



## DIOCESAN SYNOD SYNOD QUESTIONS NOTICE PAPER

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### Question 1

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**Q**      **The Rev Martin Hislop [Kingston Deanery]**

What programmes and resources are in place to equip and support ordinands and newly ordained clergy in the important mission and ministry opportunities to be exercised in schools?

**A**      **Jeremy Clark-King**

Any preparation for Ordinands would come through their parish placements and teaching at College. Many have had, of course, significant experience prior to training.

For curates, many will have experience in their local schools under the guidance of their Training Incumbent. In the Initial Ministerial Education programme, there is a day in which there is input from the Board of Education highlighting the importance of schools' ministry – collective worship; RE syllabus & Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools support; and taking on governor roles. Curates are encouraged to take on governorship where appropriate.

More widely, the Southwark Diocese Board of Educations delivers training for collective worship for incumbents – they also have a comprehensive Continuing Professional Development offer for governors; they also deliver the Bishop's certificate for Church School Leadership.

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### Question 2

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**Q**      **April Alexander [Tandridge Deanery]**

In view of the Thirty One Eight Report, as it pertains to the relationship of ECW with the Diocese, would I be right to assume that the imminent INEQE audit will apply to Emmanuel Wimbledon as to other parishes?

**A**      **Diocesan Secretary**

The independent safeguarding audit programme for the Church of England was commissioned by the Archbishops' Council, overseen by the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team (NST). Led by the INEQE Safeguarding Group, the audits tests the sufficiency of safeguarding arrangements within dioceses and cathedrals. Parishes are not themselves being reviewed.

The Diocese's formal INEQE audit period has begun and the information-gathering phase concludes in early April. The audit will assess the Dioceses (and Southwark Cathedral) against the five national safeguarding standards.

Standard 1: Culture, Leadership and Capacity

Standard 2: Prevention

Standard 3: Recognising, Assessing and Managing Risk

Standard 4: Victims and Survivors Standard

Standard 5: Learning, Supervision and Support

Safeguarding is, and will continue to be, a priority for the Diocese.

All parishes in the diocese are encouraged to contribute to the INEQE surveys and further information can be found on the [Diocesan Website](#).

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### Question 3

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**Q** April Alexander [Tandridge Deanery]

Will all other parishes who have episcopal oversight from a PEV likewise be audited by INEQE?

**A** Diocesan Secretary

Please see answer to question 2.

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### Question 4

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**Q** The Revd David Ruddick [Merton Deanery]

Given that the total numbers on Electoral Rolls across the whole Diocese fell from 37,170 in 2019 to 30,562 in 2025, what are the tangible and spiritual benefits to the Diocese, including financially, of churches with more than 126 members on their Electoral Roll and should the Diocese welcome, encourage and support congregations growing to that size and larger?

**A** Will Cookson & Gabby Parikh

One of the key reasons why we wanted to make the, successful, bid for DIP money was so that we could invest in growth across the parishes of the Diocese. We realise that there is not a silver bullet to see this happen which is why we have invested in multiple streams – Hub churches creating models of church that others can adopt, an apprenticeship scheme, parish development, new worshipping communities, mission practitioners and church grafting.

As churches grow then there are all sorts of benefits to do with being able to make a greater difference in their parish, pay the costs for their clergy, help other parishes to thrive through contributions to the PSF as well as other ways.

We are grateful for the pledge contributions from churches of all sizes. We acknowledge that people join electoral rolls for differing reasons and do not always feel that they are a family member of the church committed to giving to that church. Whilst many of our parishes with large electoral roll numbers do offer significant pledges, the size of the electoral roll does not always generate larger pledges as the relative wealth of parish and parishioners as well as other factors influence PCC's pledge decisions. In 2026 the pledges for churches with electoral rolls of more than 126 people represented a smaller proportion of our total pledges than their share of the total electoral roll.

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### Question 5

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**Q** The Revd David Ruddick [Merton Deanery]

At the December 2025 meeting of the Diocesan Synod, the Vice Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance announced that one of the Principal Budget Assumptions for the 2026 budget was that "Establishment incumbent status posts remain the same, with an occupancy rate of 240 incumbent status and 50 stipended curates."

What was the actual occupancy rate in the Diocese, in terms of incumbent status and stipended curates, at the start of January 2026; and what is it at the moment and is the Diocese intending to cut any stipendiary clergy posts over the 2026 calendar year?

**A**      **Mark Rhodes & Gabby Parikh**

The occupancy rate at the start of January was 236 stipendiary clergy and 56 curates, but by the end of February it has adjusted to 236 stipendiary clergy and 54 curates.

The approach to the strategic financial review and consultation has been explained in the briefing by the Chair of the DBF and others earlier today, and will commence in 2026, with any current vacancies included in that discussion.

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## Question 6

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**Q**      **The Revd Jen Houghton [Kingston Deanery]**

At Kingston Deanery Synod (Oct 2025), we had an informative and helpful presentation on Eco Church from Sophie Roberts (Diocesan Environmental Officer). In the ensuing discussion, representatives asked: Would it be possible for our Diocese to direct some resources towards identifying suitable contractors/project managers who could work on eco-projects across parishes and negotiate bulk purchases, rather than each PCC repeating the same research and due diligence? These include solar panel supply, air destratification, ground source heat pumps etc. In addition to saving time and sharing expertise, this could also reduce costs for parishes through bulk purchasing and fitting.

**A**      **Andrew Dickinson**

The Diocese of Southwark currently employs a part-time Net Zero Carbon Programme Manager to oversee the delivery of our ambitions for Net Zero, funded by National Church. The role of this programme manager is to work with parishes to offer advice and guidance on how best to achieve Net Zero within their context as well as to support raising of capital through building partnerships with local bodies, such as Community Energy groups. Given the number of parishes across Southwark and the specificity of needs of different parishes, this Programme Manager does focus the majority of their time on our 42 highest emitting churches and is not able to individually project manage parish work. The DAC, through its Secretariat staff and volunteer advisors, has been providing some support to parishes individually, and to bolster this capacity we have secured National Church funding to procure specialist technical advice for particularly complex cases.

We recognise the challenge of navigating supplier markets for parishes seeking to achieve Net Zero. Current Diocesan policy is not to recommend specific contractors as this opens us to legal challenge and past attempts have not been successful. Parish Buying is the Church of England mechanism for achieving economies through group purchases and does cover some categories such as energy auditing, but no longer covers solar panels. We have raised the question of “approved suppliers” lists and additional specific support for bulk purchasing of Net Zero services with National Church as we recognise this would be of great help to parishes. We are happy to raise this again. We are also exploring how churches further along the journey to Net Zero in the Diocese and outside can share their experiences and accelerate the journey for others, including where good supplier experiences have been had doing similar work. For solar panels, an increasingly good ‘way in’ is through community energy groups, hence the focus of our Programme Manager in this area. They will be able to refer local churches in turn to their recommended/trusted partner companies. For example, Community Energy London have shared a list of contractors used and named by member groups in London: <https://www.communityenergy.london/news/2026/02/contractors-and-suppliers/>

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## Question 7

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### Q The Revd Jen Houghton [Kingston Deanery]

There has been a surge in the popularity of direct cremations in recent years and research suggests these now account for 20-25% of all funerals with this proportion continuing to grow year on year. As funeral ministry is a central part of our mission and pastoral outreach, is our Diocese - or the Church of England nationally - considering any strategies to respond to or reverse this trend?

### A Diocesan Secretary

The Bishop's senior staff recently discussed this matter and authorised a priest in one parish to waive funeral fees on a trial basis so that Christian services may be offered to grieving families who have, or are considering, a direct cremation. We are waiting for a report from this priest and will consider the impact of the trial.

Funeral ministry was discussed recently at some length at the most recent General Synod. A report of the debate was published in the Church Times on 27 February [here](#). While the impact of wider societal change and mid-afternoon television advertising is challenging to counter, strong local relationships with funeral directors are an essential part of parish ministry and will go a long way towards rebuilding funeral ministry. 'Grave Talk' (published by Church House [here](#)) is an excellent resource that can be advertised locally and brings people together to discuss death and dying. There are also many excellent resources on <https://churchsupporthub.org/> and <https://parishresources.org.uk/>.