



DIOCESAN SYNOD SYNOD QUESTIONS NOTICE PAPER

Question 1

Q The Revd Phillip Kennedy [Battersea Deanery]

How many Baptisms have resulted from the work of the Nine Elms Arts Ministry, both in its SDF-funded phase and in its present BMO status?

A The Deputy Diocesan Secretary

There have been no baptisms from the work of the Nine Elms Arts Ministry which has no dedicated space or means to perform baptisms. The ministry's focus has been to use the arts as a means to bring people into contact with the Church, as a first step. This has taken place through the Creative Soul arts wellbeing initiative and Advent Calendar trail, among other missional opportunities and conversations, on the Nine Elms development.

Question 2

Q The Revd Jonathan Macy [Plumstead Deanery]

It is now fact that in conversation with diocesan officers a number of clergy/parishes have been made aware that should their response to any implementation of PLF include certain actions this would lead them to a charge of "not being in good standing with the diocese".

Since this becoming a common response by the Diocesan officers (including Archdeacons and Bishops) and is being made on behalf of the diocese itself, please could the Diocesan Secretary (or appropriate person) provide the following:

1. A clear definition of what "not being in good standing with the Diocese" means.
2. What are the criteria by which such a charge can be brought and to whom it can apply?
3. What are the prescribed/suggested consequences of a parish/clergy "not being in good standing with the diocese"?
4. What is the process for appealing against such a charge?

For the sake of proper process and clergy wellbeing, please could Diocesan Officers be dissuaded from using this statement until such a time that the above can be published.

A The Diocesan Secretary

The term of parishes being "in good standing" with the Diocese is a set of eligibility criteria, defined, agreed, and used since 2020, in discussions with parishes when considering:

- Diocesan Loans
- Participation in SDF bids
- Eligibility for any curates
- Parish self-funded ministry posts
- DBF Grants or other financial assistance (e.g. Marshalls, etc)

The paper setting out the criteria is included in the briefing material which is sent by Area Offices to all parishes every year when they are invited to consider whether to apply for a curate. It covers a range of criteria e.g. that mandatory safeguarding training for church officers and compliance with all PCC and safeguarding responsibilities have been completed, parochial fees have been submitted and that “Acceptable PSF pledge for the last three years and promises for the next three years (as agreed by Archdeacon)” are made. The consequence of a parish not meeting these eligibility criteria is that the parish may not be considered for one of those five areas of support.

Question 3

Q The Revd Jonathan Macy [Plumstead Deanery]

Following on from a question at the last Diocesan Synod where a commitment was made from the platform to ask Archdeacons to enquire as to what the feeling on the ground about the LLF / PLF process, especially around engagement at a Deanery Level, please could an update be given as to what has been learned?

A The Diocesan Secretary

Bishop Christopher, the College of Bishops, Archdeacons, and Diocesan Staff are continuing to build on the bond of trust between parishes and the Diocese through communications at all levels, in all media and including face to face contact. We continue the principles of good disagreement & speaking well of each other.

There continues to be a range of views and there has been positive engagement and continued good working relationships with all involved for the unity of the Church and the Diocese.

We are not able to reveal the outcome of individual discussions, but Synod can be assured of our commitment to ensure continued partnership working.

Question 4

Q The Revd David Ruddick [Merton Deanery]

At the July meeting of the Diocesan Synod, the Diocesan Secretary told the Synod that Living in Love and Faith (LLF) is a source of "continued uncertainty" and that a 1.5% reduction in collection rate for the Parish Support Fund (PSF) had been assumed. Would the Diocesan Secretary supply some more information about the impact of LLF and the related Prayers of Love and Faith on the PSF to date? In particular:

- a) The projected impact upon the collection rate for 2023;
- b) The projected impact upon expected income for 2023;
- c) An estimate of the total money which will not be received into the PSF in 2024, because parishes have opted not to make a formal pledge and not to pay anything to the PSF (based on the pledges of those parishes for the previous year);
- d) An estimate of the total money to come in 2024 from parishes which have made a conditional pledge to the PSF whilst indicating that this may change depending on the outcome of the General Synod debate;
- e) An estimate of the total money to come in 2024 from parishes which have opted not to make a formal pledge to the PSF for 2024, but have instead given an indicative maximum figure which they are intending to pay as things stand.

A Gabby Parikh

The Archdeacons and the Diocesan team have been conversing with parishes who have expressed concerns regarding Living in Love and Faith (LLF). There have been many constructive conversations which, as with all conversations about parish pledges, have informed the budget. Our dialogue continues.

In terms of financial impact on the Parish Support Fund which is measurable as of 15 November 2023:

- a) The collection rate for 2023 has been reduced by 0.5% due to two parishes withholding part of their pledges.
- b) The total impact by the year end will be an expected reduction in income of approximately £76,000 but we still expect to meet the forecast. One parish has said that it intends to distribute these funds to support ministry in the Southwark diocesan area, not to support ministry in their parish or for any other purposes.
- c) No parish has declined to make any formal pledge and said that they will not contribute anything to the PSF in 2024.
- d) One parish has made a conditional pledge whilst indicating that this may change depending on the outcome of the General Synod debate. Their pledge totals £86,300.
- e) Two parishes have opted not to make a formal pledge but have given an indicative maximum figure which they are intending to pay as things stand. That figure is approximately £260,000.

Question 5

Q The Revd David Ruddick [Merton Deanery]

Following the Bishop of Southwark's comments in response to a question asked at the Diocesan Synod meeting of 11th March 2023, in which he suggested that it would be profitable for the Synod to review matters relating to the Prayers of Love and Faith (PLF) once the materials have been published and the pastoral guidance drafted, are there plans to allow space for review and debate at the next Diocesan Synod meeting? The original question was asked in the knowledge that the implementation of the PLF had caused significant unease to many clergy and lay members around the Diocese, and that unease has risen over the course of the year; it appears that the next available opportunity for such discussion and review will be a year after the original question was asked.

A The Bishop of Southwark

The topic of the Prayers of Love & Faith, as part of the Living in Love & Faith process, will be discussed at the President's meeting in January, for the setting of the March Synod agenda