elections, which must be completed by 15 July 2024 at your Deanery Synod.

We particularly wish our Synod to reflect the rich and joyful diversity of our Diocese. We would welcome members of Global Majority Heritage and UKME to nominate themselves to join us through our journey of Southwark Vision 2024-2035 to be Christ Centred | Outward Focussed.

A leaflet explaining Diocesan Synod, its role and aims will be sent to your deaneries in the coming weeks and will be available online and in parishes. Please do consider standing for election or promoting this to others.

Online Parish Returns

The Church of England's online parish return system which we use for capturing church membership data (also known as 'Statistics for Mission' or 'congregational count') and parish finance information, remains open for you to put in your information. This data collection is important in celebrating the creativity and resilience of our churches. It is important that we recognise the exceptional work of our parishes and thank you for taking the time to help us understand the picture of our churches.

I'd like to remind and encourage you to enter your 2023 data by the end of January if possible although it is likely that the online parish return system will remain open for a short while beyond the end of the month. The closing date for submission of your financial information is the end of June.

The online system can be accessed here <https://parishreturns.churchofengland.org/> and please do contact us at data@southwark.anglican.org if you have any queries.

Parish Support Fund

We are very grateful for the parishes commitment to the Parish Support Fund (PSF). The PSF 2025 materials will be distributed digitally to you and your incumbent at the end of June 2024. We would be most grateful if you could share the materials with your PCC and include the discussion of your 2025 pledge in your PCC's agenda between July and mid-September. This will allow you to submit your pledge by the submission date of noon on Friday 13 September 2024.

Church Buildings; the DAC; Quinquennial Inspections

Along with Incumbents, Churchwardens and others, PCC Secretaries may find themselves involved in tasks of caring for their church buildings and applying for faculties with initiatives such as reducing the carbon emissions of church buildings.

Please do remember that your Archdeacon and the Church Buildings & DAC team in the Secretariat are here to help advise on these matters.

You can contact Luke Tatam (DAC Secretary) or Katie Jenner (Assistant DAC Secretary) regarding: Quinquennial Inspections; sources of grants for maintenance/repairs and alterations of church buildings; guidance on making church buildings more environmentally sustainable; advice on care and maintenance of church buildings; help with applying to the DAC for either initial pre-application advice (which may include input from specialist advisers as appropriate and or arranging 'DAC site visits'); or formal advice as part of the faculty application process.

We request that you use the email address DAC@southwark.anglican.org to make initial contact with Luke and Katie about such queries.

Depending on your query, your Archdeacon may suggest contacting the DAC office and/or others who can assist you in care of church buildings and issues which arise around their use, for example: the Diocesan Registry; the PCC's insurance company; the church's appointed Quinquennial Inspector (usually an Architect).

A Season for Lay Ministries

Bishop Christopher is calling the Diocese to a Season of Lay Ministries once again. It will begin on Sunday 7 January and draws to a close on Sunday 28 January. You can find material related to this on the Diocesan website at www.southwark.anglican.org/exploring-your-call/lay-ministries/. We offer sermon outlines and suggested hymns as well as recorded versions of the sermons for you simply to show in your services. Or we also offer preachers for the Sundays or speakers for other events. This year we want to focus particularly on Affirmed Lay Ministries and I would like to add my encouragement to Bishop Christopher's that you observe this important Season.

Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call

I would also like to remind you of the Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call. This year it will focus particularly on our two Diocesan Links: that with four of the Dioceses in Zimbabwe and the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East. I know that many of you have been praying for the people of Gaza and Israel since the terrible events of 7 October 2023 and Bishop Christopher has decided to focus four of the five weeks of the Lent Call on the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East. One week will be on a project in Bethlehem visited by the Diocesan Pilgrims who went to the Holy Land in March 2023 and the other three weeks will focus on projects and work that are being supported by the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East. The other week will focus on a project to promote resilience and well-being for the clergy of the Dioceses in Zimbabwe through the Zimbabwean Council of Churches. The clergy will then be better equipped to help their parishes with these issues too. The situation in Gaza and Israel is changing fast and so this year we are offering digital resources this year and these will be available on the website. On the back page of the February edition of The Bridge we are

printing a poster for display in our churches. We hope that this will encourage people in your parishes to pray for all those involved in the work and give generously during Lent.

Parish Support

As always you are more than welcome to contact Charles Hudson-Beddows (Charles.Hudson-Beddows@southwark.anglican.org) on any matter that you need help with. He will be able to forward your query onto the right people even if it's not something he can answer himself.

Area Offices

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with your Area Office; they are there to assist and advise parishes in their mission work:

Croydon Episcopal Area Office	6 St Peter's Road, Croydon CR0 1HD	Tel: 020 8256 9630
Kingston Episcopal Area Office	(temporarily) Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London SE1 1HW	Tel: 020 8545 2440
Woolwich Episcopal Area Office	Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London SE1 1HW	Tel: 020 7939 9413

Please use the Southwark Diocesan Directory on the Diocesan website (in your passworded section) for contact details of Diocesan officers and others with roles in the Diocese.

General Enquiries on Legislation and Churches

There is an organisation called *Churches Legislation Advisory Service* and they have a website with a number of useful publications. I suggest that you make occasional visits to the site: www.churcheslegislation.org.uk. Another website which you may find useful is, especially in terms of governance, finance and charities is www.parishresources.org.uk.

On behalf of the whole of the Diocese, including Charlie with whom you will be most in contact, I would like to wish you and the PCCs you serve a fulfilling year as we journey together as disciples of Christ in challenging times. We hope to see many of you at our PCC Secretaries & Parish Administrators Conference, but we understand there may be questions in the time leading up to this year's APCMs. Once again, may I reiterate that you are very welcome to get in touch with the Diocesan Office should you have any queries.

Wishing you a very fulfilling 2024 and thank you very much for all that you do.

Yours Sincerely



Nicola Thomas
Diocesan Secretary