



**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)

29 January 2026

Dear Colleagues,

In advance of this annual request for information and briefing on the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM), review 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.

### **PCC Secretaries' Handbook**

The PCC Secretaries' Handbook is available on our [website](http://www.southwark.anglican.org) 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). Updates to the handbook can be found in the errata [online](http://www.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 two years of conference dates have been confirmed. These will be held on:

- 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 2026**.

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 form titled "APCM Timetable" with the subtitle "Annual Parochial Church Meeting Timetable Calculator for a year in which an existing Electoral Roll is being revised". It features a date input field labeled "Enter APCM date" with a placeholder "dd / mm / yyyy". Below this, there are three rows of tasks with corresponding date input fields: "Revision of roll notice posted by must be at least 14 days before revision starts" and "and not later than"; "Notice of APCM posted on or by the OUTSIDE of the church door" and "notice must be in place for **two** Sundays before APCM"; and "Complete revised roll and post on or by the church door by" and "but not before". A note at the bottom states: "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". The footer identifies it as a tool for the "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 2026 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 2026**, as outlined in the Church Representation Rules 2025. 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.

## Deanery Synod Elections

These take place every three years and are due to take place at the APCMs this year. This year, 2026 Deanery Synod members will be electing General Synod members.

When conducting the elections at your APCMs please refer to the scheme table below, as agreed at Diocesan Synod in December 2025, for how many Deanery Synod representatives you can elect:

Total Electoral Roll*	Number of Lay Representatives to Deanery Synod
25 or fewer	1
26 – 75	2
76 – 125	3
126 – 200	4
201 – 300	5
301 – 400	6
401 – 600	7
601 upwards	8

*\*Total Electoral Roll numbers for a parish or individual church electoral roll numbers for multi-church parish at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025*

*The Church Representation Rules require that you use the electoral roll number from 2025 not 2026 if you are unsure of your electoral roll number for 2025 please contact [governance@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:governance@southwark.anglican.org)*

An election leaflet accompanies this letter, and copies will be sent to parishes, to encourage membership to deanery synods. We especially welcome proposals from younger members of your congregations and the Diocesan Synod, in November 2022, “encourages all PCCs and APCMs, having regard to the Diocesan Anti-Racism Charter, to identify suitably qualified people of UKME/GM Heritage as candidates for election as their lay representatives on Deanery Synod.”

In addition, the Diocesan Synod “encourages all PCCs and APCMs, in the light of their particular context, to consider the use of the power contained in the Church Representation Rules 2025, to set limits on the number of consecutive terms that their elected lay members may serve on Deanery Synod, whilst recognising the importance of continuity, experience and the role of Deaneries in advancing the Southwark Vision.”

A copy of the Roles of Deaneries and Rules and Constitution of Deanery Synods can be found on the [website here](#).

## General Synod Elections

These take place in 2026 as well! General Synod is the National Assembly of the Church of England. It considers and approves legislation affecting the whole of the Church of England, formulates new forms of worship, debates matters of national and international importance, and approves the annual budget for the work of the Church at national level. It is therefore a bit like the Church’s Parliament and elections to it are for the next five-year term. Further details of this will be sent to Deanery Secretaries in due course. Nominations of candidates to General Synod will be around July/August. Voting will be in September/October, and the new General Synod will meet in November 2026.

## 2025 Statistics for Mission & October Count

The Online Parish Returns System which we use for capturing church membership data (also known as ‘Statistics for Mission’ or ‘congregational count’), is now open and is ready to accept data for 2025 including the ‘October Count’. The system remains open until 31 January 2026.

We encourage Parishes to complete the 2025 Statistics for Mission returns and please do contact the Diocesan Data team at [data@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:data@southwark.anglican.org) if you have any queries or need help accessing the form.

### Energy Footprint Tool

The [Energy Footprint Tool](#) is now open for churches to submit 2025 energy bill data through the Parish Returns website and will close on **30 June**. Thank you to everyone who completed it last year – we achieved a record returns rate of **75%** of churches, up from 58% the previous year. This has been vital in building a clearer picture of our carbon emissions and planning support to help reduce them.

To support our collective mission of safeguarding creation, we ask all churches to complete the EFT annually to calculate their carbon footprint. The tool can help you track and identify potential ways to reduce energy usage in your church, and provides vital information for the wider national and diocesan work towards Net Zero Carbon. Completing the tool will also be required for applications towards the Net Zero Carbon grant schemes which are in the pipeline for this year.

We recommend completing it early while last year's bills are still to hand. Please feel free to reach out to our Diocesan Environment Officer, Sophie Roberts, if you need any assistance: [sophie.roberts@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:sophie.roberts@southwark.anglican.org).

### Parish Support Fund

We are very grateful for parishes' commitment to the Parish Support Fund (PSF). The PSF 2027 materials will be distributed digitally to you and your incumbent at the end of June 2026. We would be most grateful if you could share the materials with your PCC and include the discussion of your 2027 pledge in your PCC's agenda between July and early September. This will allow you to submit your pledge by the submission date of midnight of Monday 14 September 2026.

### Serious Incident Reporting

The members of PCCs, as charity trustees, are responsible for reporting all Serious Incidents to the Charity Commission in a timely manner and in accordance [with Charity Commission guidance](#). In practice, and as advised by the National Safeguarding Team, the PCC trustees delegate the reporting of Serious *Safeguarding* Incidents to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, who will also provide support in helping parishes to understand reporting thresholds and what must be reported to the Charity Commission. Parishes were asked to pass formal delegation resolutions in 2019, which will need to be renewed by the PCC. Work is planned to revisit the current delegations in place with parishes shortly to ensure that up to date delegations are in place, and that PCCs understand requirements to discharge their lawful duties in reporting to the Charity Commission within our safeguarding processes.

### 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 2026, 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 for historic church buildings – Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme for historic church buildings is currently only confirmed for this current financial year. Parishes with listed church buildings are strongly advised to submit any claims to the Scheme as soon as possible. Please note that, in a change to the rules for the 2025/26 financial year, there is a new annual cap of £25,000 per place of worship, and the scheme has a reduced budget. The 2025/26 Scheme will close when the £23m budget has been reached, or on 31 March 2026, whichever is sooner. The government scheme website provides a funding tracker which is updated fortnightly, to indicate remaining

funds (approximately); it is not however a guarantee that claims will be paid. As of 13 January 2026, there is £5.5m still available, but the remainder of the £23m budget for the financial year (i.e. £17.5m) has already been used or is in the process of being allocated to grant-claimants.

A decision on the future of the Scheme has not yet been announced by the Government (Department of Culture, Media and Sport), but its loss would mean that eligible parishes could no longer obtain a grant equivalent to the VAT paid, and overall costs for their building-works would increase by 20%. There is an ongoing media campaign to advocate for the Scheme's continuation, by MPs and Bishops alongside charities, partner organisations, and local churches amongst others. PCCs may wish to consider writing to their local MPs and to the Secretary of State at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), to add weight by the individual views of those responsible for local places of worship are heard.

<https://listed-places-of-worship-grant.dcms.gov.uk/>

## **The Church of England revised Records Retention Schedule**

We are pleased to announce that the revised Record Retention Schedule is now published and is available on the Church of England website on the following page:

[Records and Information Management | The Church of England](#)

You will notice that the former Records Retention Policy is now called the Records Retention Schedule. It no longer has the primary record holder column as only few records were just the responsibility of one church body, so the column is rather redundant. We recommend downloading a new copy each time you need to use the Records Retention Schedule as there are further changes expected.

## **A Season for Lay Ministries**

This year, Bishop Christopher is calling the Diocese to celebrate our Lay Ministers at Candlemas on Sunday 1 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 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 on this day. There are resources for services to be used on 1 February or Sundays around it and a service outline. These can be found on the Diocesan website [here](#). During February and indeed any time that you are able to celebrate the laity in your parish, we are happy to be able to offer people to come and preach at your Sunday service and encourage others to take part in Lay Ministry too. If you would like to invite someone on 1 February, throughout February, or later in the year please contact Helen Medland in the Department of Discipleship, Lay Ministry and Continuing Ministerial Education on [helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:helen.medland@southwark.anglican.org)

Do encourage people to come to Trinity House and find out more about the different types of ministries including Pastoral, Reader, Pioneer, Church Army and Children and Young People. For more information and to book your place, email [learning@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:learning@southwark.anglican.org)

## **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 centre particularly on supporting projects that focus on the work of schools that will help benefit children and young people to flourish. We are supporting this type of work in our Link Diocese of Jerusalem 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 [here](#).

## **Parish Support**

As always you are more than welcome to contact Charlie, Maia or Henry ([governance@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:governance@southwark.anglican.org)) on any matter that you need help with. They will be able to forward your query onto the right people even if it's not something they can answer themselves.

## **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 Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough Tel: 020 8545 2440  
High Street,  
London SE1 1HW

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Woolwich Episcopal Area Office Trinity House, 4 Chapel Court, Borough Tel: 020 7939 9413  
High Street,  
London SE1 1HW

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* who 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 2026 and thank you very much for all that you do.

Yours Sincerely



Nicola Thomas  
Diocesan Secretary