



DIOCESAN SYNOD SYNOD QUESTIONS NOTICE PAPER

Question 1

Q The Revd Hugo Foxwood [Kingston Deanery]

We'd like to thank the investment committee for all their hard work and expertise in moving our investments to those that reflect the ethical and environmental considerations that Synod previously raised. We're grateful that they've disclosed the names of the organisations managing the funds, but in the interests of transparency please could they also detail the specific funds that we're invested in?

A Mark Rhodes

The Diocese appointed two investment managers, Cazenove and Rathbones. We are only invested in the funds of one of these managers - the Cazenove Sustainable Multi Asset Fund. With Rathbones they run a discretionary portfolio for us, in line with the Diocesan Synod motion on divestment and the Ethical Investing Guidelines of the Church of England.

Question 2

Q The Revd Dr Charlie Bell [Lambeth North Deanery]

What provision exists to ensure that clergy offered Overseas Permission to Officiate within the diocese are sufficiently trained and prepared to exercise ministry in the Church of England?

A Bishop of Southwark

Clergy whose orders are regulated by the Overseas and other Clergy (Ministry and Ordination) Measure 1967 are required to attend a Ministry Division candidates panel before licensing. Overseas candidates seeking to minister in Southwark are put in contact with our Vocations team to discern whether a Candidates Panel is appropriate and, if it is, to prepare for it. I have been prepared to sponsor candidates for Overseas Permission To Officiate (OPTO) - and the Archbishop has been prepared to issue OPTO – so that I might give them PTO to work under the supervision of a parish priest as part of this wider process of discernment with the Vocations team in advance of a Candidates Panel. Clergy who are recommended by a Candidates Panel may then be licensed to a non-stipendiary training curacy, the length and content of which is determined by their previous experience and any recommendations from the Panel.

There are also OPTO arrangements for visiting clergy making visits of under two weeks (including bishops who are not exercising episcopal functions) and who are not ministering unattended. This is called 'OPTO light' and may be issued after a pro forma letter of good standing has been received for their bishop (or archbishop in the case of episcopal applicants). The Provincial Registrar is copied in to all permissions issued this way.

Question 3

Q The Revd Dr Charlie Bell [Lambeth North Deanery]

Has the Bishop considered issuing guidance, as have been the case in some dioceses, on the appropriate limits on ministry for ordained persons without PTO in churches, to ensure that Safeguarding is not compromised by their being mistaken for authorised clergy?

A Bishop of Southwark

Canon C8 is clear that 'A minister duly ordained priest or deacon ... may officiate in any place only after the minister has received authority to do so from the bishop of the diocese or other the Ordinary of the place'. The Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016 imposed a duty of 'due regard' upon all clergy. Clergy who are not authorised by PTO or by licence should not be ministering (this includes robing at services). Clergy who minister without authorisation open themselves to misconduct proceedings under both the current Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 and the Clergy Conduct Measure 2025 which will succeed it. Whether a clergyperson is authorised can be checked on the National Register of Clergy, which is updated every 24 hours, here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/national-register-clergy>

Question 4

Q Rosemary Wilson [Tooting Deanery]

Given the welcomed increase in clergy stipends, pensions and other clergy costs, I am grateful that the recently published PSF indicative costs for 2026 only show a 5.7% increase on 2025. What do you anticipate the monetary impact to be on future PSF requests, and what is the current plan for managing the financial impact of this increase going forwards?

A Gabby Parikh

The significant rise to the 2026 pledge request resulted from the invitation by Archbishops' Council for dioceses to increase incumbent clergy stipends to £34,950. This is a 10.3% rise for Southwark and stipends represent 50% of our costs. The Archbishops' Council has adopted a policy of setting the National Stipend Benchmark and the National Minimum Stipend to track inflation in future, subject to annual review and a cap of 5% and this will limit future rises. However, should National Insurance increase, as in the 2024 Autumn statement, then DCT and Diocesan will need to decide, as last year, how to manage the budget.

We recognise that the financial impact of the increased cost falls on personal, parish and diocesan finances and are very grateful for people's generosity and commitment to the PSF. The Diocese is committed to parish ministry, supporting growth through the Diocesan investment programme and to expand and resource parish ministry e.g. through missional initiatives and fundraisers supporting parish grants. At Diocesan level there are some areas, such as the new Ministry Training Fund, where the central church still apportions the cost but remaining expenditure is closely controlled. Careful stewardship of our resources is at the heart of our staff values. The staff team are working with Bishop's Staff, the Policy and Finance committee and Diocesan Council of Trustees to look strategically at our finances and examine possible cost savings and in the light of the Church Commissioners Diocesan Finance Review and plan for a sustainable future for parishes and the Diocese.

Question 5

Q **Grahame Woods [Charlton Deanery]**

What is the process for supporting the vocational pathways of women, who attend a church or Bishop's Mission Orders which does not recognise the ordination of women?

A **The Revd Canon Jeremy Clark-King**

The Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience; we also recognise that those who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures. A woman wishing to discern a vocation to ordained ministry should first discuss that with her incumbent. If that incumbent is unwilling, on grounds of her gender, to support her, then the expectation is that provision should be made for her to be able to speak with a priest who can support her in her discernment. We have a Dean of Women's Ministry in each area who can be contacted if the parish clergy do not know who they might contact. And, of course, the Vocations Team are always ready to speak with people.

The above is written into the agreement creating a BMO and is a condition of granting the BMO.

Question 6

Q **Grahame Woods [Charlton Deanery]**

Who are the patrons of the parishes with Bishops Mission Orders in the Diocese, and confirm how many patrons were consulted prior to the establishment of a Bishop's Mission Order?

A **The Revd Will Cookson**

Parishes who have Bishop's Mission Orders associated with them have varying patrons. The patron(s) for a particular benefice can be found on the [Diocesan website](#).

There is a duty on the bishop to carry out consultations with the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, and with people who the bishop considers to have a "significant interest" in the proposed BMO. Patrons are deemed to have "an interest" but it is for the bishop to consider whether the patron has a "significant interest", having regard to the objectives of the mission initiative among other circumstances.

Our practice has been to consult with the incumbents of benefices covered by the BMO, and we believe that this complies with the requirement under the Mission and Pastoral Measure. We leave it for the incumbents as to whether they wish to carry out their own consultation with others to help frame their feedback to us on a proposed BMO. In practice, it varies from BMO to BMO as to the people they wish to involve, but usually this involves at least their PCC and can include the Patron(s) of the parish.

Question 7

Q **Adrian Greenwood [Bermondsey & Rotherhithe Deanery]**

How many parishes have submitted their Electoral Roll Certificates for 2025? What plans are there to ensure that all parishes do this on a timely basis? And what can Diocesan Synod members do to support such plans? What plans are there to analyse the 2025 figures by comparing and contrasting them with the returns for 2024 (the preceding year) and 2019 (the last time there was a complete revision)?

A Nicola Thomas

This is a difficult question to answer accurately as combined Electoral Rolls are sent from a parish with multiple churches, and conversely multiple church can send in a combined roll. We maintain a list of all possible combinations and log rolls accordingly when they are received.

As of Wednesday 09 July 2025 220 responses have been received.

Reminders have been sent to parishes, and a further one (Monday 7 July) notifying them of the deadlines with the forms re-attached for ease. We have reminded attendees at various meetings, including the PCC Secretaries' Conference, and we will ask Deanery Secretaries and Lay Chairs in the next week to support us in following up the forms. We will begin calling parishes a week after that.

Parishes were informed of the need to undertake a full revision of the Electoral Roll in the Diocesan Secretary's New Year Letter, which included a new version of the date calculator tool for a full revision, taking into account of differing deadlines for a full revision. Documents and instructions are on the website and full support has been given by the Secretariat. We would be grateful if Synod members could reiterate the importance of receiving this information at their deaneries, and in their parishes.

Electoral Rolls are included within diocesan data dashboards, and form part of any strategic outlook in parishes as well as a tool for wider strategy. We will analyse this information, along with other indicators of church growth and attendance as we move to implement Southwark Vision.

Question 8

Q Adrian Greenwood [Bermondsey & Rotherhithe Deanery]

What is the Diocesan policy for letting properties, including parsonages, and how does that link to the Property Strategy in terms of ensuring that they are available for mission and ministry on a timely basis?

A Nicola Thomas

Diocesan Policy in relation to vacant parsonages, is to use the parsonage for rental until a new incumbent is appointed in order to make best use of our properties to support mission and ministry, as approved in the [Property Strategy](#). The standard term is for a 12 month letting with a six month break clause.

Question 9

Q Wendy Foreman [Charlton Deanery]

What consideration is given to the views of the incumbent and congregation of a parish, if any, prior to the creation or renewal of a Bishop's Mission Order?

A The Revd Will Cookson

The answer to question 6 talks about who is consulted with prior to the creation or renewal of a BMO. The Bishop listens closely to all the views expressed in the consultation to give him a considered view of the proposal allowing him to make a decision on its merits.

Question 10

Q The Revd Anneal Appadoo [Reigate Deanery]

Replying on his own account and as a member of the House of Bishops, please could the Bishop of Southwark, answer the following, respecting necessary levels of confidentiality in relation to the continuing deliberations of the House of Bishops.

In July 2024, meeting in York, General Synod formally passed a Motion concerning the PLF process, in the following terms:

That this Synod:

- *support the overall proposal and timetable set out in GS 2358;*
- *request that the House of Bishops, with the advice of the LLF working groups:*

i. revise the Pastoral Guidance to remove restrictions on the use of PLF in 'standalone' services alongside the introduction of an arrangement to register for Pastoral Reassurance;

ii. establish the basis for the provision of Pastoral Reassurance through a House of Bishops' Statement and Code of Practice which provides for the delegation of some specific and defined episcopal ministry, and which is overseen by an Independent Review Panel;

iii. report to this Synod at its February 2025 group of sessions on the further theological work carried out under the auspices of the Faith and Order Commission around the nature of doctrine, particularly as it relates to the doctrine of marriage and the question of clergy in same-sex civil marriages. This work to be appropriately budgeted and resourced by the Archbishops' Council in terms of theological advice, travel and meeting costs in order to increase the likelihood of meeting the timescales as set out in GS 2358.

- *Agree that taken together the Pastoral Guidance, the Bishop's Statement and Code of Practice for pastoral provision will replace Issues in Human Sexuality.*
- *Agree for the arrangements for Pastoral Reassurance to be regularly monitored over a period of at least three years before being formally reviewed by General Synod.'*

Please can the Bishop confirm that the PLF discussions at Southwark Diocesan Synod on 10th July are being held under all the aspects of this Motion, and specifically that nothing substantial has changed around the provision of Pastoral Reassurance with regard to the wish for defined and specific delegation of episcopal ministry as a clear part of the overall package?

If this is not the case, could the Synod be told exactly what form of provision of Pastoral Reassurance is being discussed by the House of Bishops, and whether that provision has been approved by the central PLF Programme Board and House of Bishops?

A Bishop of Southwark

The proposals for Pastoral Reassurance discussed in the January and May meetings of the House of Bishops and the April College of Bishops are based on arrangements for the delegation of specific areas of episcopal ministry under a code of practice. These draft proposals were drawn together by the LLF Programme Board and remain in development. The bishops have asked for further considerations to be made on some key theological points and given feedback on areas of concern. Discussions to test any particular approach to Pastoral Reassurance are undertaken in reference to the range of options outlined in Annex F of GS 2328. An update of the draft proposals is expected over the summer. The LLF Programme Board is chaired by the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell. It was formed in 2024 to support the Lead Bishop by collectively monitoring and overseeing the process of developing proposals around work initiated by the February 2023 General Synod motion. This includes receiving and bringing together proposals developed through the LLF Working Groups. The Board is responsible for providing the House of Bishops with clear integrated proposals

that stem from this work. The House of Bishops, and the General Synod are the governance bodies that decide on the formal basis and implementation of any proposals. In developing these, the Programme Board will also receive and consider feedback from wider stakeholders and assess any implications for the emerging proposals.

Question 11

Q The Revd Anneal Appadoo [Reigate Deanery]

In the Report of the Faith and Order Commission to the February Group of Sessions of General Synod 2025, identified as GS MISC 1406, Para 139 opens with the words:

- ... it is a failure of Christian love for one side to declare what kind of disagreement is being experienced by the other’.
- Later in Para 139, it continues ‘To deny that LLF is a first- or second-order disagreement simply on the basis that the majority assert that it is not (in spite what the dissenting minority say) is unkind or even oppressive’

Does the Bishop accept this advice as part of what it means to ‘speak well of one another’ and please can he confirm that the presentation and discussions at Diocesan Synod on 10th July 2025 will proceed on the basis that the spirit of this advice will be honoured?.

Will the Bishop continue to lead the Diocese so that in all things this approach is upheld?

A Bishop of Southwark

GS MISC 1406 is a 118 page document produced by the Faith and Order Commission ‘at the request of the House of Bishops ... to be an aid to theological reflection’ (para. 1). It is not a formal FOAC report and was published ‘not as an authoritative statement on FAOC’s fully considered view, but (as it is) a working group paper’ (para. 36). Everyone who holds my licence makes the following the Declaration of Assent to the following:

‘The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons’.

This is what I hold fast to and I am glad that creedal orthodoxy and a commitment to speaking well of each other – which I have made a central part of my episcopal teaching – helps us to define and understand our existing polity within the Church of England and this Diocese. We live with great diversity in this Diocese which I see as God’s gift and blessing and it is my duty as Diocesan Bishop to uphold the spectrum of conscience and conviction when held in good faith.

Question 12

Q The Revd Martin Hislop [Kingston Deanery]

In light of the increasing persecution of Christians, especially in Syria and Northern Nigeria, what action is the Diocese planning to highlight these atrocities and pressure the UK Government to be more proactive in defending our brothers and sisters?

A Bishop of Southwark

As a patron of the charity *Embrace the Middle East* I visited Syria during the civil war in May of 2014 for the enthronement of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch, His Holiness Mor Ignatius Aphrem II, just outside Damascus. On 11 February this year, I spoke at an event in Parliament to commemorate the 21 Libya martyrs of whom 20 were Egyptian Copts. All 21 refused to deny Jesus and were beheaded.

On Boxing Day 2018, the then Foreign Secretary announced an independent review of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office support for Persecuted Christians, to be led by the then Bishop of Truro. I and the Bishop of Clifton appeared before the review in June 2019 to speak to the joint submission by the Archbishops of Canterbury and Westminster. The Government accepted all the recommendations of the Bishop Mounstephen's report. <https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/report/> For example, courses continue to this day on encouraging religious literacy amongst the staff of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office staff, and the Government's latest Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief is David Smith MP. Sally Langrish is the FCDO Director General for Legal Services and the Management Board's champion for Freedom of Religion and Belief. The Government co-sponsored a UN resolution to commemorate victims of acts of violence based on religion in 2019 and that day falls on 22 August. The House of Commons last debated the persecution of Christians on 8 April 2025 and I recently tabled a question in the House of Lords on the bombing of the Church of the Prophet Elias in Damascus.

The Revd Sue Thomas takes forward Southwark Diocese's involvement in UKForB Forum and reports regularly to the Diocesan Bishop, having attended meetings since the Forum's inception when Bishop Philip Mounstephen was first Chair in 2019. The Forum brings together government representatives, NGOs, and faith organisations to discuss live issues of global persecution, for all faiths, and those of no belief. It is an important space for engagement. The January 2025 meeting was held at the FCDO with David Smith MP, new Special Envoy on ForRB.

There are a number of nondenominational organisations active in support of the Persecuted Church. These include Open Doors UK, Release International, and Christian Solidarity Worldwide. There is also the Roman Catholic Aid to the Church in Need. The former often highlight the international day of prayer for Christians undergoing persecution on the first Sunday in November, whereas Aid to the Church in Need has Red Wednesday in November to the same purpose. Hitherto, both Westminster Cathedral and Westminster Abbey have been lit up in red on this day. Details are on the Church of England website. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/views/international-religious-freedom> I commend any of the above organisations to those wishing to offer practical support to the Persecuted Church.

The General Synod has debated persecution several times, most recently in 2022 when I spoke on a motion that came from the Diocese of Lichfield and last year on a motion from the Diocese of London. Dioceses tend to focus on areas of the world where they have links. The Diocese of Coventry is linked to the Syrian Orthodox Church and the Dioceses of Guildford and Liverpool to the Anglican Church in Nigeria. We are linked to dioceses in Zimbabwe and to the Diocese of Jerusalem and regularly draw attention to what is happening in these places.