The Diocese of Southwark

DIOCESAN SYNOD
SYNOD QUESTIONS NOTICE PAPER

Question 1

Q Christopher Parker [Croydon Addington Deanery]

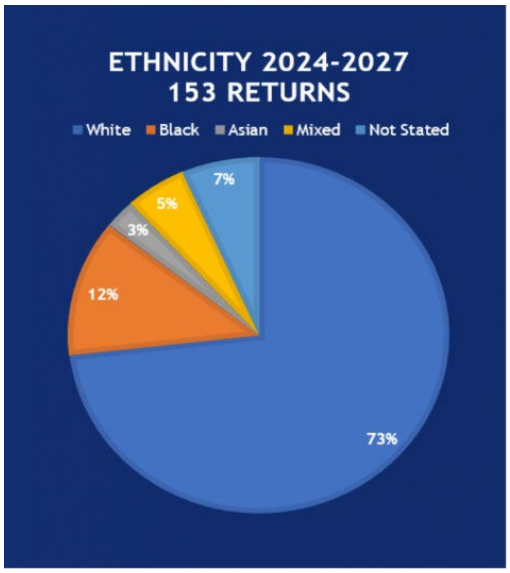
Slide 56 on the last Diocesan Synod Summary (March '25) shows the current data of the Ethnic composition of members of the current diocesan synod. Does the diocese have data on the ethnic composition of its congregations and on the population at large within the Diocese. If so, please can this ethnicity data be presented in a similar format to slide 56 so that comparisons can be made?

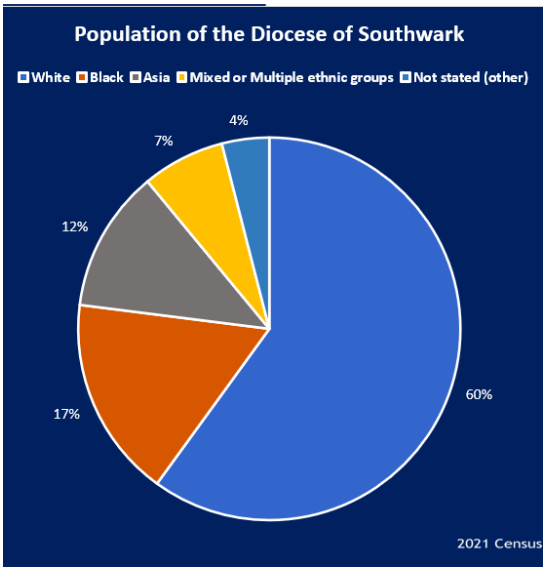
A Diocesan Secretary

The Diocese of Southwark does not collect ethnicity data on congregations. However, we do have ethnicity data for the diocese as a whole and for the population living within each parish.

A comparable chart for the population of the Diocese of Southwark (from the March 2021 census data) is shown below, to the right of the chart from the March 2025 Synod meeting that you refer to.

Parish population data on ethnicity can be found here [ArcGIS - Church of England parish map]





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Question 2

Q Christopher Parker [Croydon Addington Deanery]

Please give a summary of the triaging process to decide the priority of investigations, for example, are reports of possible clergy and diocesan staff malpractice given priority over reports of concerns about congregational members and cases involving vulnerable people who are casual visitors to a church?

A Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Guidance and Safeguarding Code of Practice is used to assess and determine priority responses when managing safeguarding cases. The overriding principle of the code is that the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults is paramount. Safeguarding e-manual | The Church of England

The triage process requires that we prioritise cases that pose the greater risk of harm or require statutory service intervention.

Question 3

Q Christopher Parker [Croydon Addington Deanery]

Is there a timeline or deadlines in place to ensure that investigations are kept on track, and are those targets met?

A Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

Safeguarding Case Management Groups (SCMGs) are convened as the forum to manage risk and oversee, plan and agree risk management mitigations and referrals.

The Safeguarding Advisor/Officer must decide when to convene the initial SCMG meeting based on the urgency and individual circumstances of a case. The guidance provides this is held no later than ten working days after receiving the allegation. Cases may be complex with factors that impact on this target and so may be delayed on agreement of the Safeguarding Advisor/Officer and the Chair if there are good reasons to do so. Updates on the status of the investigation should be provided to the SCMG every six weeks.

The vast majority of SCMGs are held on time, though issues of complexity (that require further information) or statutory investigations (police or social care) may delay or cause our processes to be paused at their request.

Question 4

Q Christopher Parker [Croydon Addington Deanery]

Please provide an average for the full cost, per priest, to the Diocese of Southwark per annum last financial year breaking down the cost into stipend, housing, pension, training, and diocesan support, and any other relevant costs, and make an estimate of the same, per priest, for the forthcoming financial year, with a similar breakdown.

A Mark Rhodes & Gabby Parikh

Our Shared Costs of Ministry		2026 costs	2025 costs	% Change 2026/2025
Indicative costs for a church with one priest are		**£94,400**	**£89,300**	↑ 5.7%
	**Stipend, NI and pension**	**£46,800**	**£42,000**	↑ 11%
	**Ministry housing** Including minor repairs, rentals, water rates and council tax	**£12,600**	**£11,800**	↑ 7%
	**Training and other ministry support** Training including ordinands, vocations and mission teams. This includes our contribution to the National Ministry Training Fund Curates Stipends and support	**£19,300** £9,700 £9,600	**£18,900** £9,200 £9,700	↑ 2%
	**Enabling and Support Functions** Episcopal Area Teams Parish Support, HR, DAC, IT and Governance Grants to Board of Education and Welcare Communications (*incl The Bridge Newspaper*) Safeguarding Contributions to National Church *(If the contributions to National Church had continued in 2026 the Enabling functions costs would have increased by 5%)*	**£15,700** £1.700 £8,900 £1,900 £1,300 £1,900 -	**£16,600** £1,600 £8,400 £1,900 £1,100 £1,700 £1,900	↓ 5%
Please note, In addition, in 2026 a further £3.3m of restricted grants from CofE Strategic Development Fund and the Diocesan Investment Programme will be spent on parish projects				

Each year we provide the indicative costs of ministry for one priest in a church in the Diocese of Southwark in the Parish Support Fund booklet. These are emailed to incumbents, PCC secretaries and treasurers and we ask them to share the information with their PCCs. You can find the booklet on our , website @ Parish Support Fund - The Diocese of Southwark. These calculations are based on the budgets and forward projections.

Question 5

Q The Rev'd Cécile Schnyder [Wandsworth Deanery]

To celebrate the ten year anniversary of the Parish Share Fund, could the Diocesan Board of Finance provide Synod with a full disclosure of PSF payments across the diocese over the last 10 years, including both the totals received from all parishes and the specific totals contributed by BMO (Bishop's Mission Order) churches? In addition, could the Board clarify how these figures are monitored and what proportion of overall diocesan income they represent? Sharing these figures would introduce transparency and greater accountability to one another across the diocese, and enable us to see whether those in areas of greatest need are benefiting, and how well individual parishes are moving towards becoming sustainable.

A Gabby Parikh

The total collections from the Parish Support Fund (PSF) are disclosed in the annual accounts each year analysed between current year receipts and prior year receipts. The details of pledge payments, collection rates and PSF pledges as a % of overall Diocesan Income are summarised overleaf for the years 2016-2024.

We do not disclose parishes' or BMOs' separate contributions as all parishes make their pledge based on their own circumstances. We do share local data with deaneries where we hope there is a greater understanding of each parish's circumstances and opportunity for discussion, support and challenge. This promotes a balance between transparency and accountability. The principles of the Parish Support Fund are that no parish is excluded from support from the Diocese because they can offer a small pledge, and parishes with greater resources are encouraged to share their blessings generously to resource ministry in poorer areas.

There are extensive monitoring processes for the PSF. The Policy and Finance committee, a sub-committee of the Diocesan Council of Trustees (DCT) and the full DCT meeting receive monthly accounts and debate regular reports on the PSF. These presentations cover current year collections, the trajectory, and challenges of the new year's pledges, including the movements towards self-financing.

	Pledges paid per a/cs (current and past year pledges) £000s	Collection rates ie % of current year pledges paid	Overall Diocesan income per Annual Accounts	PSF as % of overall Diocesan income
2016	£16,166	99.0%	£24,949	65%
2017	£16,230	99.3%	£25,867	63%
2018	£16,448	99.6%	£27,147	61%
2019	£16,413	99.6%	£24,601	67%
2020	£15,980	96.7%	£25,278	63%
2021	£15,657	99.4%	£29,011	54%
2022	£15,947	99.4%	£26,120	61%
2023	£16,044	99.4%	£23,811	67%
2024	£16,408	99.7%	£28,536	57%

Sourced from Diocese of Southwark financial statements/annual review 2016-2024

Question 6

Q The Revd Jonathan Macy [Plumstead Deanery]

Based on the Electoral Roll returns received to date, how do the total numbers across the Diocese compare with those in 2024 and 2019 (the year of the last total revision), and from those returns received to date, how many parishes fall within 1 -25; how many from 26 – 75; how many from 76 – 125; how many from 126 – 200 and how many above 201?

A Deputy Diocesan Secretary

In 2019 the total electoral roll numbers submitted for the Diocese was 37,170, in 2024 27,706, and in 2025 30,562.

The returns for 2025 fall into the following categories (this includes non-returns where we record an electoral roll of one as default to ensure representation at Deanery Synod):

Number on electoral roll	Number per category
25 or fewer	26
26-75	132
76-125	94
126-200	47
201-300	16
301-400	6
401-600	1
600 or more	1

Question 7

Q The Revd Jonathan Macy [Plumstead Deanery]

How many parishes (and what percentage of the total) have submitted their Electoral Roll number after the total revision earlier this year, and what plans are there to chase up those parishes for whom no returns have yet been received, and what happens with their Deanery Synod places in 2026?

A Deputy Diocesan Secretary

As of Tuesday 11 December 2025, out of an expected 323 returns, we received 312 returns which is almost 98% return rate. This followed a considerable drive to contact parishes which included phone calls and email reminders to parish secretaries and parish clergy.

Parishes (PCCs) who have not returned their electoral roll forms are allocated a single space on Deanery Synod.

Question 8

Q Paul Waddell [Croydon Deanery]

What range of provision is there within the diocese to specifically look after the well-being of licensed lay ministers/readers?

A Wendy Robins

We very much hope that the relationship between the incumbent and Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) in the parish is one which helps the LLM to care for their Well-being. Their working agreement (which is reviewed annually) should help to balance the demands of ministry and their work and home life and regular meetings between them should further help with this.

The Diocesan Warden of Readers and the Area Wardens are in regular contact with Readers across the Diocese. If they are made aware of any needs for further training or coaching or counselling they would direct the Reader to the Director of Discipleship, Lay Ministry and Continuing Ministerial Education or the Assistant Director for Lay Ministry. Help is offered on a case by case basis. There are regular Area meetings for Readers and regular training sessions run as part of the Discipleship and Lay Ministry training offer. The Assistant Director of Lay Ministry is in regular contact with the other LLMs (Pioneer and Children and Youth ministers) they are also in regular contact with those in the Mission Team responsible for their ministries. The Lead for Pastoral Lay Ministry is in regular contact with the Licensed Pastoral Lay Ministers (LPLMs). They too would refer any needs to the Director or Assistant Director. Retreats have been offered for Lay Ministers. Women Licensed Lay Ministers can apply to the Gilmore Fund for help with well-being costs too.

Question 9

Q April Alexander [Tandridge Deanery]

Can the Diocese assure us that there will be hustings regardless of the number of candidates?

A Diocesan Secretary

Planning for the General Synod elections began in November with the National Church, in which hustings were discussed by many dioceses.

The presiding officer has confirmed that there is every intention to have hustings for the next set of elections. The form in which these are done has yet to be agreed upon. Options are for in-person hustings and/or online hustings.

The key consideration will be fairness as between the candidates. In order to maintain this fairness, the format will to some extent depend on the number of candidates for each election. Regard will be had to guidance on hustings which is due to be issued by the National Church as part of the next group of sessions of General Synod.

At present, whilst no final decision has been taken, it is unlikely that hustings will be arranged on a strict per-Area basis. This is because the Diocese operates as a single constituency, with every elector able to vote for every candidate, and there is no basis for restricting candidates to canvassing only in their own area.

Question 10

Q April Alexander [Tandridge Deanery]

Has the Diocese considered the possibility of having hustings by area even if the election is for the Diocese as a whole?

A Diocesan Secretary

Please see answer to question 9.

Question 11

Q Adrian Greenwood [Bermondsey & Rotherhithe]

Splitting the answers between inner London Boroughs, outer London Boroughs and East Surrey: In recent years how many CoE Primary Schools have had to close down or amalgamate with other schools due to falling rolls or other reasons and How many CoE Primary Schools are now facing falling rolls such as they might be at risk of closing down or amalgamating in the next few years?

A Roz Cordner (SDBE)

Since 2021, a total of six schools have closed across the diocese. All six are in the inner London boroughs of Southwark, Lambeth and Wandsworth. There have been 2 secondary school and 4 primary school closures.

In Southwark there have been two primary school closures, St John's CofE Walworth and St Mary Magdalene, Peckham.

Archbishop Tenison secondary school at the Oval was closed by SDBE MAT. St Martin in the Fields High school for girls was closed by its Stand-Alone Academy Trust.

Two Wandsworth primary schools have closed; Christ Church Battersea and St Anne's Wandsworth.

Falling rolls and the impact on finances was the main reason for each closure.

Most schools, even those that are oversubscribed, have seen a drop in applications, however, we do not anticipate any closures this academic year (up to 31 August 2026). We continue to work with closely with school leaders across the Diocese particularly those who have challenging finances and have more than 45% of places that are vacant. It is worth noting that some small schools have secure finances so we cannot make assumptions around viability based on numbers on roll.

There is no hard and fast measure to forecast potential closures and it is the local authority who has the ultimate power to consult to close a school. We continue to lobby to ensure that proportionality of CofE school places remains stable, recognising that across the Diocese, the majority of local authorities are reducing the overall size of school stock, ie dropping from a 3 form entry school to 2 form entry, or from 2 form entry to 1 form entry, before looking to close schools. As the larger schools tend to be maintained schools, proportionality of CofE primary schools has remined stable so far as we have more 1 form entry schools overall.

We are actively working with schools, local authorities, DfE to explore all school organisation options – including joining an SDBE Multi Academy Trust, strengthening local school-school partnerships, securing soft federations, reducing the pupil admission number (eg from 60 to 30 or from 30-15).

We are also reviewing the process with the Department for Education with regards to approval for amalgamations with other CofE schools as well as maintained local authority schools.

Longer term, it is anticipated that there will be further school closures, but at this stage it is difficult to give an exact number. Our Policy and Strategy Committee review pupil numbers at each meeting.

Question 12

Q Adrian Greenwood [Bermondsey & Rotherhithe]

In the year 2025 to date how much has been received by the DBF by way of rent for vicarages and other ministerial dwellings which have been rented out during a 'vacancy' (or for similar reasons); and how much has the DBF paid out to rent accommodation for ministers where suitable designated ministerial accommodation is not available for any reason?

A Diocesan Secretary

In 2025, to date, 10 Parsonages have been 'rented out' and 7 Parsonages have been rented for clergy.

In total, there have been 68 properties (Parsonage, Glebe and Board, not incl. land), rented out. There has been a total of 40 properties rented for clergy (curates, assistant, associates etc).

Income from rented properties is published in the Annual Report and in 2024 was £908,000. We do not separate in our accounts expenditure on rentals which forms part of our wider investment in maintaining clergy in parishes.

Question 13

Q The Revd David Ruddick [Merton]

The recent Independent Reviewer's report into the ministry capacity of the Bishops of Beverly and Ebbsfleet concluded that the Ebbsfleet ministry for complementarian evangelical parishes "is, in its current form, unsustainable in the medium and long term." The report noted that "the number of parishes that had passed resolutions and were under the care of the Bishop [of Ebbsfleet] was higher than for any of the Provincial Episcopal Visitors" and noted that "other parishes were seeking support and advice in increasing numbers." The recommendation of the report is that "some deputisable support should be put in place for the Bishop of Ebbsfleet" as "there is no resilience in the current provision and this presents a risk to the many parishes under his care."

What is the current situation with regard to provision for Ebbsfleet churches in the Diocese of Southwark, and how will plans for this ongoing provision take into account (i) the recommendations of the report and (ii) Bishop Christopher's retirement next year?

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/northern_province_ebbsfleet_final.pdf

A Bishop of Southwark

The Bishop of Southwark extends episcopal care through the Bishop of Ebbsfleet to six parishes where PCCs have made a declaration on grounds of theological conviction. The arrangements for this extended care are set out in the 'Southwark Principles', which describe the care extended by both the Bishop of Ebbsfleet and the Bishop of Fulham, and which has ensured mutual flourishing. These arrangements will continue during the Vacancy in See because they are part of the Diocese's ongoing commitment to inclusion and diversity. The recommendations of Maggie Swinson's report of September are for the Church nationally ('for the House of Bishops, the Dioceses Commission and the wider church' – p.15). Should the Church nationally make recommendations in light of this report, they will be considered accordingly.

Question 14

Q The Revd Dr Charlie Bell [Lambeth North]

Is it within the bounds of Southwark Diocesan Policy for Diocesan Directors of Ordinands (including assistants or area directors) or Vocations Advisers to suggest to same sex married lay people that they should divorce in order to pursue a vocation to ordained ministry?

A Jeremy Clarke-King

It is not within policy or practice to suggest to anyone, including those in same sex marriages, that they change their marital status in any way in order to enable pursuing a vocation to ordained ministry.

It should be brought to the attention of the Diocesan Director of Ordinands if this has occurred.