



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

10 January 2025

Dear Colleagues,

In advance of this annual request for information and briefing on the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) and full revision of the 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**

- P** Parishes
- M** Ministry
- G** Growth
- Y** Youth & diversity
- D** Deepening our discipleship
- H** Healing

Diocesan Synod approved Southwark Vision 2024-2035 at its meeting in November 2023, setting out our priorities as a basis for the objectives of the Diocese, and the outcomes we seek. At the heart of the Vision is a commitment to be Christ Centred | Outward Focused, and we remain committed to the six priorities, the top of which is valuing our parishes in all their diversity.

Resources and copies of the Vision are available by request and further information can be found on the [website](#). Please do get in touch if you have any queries, and consider how you might discuss Southwark Vision in your parishes or PCCs.



**Diocesan Investment Programme**

The Diocese of Southwark is set to receive £29 million over nine years from the Church of England.

The Church's [Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board](#) has approved the funding for Southwark's whole-diocese transformation programme, which will facilitate mission and growth projects throughout South London and East Surrey.

The application made by Southwark Diocese seeks to address four main missional challenges in partnership with the National Church:

- Growing church attendance
- Doubling the number of churches with more than 25 children and young people
- Reaching and resourcing estates parishes
- Growing pathways to ministry that increase the diversity of leadership and are more accessible to young people

## PCC Secretaries' Handbook

The updated PCC Secretaries' Handbook is available on our [website](#) or hard copy by request. The Handbook contains a wealth of information that we hope you will find useful. If you would like a copy please let us know by email at [governance@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:governance@southwark.anglican.org).

## 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 three years of conference dates have been confirmed. These will be held on:

- Saturday 7 June 2025 – In person
- Monday 9 June 2025 - Online
- Saturday 30 May 2026 – In person
- Monday 1 June 2026 - Online
- Saturday 29 May 2027 – In person
- Monday 31 May 2027 - Online

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.

## Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM)

In line with the Church Representation Rules, your APCM must take place by **31 May 2025**.

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. We encourage PCCs to conduct basic DBS checks on all members as a matter of policy.

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 tool titled "Preparation of new Electoral Roll". It includes a form to "Enter APCM date" with a date picker set to 4/1/2025. Below the form, there are several rows of text with input fields for dates and times. The text includes: "Notice of the preparation of new roll must be posted at least 2 months before the APCM", "At every Sunday service between the two dates above, the person conducting the service must inform the congregation", "Preparation of the new roll must be completed by", "Notice of APCM posted on or by the OUTSIDE of the church door", and "New roll available for inspection (no personal data other than names) from no later than". There are also fields for "and must remain in place until at least" and "notice must be in place for 3 Sundays before APCM". A small disclaimer at the bottom states: "During the above 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."

## Revision of the Electoral Roll

As part of the 6-yearly timetable, 2025 is a year in which a completely new Electoral Roll needs to be prepared. Guidance on the process can be found in the enclosed briefing paper and extract from the Church Representation Rules. I'd be grateful if you could bring this to the attention of your Electoral Roll Officer as a matter of urgency.

Copies of both the 'Notification Form' and 'Application for Enrolment Form' are enclosed with this letter and can also be downloaded from the Diocesan website under [forms](#).

The Church Representation Rules are available online [here](#) on the Church of England website.

Included in the application for enrolment is an optional section for Parish Communication which parishes can use, if the applicant wishes, to hold contact data for church news, activities, events and fundraising. This data should be used in accordance with your Privacy Policy.

## **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 and any subsequent changes.

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.

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 2025**, 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](mailto:governance@southwark.anglican.org). They can either be filled in digitally (with an electronic signature) or scanned in and sent.

## **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 2024 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](#) and please do contact us at [data@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:data@southwark.anglican.org) if you have any queries.

## **Energy Footprint Tool**

[The Energy Footprint tool](#) is open for churches to submit their 2024 energy data. Submissions can be made through the Parish Returns website, until the tool closes on the 30th June.

This tool calculates churches carbon footprints for the year – providing vital information for our work towards Net Zero Carbon.

To support our mission of safeguarding creation, we ask all churches complete the EFT so our Diocese can better understand emissions and plan for projects. Completion of the tool will also be required for applications towards the Net Zero Carbon grant schemes which are in the pipeline for this year.

Completing the tool is easier than you think! Contact our Diocesan Environmental Officer, Sophie Roberts, if you have any questions. Why not try and complete it whilst you still have last year's bills to hand?

## **Parish Support Fund**

We are very grateful for the parishes commitment to the Parish Support Fund (PSF). The PSF 2026 materials will be distributed digitally to you and your incumbent at the end of June 2025. We would be most grateful if you could share the materials with your PCC and include the discussion of your 2026 pledge in your PCC's

agenda between July and early September. This will allow you to submit your pledge by the submission date of noon on Friday 12 September 2025.

### **Parish Safeguarding Audits**

Parish Audits will be coming in the new year. These will be an opportunity for us at the Diocese to further build a comprehensive view of what safeguarding looks like across the Diocese. It is also a chance for yourselves to check in and see where you are with safeguarding as a parish.

This is something that will be carried out primarily by your Incumbent and Parish Safeguarding Officer but that the PCC may wish to feed into. More information will follow later in the New Year.

### **Church Buildings; the DAC; Quinquennial Inspections**

Along with Incumbents, Churchwardens and others, PCC Secretaries may find themselves involved in the PCC's tasks of caring for their church buildings and applying for faculties, or 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, along with others such as: the church's appointed Quinquennial Inspector (usually an Architect); the Diocesan Registry; and the PCC's insurance company. For churches whose Quinquennial Inspection is due in 2025, Katie Jenner (Assistant DAC Secretary) will be emailing PCCs in the early New Year with details of how to arrange this. To contact Katie, or Luke Tatam (DAC Secretary), for example regarding Quinquennial Inspections queries or for commencing faculty applications, please use the email address [DAC@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:DAC@southwark.anglican.org)

### **Funding and grants**

[The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme](#) for historic church buildings is currently only confirmed until 31st March 2025, and is at risk of being brought to an end.

The loss of the Scheme would mean that parishes could no longer obtain a grant equivalent to the VAT paid, and overall costs for building-works would increase by 20%. There is an ongoing media campaign to advocate for the Scheme's continuation, by MPs and Bishops amongst others. However, it would add considerable weight if the individual views of those responsible for local places of worship are heard. PCCs are asked to consider urgently writing to their local MPs and to the Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), to ask for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme to be extended beyond March. In the meantime, parishes with listed church buildings are strongly advised to submit any claims to the [Scheme](#) as soon as possible.

The Minor Repairs & Improvements (MR&I) Grants Fund has re-opened for applications again this year. Part of the Archbishops' Council 'Buildings for Mission: Support for Churches' project, this scheme allows PCCs to apply for grants that will help to fund stand-alone small-scale works (minor repairs and improvements) to church buildings. The scheme focuses on assisting parishes to promptly implement urgent minor repair projects, particularly 'stitch in time' works that can save money in the long term by avoiding deterioration and acting in a timely way before potential costs rise further. Some categories of minor improvement works are also eligible, where demonstrably essential to sustaining worship and mission. Routine maintenance (including cleaning, inspections and servicing) is not eligible, and neither is any work covered by insurance. Works cannot start until after a grant offer has been made. For 2025, decisions on awarding grants will be taken on a monthly basis between January and July. Grant applications need to have been submitted (along with necessary supporting documentation) by the end of the preceding month: the last deadline in 2025 is therefore 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025. Applications are made by completing the online form and emailing the supporting documentation. The grant-funded works will then need to have been completed by the end of the year. For any queries about the scheme, or to access further guidance and the online form, please contact [churchbuildinggrants@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:churchbuildinggrants@southwark.anglican.org)

### **A Season for Lay Ministries**

This year Bishop Christopher is calling the Diocese to celebrate our Lay Ministers at Candlemas on Sunday 2 February. He is delighted that so many people are involved in sharing God's Good News with those around

them and working with others in their churches and communities to show God's love to all. He asks that all our churches celebrate on this day our lay ministers Licensed, Commissioned and Affirmed and all those who serve on our PCCs, at the altar, offer hospitality or work to help to keep the church running smoothly. Watch out for videos, published by our Comms Team, of people involved in lay ministry and hear their stories of finding their vocations and how it feels to be involved in ministry. There will be resources for services to be used on 2 February or Sundays around it and a service outline. These can be found on the Diocesan website. We are also providing people who can preach at your church at Candlemas or on a Sunday near to it. If you would like a preacher to join you, please contact Helen Medland on [helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org).

Do encourage people to come to the Lay Ministry Taster Day on Saturday 28 January at Trinity House where the speaker will be the Revd Canon Derek Walmsley author of *All are Called*. This will provide an opportunity to explore various ministries that are available across the Diocese and how to become involved in them.

## **Parish Bible Studies**

Following the launch of the Southwark Anti Racism Charter (ARC), we are very pleased that we will soon be able to share an ARC Parish Bible study resource for use within your parishes. We hope that this will further support your exploration and *implementation* of the key principles of the ARC.

This Bible study programme consists of four sessions, designed to help parishes think about how to embed the principles of the Diocesan Anti Racism Charter in their daily discipleship and local context.

The first three sessions in the booklet focus on one of the key principles of the ARC and the fourth will help people consider what actions they may take to challenge racial injustice. The resource is designed to be used in small groups but can also be used individually.

A copy of the resource will be sent to all Incumbents in the coming weeks and will also be made available on the Diocesan website.

If you have any queries or would like to request printed copies, please contact our Diocesan Racial Justice Development Officer Weisi Dennis at [weisi.dennis@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:weisi.dennis@southwark.anglican.org)

We would also like to remind you that Racial Justice Sunday will be on Sunday 9th February 2025, and there will be resources for services on the Diocesan website.

## **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 supporting projects that help children and young people recover from trauma and which encourage their mental wellbeing. We are supporting this type of work in our Link Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East and in our Link Dioceses of Central Zimbabwe, Manicaland, Masvingo and Matabeleland in Zimbabwe.

Look out for materials on how you and your church can be involved on the Diocesan website at [here](#).

## **Parish Support**

As always you are more than welcome to contact Charlie Hudson-Beddows ([Charles.Hudson-Beddows@southwark.anglican.org](mailto: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

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Kingston Episcopal Area Office (temporarily) Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough High Street, London SE1 1HW Tel: 020 8545 2440

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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](http://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](http://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 2025 and thank you very much for all that you do.

Yours Sincerely



Nicola Thomas  
Diocesan Secretary