



DIOCESAN SYNOD

BRIEF OUTLINE SUMMARY OF THE SYNOD'S 13 December 2025 BUSINESS AT ST PETER'S, BATTERSEA

Opening Prayer & Introduction to the Synod Meeting

94 Members of Synod were welcomed to the meeting, led in prayer by Adrian Greenwood (Lay Chaplain and Mentor to Diocesan Synod). Members were joined by guest speakers, Roz Cordner and Pia Longman (SDBE Update), The Revd Charlie Lamont (Growing Churches) and The Venerable Bridget Shepherd and The Revd Canon Leanne Roberts (Wellbeing Update).

Presidential Address

The Bishop of Southwark gave the Presidential Address, saying that "I know how generously and sacrificially people in our parishes across Southwark – and the members of this Synod – give and work for the benefit of the Gospel. I thank God for you daily." The full text of Bishop Christopher's Presidential Address can be found at Appendix A and on the [website](#).

Elections and Co-Options (House of Laity only)

To ensure that those who stand on our committees are represented at all levels of governance if they have not yet been elected to do so, Synod were asked to co-opt members to the synod and appoint them to the DCT where necessary.

The Chair of the House of Laity moved that:

"The House of Laity approve the co-option of Peter Calderbank and Ruth Martin to the Diocesan Synod."

This motion was unanimously carried.

The Chair of the House of Laity moved that:

"The House of Laity approve the appointment of Peter Calderbank to the Diocesan Council of Trustees."

This motion was unanimously carried.

Diocesan Board of Education

Roz Cordner, the Director of Education and Pia Longman, Assistant Director of Education gave a presentation on the work of the Southwark Diocese Board of Educations, covering inspections, outcomes, and challenges. A copy of the slides used can be found at Appendix B. Members were encouraged to support their local schools by joining boards and serving as governors. They undertook group discussion on how best to support schools in the Diocese, with feedback collated by the SDBE.



Annual Objectives

The Deputy Diocesan Secretary, Jackie Pontin gave an update on the 2025 Annual Objectives. This was followed by a presentation of the 2026 Annual Objectives by the Diocesan Secretary

which had been recommended to the Synod by the Diocesan Council of Trustees. A paper was circulated in advance and can be found on the [website](#). The Annual Objectives focused on embedding Southwark Vision, being Christ Centred | Outward Focused across the work of the Diocese. As in 2025 the Objectives linked directly into Southwark Vision and its Priorities.

Given the workload throughout 2026, the Objectives were to be achievable and focus on ensuring that parishes were well served and supported and that statutory obligations were met. The 2026 Annual Objectives reflected this need with several being carried over from 2025. They are listed below.

Finance & Giving

- Good stewardship of assets, maintaining a balanced budget, encouraging generosity in giving (working towards more parishes fully covering their own ministry costs)
- Review and propose a sustainable financial plan to 2030 to support Southwark Vision and beyond.

Value all our Parishes

- Serving and engaging with parishes, including Advice and Support for:
 - Continue Volunteering review
 - Giving
 - Parish conversations, listening, learning and sharing opportunities with those serving in our parishes
 - Sharing good news and celebrating success in parishes, the Diocesan offices and wider church

Implement Southwark Vision 2024-35

- To continue scaling up the reach and impact of the Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP), delivering growth in key areas aligned with the Southwark Vision, delivering growing church attendance across DIP-funded churches, successfully sharing models developed within our Hub Churches and pilots and using them in new contexts, and supporting more churches to sustainably support themselves and their wider mission.
- Racial Justice: we will support our Area Racial Justice Groups to drive forward implementation of the Anti-Racism Charter, equipping these groups and our parishes with the resources, people, and networks to champion racial justice in their context. We will further embed cultural diversity into our mission, ministry, vocations, and practices, listening and acting on outcomes from our research, and working through our Deans of Cultural Diversity and Estates Ministry.
- To continue working with high CO₂ emitting churches, and develop work within the property strategy, to work Towards Net Zero in the Diocese.

Outward-focused governance centred on Christ¹

- To continue to provide effective support for parishes and deaneries to enable their local mission in the places where they are, and to maintain the highest level of statutory provision.

Wellbeing

- Ensure effective working practices for all diocesan staff as we seek to implement Southwark Vision with a particular focus on staff health and well-being including access to necessary training.
- To keep under review the workspaces for Trinity House, and the need for substantial works to the structure and fabric of the building.

The Bishop of Southwark moved that:
"THIS SYNOD endorses the Annual Objectives for 2026 as recommended by the Diocesan Council of Trustees."

The motion was unanimously carried.

Budget Approval & Finance Update

The Vice Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Sarah Docx, with the Director of Finance, Mark Rhodes, gave a presentation on the recommended budget for the Diocese in 2026 as agreed by the Diocesan Council of Trustees. A paper was circulated in advance and can be found on the [website](#) and a copy of slides can be found at Appendix B. The updated budget included expected annual increases in stipends in line with the National Church Recommendations.

The Vice Chair of the DBF moved that the consolidated budget for 2026 now be considered and that:
"THIS SYNOD approves the total budget expenditure of £30,058.087 which is based on total budgeted income of £30,025,730."

The motion was overwhelmingly carried, with ten votes against and one abstention.

Worship

The Eucharist was followed by This time Tomorrow led by Adrian Greenwood and Paul Waddell. The Reading was given by Ruth Reid.

Growing Churches

The Revd Charlie Lamont led a session on growing Churches, he introduced his role and that of other staff members of the Mission team all of whom were there to support the growth of Churches. Members split into groups to discuss successes within their own parishes which were then shared with the rest of the meeting.

Wellbeing including Bullying Harassment and Discrimination Policy

The Venerable Bridget Shepherd and The Revd Canon Leanne Roberts gave a presentation on Wellbeing and introduced the new Bullying Harassment and Discrimination Policy, and

¹ Romans 12:4-8

Reporting Racial Incidents guidance, were circulated in advance of the meeting and can be found on the [website](#).

Deanery Synod Election Numbers

Please note that this item was taken out of order immediately after lunch.

The Chair of the House of Laity Rebecca Chapman spoke to the proposed Deanery Synod Election Number of lay representatives per parish to be elected to deanery synods at the annual parochial church meetings in 2026 s. Ruth Inwood spoke to and moved her amendment, allowing for questions.

Ruth Inwood (Reigate Deanery) moved that:

“THIS SYNOD: Approves the proposed table of the number of lay representatives per parish to be elected to deanery synods at the annual parochial church meetings in 2026 as set out in paper DS(25)29b.”

The amendment was lost. Thirteen members voted in favour three abstained and seventy-eight against.

Rebecca Chapman then moved the original motion.

The Chair of the House of Laity moved that:

“THIS SYNOD: Approves the proposed table of the number of lay representatives per parish to be elected to deanery synods at the annual parochial church meetings in 2026 as set out in Appendix A.”

The motion overwhelmingly carried with ten members abstaining.

Formal Questions

Fifteen formal Synod Questions were received for written answer. A copy of the Questions Notice Paper, including any supplementary questions, can be found on the diocesan [website](#).



Diocesan Synod Presidential Address 13th December 2025

My brothers and sisters, as I wrote in my Advent letter I have had the greatest possible privilege of serving this Diocese for over twenty years in two episcopal roles, and of sharing the cure of souls with the many excellent clergy who hold my licence. I know how generously and sacrificially people in our parishes across Southwark - and the members of this Synod - give and work for the benefit of the Gospel. I thank God for you daily.

One reason for which I give thanks to God is the glorious diversity of this Diocese. I also give thanks that Southwark genuinely aspires to be a safe diocese for all God's people and will be taking steps to ensure this remains so. I make no apology for saying again that I consider our diversity to be God's gift and blessing, something given within creation. But like many gifts in the spiritual life it comes at some cost. It can be costly to recognise Christ in those who differ from us because Christ calls from us a depth of love and mutual understanding, a depth of tolerance, that is always going to push people to the limits of their compassion. But we need our compassion to be pushed. It is how the seed of love grows within us. This is not always a pleasant process, as the seed sprouts and something decays within so that something else can grow – but it is, to borrow Simone Weil's words, 'the pain that makes the beauty of the world penetrate to the human being's very core' (*The Need for Roots*). Nevertheless, this is how it is for us, it is our God-given reality, and we need to continue to be bold and courageous in what we are asking – that is to say, our asking that we recognise God's love for all God's children. I have received letters about the House of Bishops' recent decision concerning the Prayers of Love and Faith. The apology made by the House of Bishops in January 2023 cannot be taken back. It

concluded with these words: 'As we have listened, we have been told time and time again how we have failed LGBTQI+ people. We have not loved you as God loves you, and that is profoundly wrong'. I affirm publicly and unequivocally what that document said, that 'LGBTQI+ people are welcomed and valued: we are all children of God'. As we prepare to celebrate the Incarnation of our Lord, the very Word made flesh, we must remember that the Christian faith rests on more than words. Equally, this apology must be more than words – and there is work still to be done. The pastoral response from the Bishops in 2023 takes us to the hard realities of tolerance and diversity as we face our differences. The Bishops themselves represent the Church more widely in all its difference and the range of diverse convictions about sexuality and marriage.

But we do have not the right simply to look within the life of the Church. Today Stephen Yaxley-Lennon is gathering people in this city to 'Put Christ back into Christmas', following on from his 'Unite the Kingdom' rally. There will be a counter protest on the steps of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Anglicans, Quakers and others will offer a different voice. The Church of England has spoken clearly, and in Southwark my episcopal colleagues and I have said clearly that 'the heart of the Christian faith is the belief that God has created all people - and that he loves everyone ... Any co-opting or corrupting of the Christian faith to exclude others is unacceptable, and we are gravely concerned'.

Elsewhere during this holy season, the land called holy - the cradle of the Jewish and Christian faiths - is a crucible and the cradle of our faith bears reflection at this time.

In doing so, it is worth looking at the circumstances in our nativity stories from a certain angle: we have a census – for all the reasons a census may be useful (tax and control), the forced requirements of that particular process – ancestral place

of registration – and the difficulties this imposes in transport and accommodation. We have Magi crossing borders either via or avoiding key border posts between the area under Roman control and that of Persia. And there is the use of state resources by Herod eliminate what he saw as an existential threat to his regime which led the Holy Family to seek temporary asylum in imperial Egypt before later returning home to an area of mixed ethnicity, and beliefs. So before we return to contemporary concerns, we have from the very first, some familiar instances of administrative law, upheaval, migration, fear, and state violence.

I mention this not to sideline the Incarnation and the birth of a saviour, or at Epiphany the strange acknowledgement and worship of Magi from outside the covenant. But I just wanted to emphasise the entirely human, intelligible and difficult circumstances described in Matthew and Luke which bring vivid historicity to what we read and suggest that the precarious things that happened then in a time of comparative peace do not vouchsafe us a more tranquil life now at a time of greater complexity and conflict.

Indeed, some of the events around the nativity which we seek to celebrate in the place where they happened are relevant today. I do not want to suggest that the circumstances that I describe in Israel and in Palestine are uniquely challenging or indeed amongst the worst faced by Christians around the world. They are not. The territories of the Holy Land do not figure amongst the areas regularly listed as the most dangerous for Christians by organisations such as *Open Doors* or *Aid to the Church in Need*, whose Red Wednesday commemoration I attended at St George's Cathedral last month. It does not match the circumstances of North Korea, Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Sudan or many other countries.

Nonetheless, there are distinct problems some of which I will outline. We read in Luke chapter 2 of Joseph and Mary travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Joseph will register and Mary will give birth. It was precarious then for a woman in pregnancy. It has become so again as both the separation barrier and military checkpoints and settler activity require women to make considerably longer journeys than would otherwise be the case at the risk of their health and that of their unborn child. This is similar for those needing acute care. Indeed, the separation barrier which now hedges in Bethlehem on three sides also cuts across farmers' land and is a barrier to those seeking employment, both Muslims and Christians. The great expansion of settlements, authorised and otherwise, and the encroachment of settlers on Palestinian farmland have seen their attacks on places such as Taybeh, the last remaining wholly Christian village on the West Bank, increase.

The linking up of settlements now threatens to bifurcate the Palestinian territory entirely. Following a meeting at Umm al-Khair last month with members of the local Women Development Programme, which is supported by the East Jerusalem YMCA, the Archbishop of York found his vehicle blocked by armed settlers. The intention is to secure the demolition of Palestinian homes in Umm al-Khair. At the request of the military, the settlers moved away. But they largely act with impunity and this adds to the pressure on Christians to emigrate from the West Bank as it leads to a wider sense of despair on west of the River Jordan. I look forward once again to joining the Vatican mandated Holy Land Coordination in January which builds relationships with the Christian churches and communities. When it concludes I will be joined by the Bishops of Chelmsford, Gloucester, and Norwich for a further pilgrimage of solidarity, and I am very glad that Bishop Martin recently visited St George's Cathedral and College strengthening our links with the Diocese of Jerusalem.

You may know about Layan Nasir, who is a lay member of St Andrew's Ramallah and was taken into administrative detention for being a member at college of an organisation which was later proscribed after she left. She was released, summoned to court, informed that the trial was postponed and then tried *in absentia* on the original date and re-arrested. It is very hard to trust in the rule of law under these circumstances. One may argue that her Christian faith plays little or no part in her prosecution. Less so are the repeated attacks on Christians and on Church buildings in Israel and in Palestine.

For example, the Israeli newspaper, Haaretz reported on 24 September 2017 some 53 cases of attacks on Christian and Muslim sites in the past nine years in which instance only eight cases were under investigation and 45 closed. These included the attack – one of several – on the Beit Jamal Monastery and the firebombing of the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes in Tabgha which destroyed the roof. Arrests are comparatively rare. More than 30 graves at the Mount Zion Protestant Cemetery were vandalised in January 2023. In May 2023 far-right Israeli protestors attacked an Evangelical prayer rally at the Davidson Centre in Jerusalem. In December that year, the Israeli military entered the compound of the Church of the Holy Family in Gaza and according to Vatican News, shot those leaving the church, including one woman who went to rescue her mother. Both died. The IDF claimed that there was a missile launcher in the parish. This followed an air strike on the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius that October in which 18 were killed. The Anglican Al-Alhi hospital in Gaza has been hit multiple times, including once, it is suspected by a misfire by Islamic Jihad. Israeli Christians claim routine abuse, including spitting.

This Easter for the first time, Israeli police severely restricted access to participants of the Holy Fire ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre – a ceremony

which dates from at least the eighth century. The key-holder to the Holy Sepulchre claims that there were more police than pilgrims.

As I have said, the situation in Israel and Palestine – and I am talking more widely than the relentless destruction of Gaza and displacement of her people – impacts significantly and continuously on the Christian minority but does not compare with the scale of persecution elsewhere in the world. However, we tend to regard Israel much as we regard Sweden or France. It is worth reflecting that while we regard Herod as the slaughterer of innocents, history still allows him the title of Herod the Great because of the territory he ruled, his political success and the monumental scale of his building projects. But the veneer of civilisation could run very thin then as it does now. The treaties and protocols that were constructed on the experience of the horrors of two appalling world conflicts and were meant to regulate warfare and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 - which was meant to guarantee basic freedoms - now look thread-bare in the light of repeated flouting. As Jesus tells us, a servant is not greater than his master (John 13:16) and so trouble may come our way, but that does not mean that we should look for it, or endorse it, especially when it is served out to others – abroad, or at home. My friends, surely we ought to pray, in the Prayer Book version of the Advent Collect, that God would himself put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

Christ
Centred

Outward
Focused



SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Inspection outcomes are above national levels

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)

All of our schools fulfil their vision as inspected by the National Society under Section 48

Ofsted

97% of SDBE schools are graded 'Good or better' (96/99)

91% of all schools are good or better nationally



Ofsted outcomes

- **Ofsted 'Good or better'**
- **94% of primary schools (National 91%)**
- **100% Secondary schools (National 83%)**
- **20% primary graded outstanding (National 17%)**
- **30% secondary graded outstanding (National 16%)**

There are 3 RI schools – Requires Improvement; all 3 schools have an improvement plan and are closely supported by SDBE



Changing landscape

- **Falling pupil numbers**
- **February 2025 – London Councils Report – pupil rolls still falling**
- **Closures since 2021:**
 - **St John's Primary, Walworth, August 2021 Inner**
 - **Archbishop Tenison Secondary, Oval, August 2023 Inner**
 - **St Martin in the Fields High School for Girls, Tulse Hill, August 2024 Inner**
 - **Christ Church Primary, Battersea, August 2024 Inner**
 - **St Anne's Primary, Wandsworth, August 2025 Inner**
 - **St Mary Magdalene's, Primary Peckham, August 2025 Inner**



A new vision to meet the needs of today to secure CofE education for the future



SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
BELONG SERVE THRIVE

Strength in partnerships – Formal and Informal

- **Southwark trio small primary schools – Headteacher**
- **Lambeth/Southwark trio small primary schools – Headteacher**
- **Lambeth partnership two primary schools – Exec headship**
- **Surrey/Bexley two primary schools – Exec headship**
- **Croydon one infant one junior school – Exec headship**
- **Wandsworth two small primary schools – Headteacher**
- **Greenwich Koinonia Federation – primary/all-through
primary/secondary**



Marketing, raising the profile and strengthening CofE education in your Deanery.

Despite the landscape, we have good news stories in all of our schools

Focus on refreshing the outside view of CofE education to ensure that families know what it is like to be in a Church of England school today

Working in partnership with the local church and wider to celebrate and support the school.

Propose closer working relationship with our Deanery networks



Discussion activity

The DBE recognises that our Deaneries are a support network from which we can mutually benefit.

1. How can we maximise the expertise, local intelligence and connections within each Deanery in order to strengthen the impact of our shared mission?
2. What else could we do to raise the profile of our schools and chaplaincy work at Deanery level? (eg could Education be an agenda item across your cycle of meetings?)
3. Please list any examples of what already happens within your Deanery with regard to schools/chaplaincy and education and add any ideas that you think will help us to improve how we maximise the expertise within the Deanery to support our schools.

If you would like to know more or if you are willing to be part of a working part to run in the spring term to collaborate with us to develop these ideas further, please get in touch.

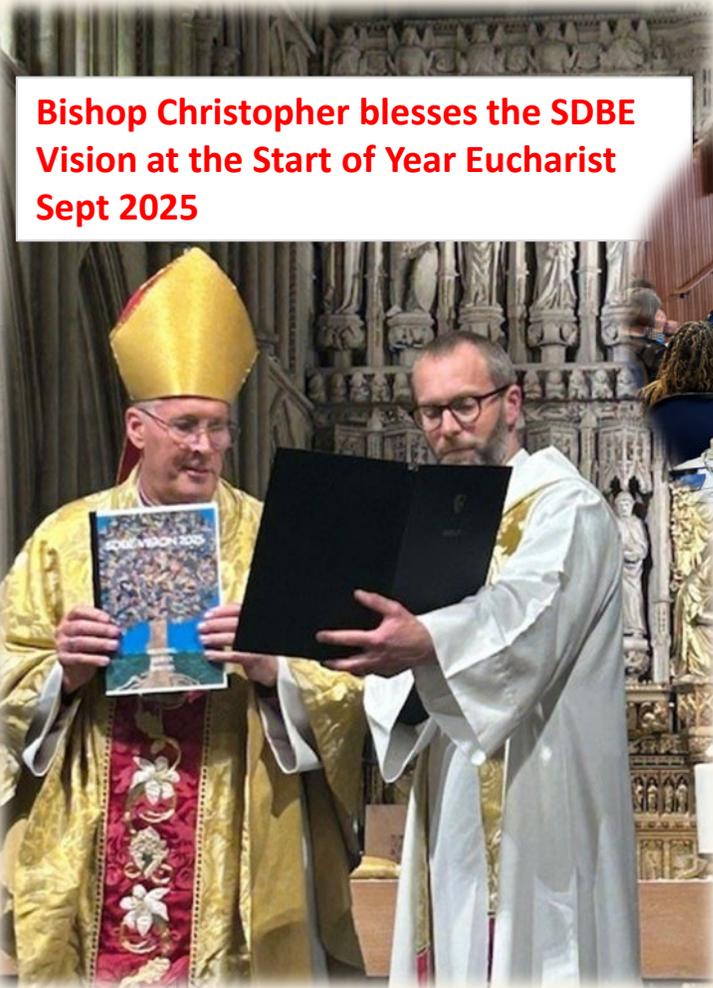


SDBE Events 2025

Gathering at the Annual Conference for headteachers in Canterbury – supported by Senior clergy; Bishop Rosemarie
Events at the Cathedral



**The Bishop of Southwark's Lent
Call Service 2025**



**Bishop Christopher blesses the SDBE
Vision at the Start of Year Eucharist
Sept 2025**



**SDHTA Conference Canterbury
October 2025**



**Year 6 Leavers
Services 2025**



Celebrating wonderful good news stories



Minster schools win 'Show Racism the Red Card' Art competition for second year running in 2025



Big Spring sing March 2025



Koinonia 'We Are One' Event January 2025



Bishop Alastair blesses the winning artwork at 2025 Leavers' Service
– The Golden Tree by Kenzo from St Richard's CofE School, Ham



Please include SDBE and our schools and chaplains in your regular cycle of prayer



SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION
BELONG SERVE THRIVE