

Barney deBerry, Canterbury Deanery and General Synod

- 1 Recognising that for every successful 'start up' there are always some that don't succeed and with the bold outcome of establishing 200 new Christian communities by 2030 in mind; what criteria will determine if a new Christian community is deemed to be established and so count towards the goal of 200 by 2030? Will the 200 include those that last or simply those that start up even if they 'close' a few months later or before 2030? What are the main resources and strategies being used by the diocese to succeed in our bold outcome of establishing 200 new Christian communities by 2030?**

Answer

- Our recent stats for mission suggest that we start up new Christian communities regularly but that we do indeed struggle to keep them going. This is a national pattern, not just a Canterbury one. New Christian communities are simply more volatile than established forms of church.
- Yet our 13.6% growth in 2024 among children and young people (see Average weekly attendance in October 2024 - report for the Diocese of Canterbury by Bev Botting and Bob Jackson, which can be read in full here [canterbury-2024-report-jan-2025-final.pdf](#)) seems largely to be down to new initiatives, from services aimed at children and families through to new Christian communities.
- So Barney raises an important question, which has not been addressed: are we counting all new Christian Communities, or just those that last, a significantly higher bar? Is this Outcome an aspiration, or an intention?
- An obvious gap in our developing strategy is this area of new Christian communities. We are grateful that Barney and Gareth Dickinson are working together to launch a first cohort of those seeking to plant new Christian communities, working with the national Myriad process.
- A slightly simpler model, Greenhouse, is also available to us. Both Myriad and Greenhouse form 'learning communities' of those having a go at this approach to church planting (often with a few people aiming at 'micro' planting).
- We expect to learn valuable lessons from this initiative, which might lead to more focused action as a diocese.

Steve Coneys
Mission and Growth Adviser

No supplementary question.

- 2 What is the average age of the new Diocesan synod membership and how does it compare to the last synod? And what is the distribution of ages of the synod? We have access to the information if the member has chosen to include this in CMS.**

Answer

Under GDPR, the Board cannot use the clergy ages on the People System for this purpose because that is not what the information is stored for. Some members of clergy and laity choose to include their ages in their CMS profiles but it is far from clear as to whether this information could be used to monitor the age of Synod members.

It might be possible to create a voluntary census or take an estimation if needs be, but this information is not currently gathered and would mean an additional layer of administration and cost.

Cordelia Sain Ley Berry Gray
Information Systems Programmes Manager

No supplementary question

Amy Klosek, Ospringe Deanery

When I attended my first Diocesan Synod in November, I arrived feeling that it was an absolute privilege, however my feelings soon changed to utter dismay and angst about the future of the Church that I know and love.

It was the very week that the Makin report revealed an inexcusable lack of transparency and an abuse of power within the Church of England, so it was incredulous that we bear witness to the debacle that was the budget presentation and the chaotic, 'show of hands' style voting that proceeded it, which was arguably, unethical and inaccurate.

Will the Archbishop's Council, as the Standing Committee of this Synod, review the practical arrangements for the chairing of important issues, and for voting in the Synod, ensuring that the Synod can have confidence in the final numbers of those in favour of a motion, those against and those abstaining, and report back to the next Synod meeting?

Answer

The management of Synod is constantly evolving and Synod has received a note from the Diocesan Secretary advising of changes designed to improve how the business of Synod is run. This includes a trial of card voting, the use of stand microphones, an expansion of the number of Chairs, clearer and simpler slides/papers and a diarised "wash-up" which will include a reflection on any feedback.

If members have any practical suggestions as to how Synod might be improved they can forward these to the Diocesan Secretary at DiocesanSecretary@diocant.org

The Right Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin
Bishop of Dover

Supplementary Question

There is much discussion about the way Synod is run, can Synod be assured that discussions will take place before being approved.

Answer

Yes.

Harry MacDonald, Canterbury Deanery

In view of the importance that the Diocese attached to net Zero Carbon, can Synod be advised if there is any requirement for clergy to receive CPD training on climate change/NZC or the environment.

Answer

Harry's question is: 'In view of the importance that the Diocese attached to net Zero Carbon, can Synod be advised if there is any requirement for clergy to receive CPD training on climate change/NZC or the environment.'

The simple answer is 'No, there is no requirement.'

The longer response would need to consider who would make such a requirement - probably the bishop.

From that, how would such a requirement be received - probably reasonably well, but we have no mechanism to ensure clergy attend any CPD (we call it CMD - for ministry) training event. So, for instance, we are offering a CMD training event this evening on mental health for ministers and we have 10 attendees registered, of which 4 are Incumbents and 1 SSOM, the rest lay ministers.

Clergy receive a very good theological education, and environmental concerns come right at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1-3. Further, as the great Swiss theologian Karl Barth said, a preacher should have in one hand the Bible and the other the newspaper, so every Sunday they will be / should be addressing concerns of the day. I think our ministers, lay and ordained, are well informed regarding environment and climate change and I am sure this is part of their regular address Sunday by Sunday, and maybe through study groups too.

However, I am in conversation with Joyce Addison about 'greening' the Canterbury Diet, we can do this by offering seminars for those who wish to attend on environmental matters by all means.

**Neville Emslie
Director of Mission and Ministry**

No supplementary question

David Kemp, Reculver Deanery and General

To ask the Chairman of the Board of Finance

Bearing in mind the parlous state of the Diocesan finances, how many parishes/churches are there in the Diocese from which Parish Share is requested? How many did not pay their 2024 Parish Share in full, and of those, how many, to your knowledge

- **were too small or poor**
- **were experiencing pastoral difficulties resulting in financial problems**

- were withholding Parish Share in full or in part for doctrinal or theological reasons
- were paying into the Ephesian Fund or similar schemes
- did not fall into any of the four categories above.

A number (27 in 2024) of PCCs receive funding through the LInC scheme and part of our reasoning behind seeking additional funding from the NCIs to expand the Generous Giving Team

and the work done by the Finance Team was to ensure every parish is able to contribute. This work will take some time to make a full impact but is making a difference now.

There are 204 PCCs to which a Parish Share request is submitted. Of these sixty-five did not pay did not pay in full.

- “too small or poor” we know from what we are told that PCCs want to contribute to the Mission of the church and our aim moving forward is to better link funding to strategy to enable them to do this. The Board does not have a “too small or too poor” criteria. Of the sixty-five referenced above, nineteen PCCs have a Parish Share request below £15,000.
- “were experiencing pastoral difficulties resulting in financial problems” - no PCCs have advised us of such issues with regards to Parish Share. The Board aims to support all PCCs in whatever way it can. For example, there are PCCs where the Board has intervened to support staff salaries and to provide interim finances pending the sale of property.
- “were withholding Parish Share in full or in part for doctrinal or theological reasons” - none and the Board is grateful to those PCCs who have explored the option of paying Parish Share through other means, including the Ephesian Fund, for engaging with the DBF at every stage. There have been instances in other dioceses of the DBF sidelined in this. In Canterbury this has not been the case.
- Three PCCs were paying into the Ephesian Fund in 2024
- Two PCCs were not able to contribute the amount they had hoped to due to significant issues with their church buildings

Tony Richter
Chair, Canterbury DBF

No supplementary question

The Rev'd Rachel Webbley, Whitstable Team Ministry and General Synod

Which churches are currently paying their parish share through the Ephesians Fund or similar third party or other special arrangement? Are any churches placing limitations on how parish share contributions can be used such that their contributions cannot be used to support all clergy, training of curates and churches in the diocese? How much money is affected by these arrangements?

Canterbury, St Mary Bredin
Loose, All Saints

Herne Bay, Christ Church St Andrews
Westgate-on-Sea, St James

Overall, we anticipate the amount as being approximately £500k+. We remain in discussion with the Ephesian Fund as to how payments are shown within the accounts.

We are grateful that each PCC has fully engaged with the DBF over payments and these payments have resulted in increased payment of Parish Share overall.

Natalia Olszewska
Director of Finance

Supplementary Question

What are the limitations on parish contributions made by the Ephesian Fund.

Answer

We are not sure on what their decisions are, 30 April is the deadline date.

When was the last time a V.i.S.C. election was run with the correct conditions for eligibility (i.e. to all on an ER in the Diocese or any clerk in holy orders, and not restricted to diocesan synod)? We have not, yet, completed investigations into this and, given the timeframes, it may well be that the information does not exist. The rules do appear to have been changed for Canterbury DBF by Diocesan Synod some time ago, possibly in excess of fifteen years ago.

Iain Blythe
Diocesan Secretary

How much money has been paid to the registrar over these years, and how could they have helped us avoid these errors?

It is correct that the Registrar's retainer has always included attendance at both Diocesan Synod and Archbishop's Council and while I cannot speculate on what may have happened it is certainly my intention that the Registrar's presence provides clarity and legal certainty over what Synod can achieve.

Iain Blythe
Diocesan Secretary

What training around synodical processes and governance is in place for Area Deans, Lay Chairs and parish clergy? I have spoken with a deanery lay chair who has never known any specific training in synodical processes. We did issue a new PCC Secretary Handbook in 2024 (and are following this up with a new Treasurers Handbook in 2025). This is part of a roll out of support that we hope will assist.

We are somewhat constrained by resources, but I would be very happy to explore any training or notes that people think would be helpful.

Iain Blythe
Diocesan Secretary

Are curates in our diocese taught the basics of church governance in IME2, and if not can this be incorporated, for example the module on law and the public minister?

Curates are members of the PCC(s) of the Benefice in which they are licensed and also members of the house of clergy of their Deanery Synod. Curate working agreements will stipulate that they play a full part in church governance by participating in these bodies, although curates in a multi-church setting may focus their attention on a particular PCC or DCC. Curates preparing for incumbent-status roles should have the opportunity to chair the PCC and engage with strategic decision-making during this time. At the end of curacy there are a series of practical skills days and this includes a session on the PCC, which sets the practical leadership of these groups in the context of synodical governance and the Church Representation Rules.

The Law and the Public Minister Module is delivered in eight sessions over two study days in the second year of curacy. It currently contains sessions on both the theological foundations and the practical workings of church law and the professional conduct of the clergy. The content of this IME2 module will be reviewed once a new module leader has been appointed (expected later in 2025) and a session on church governance could be worked into the programme.

It is also worth noting that many of the curates ordained via The Dover Pathway (curates over 65) have had significant involvement in synodical processes as lay people, including those who have held office as Deanery Lay Chairs. There are currently four curates elected to the House of Clergy of Diocesan Synod and 20 Training Incumbents are also members of synod.

**The Revd Jon Marlow
Head of Vocations, DDO and Director of IME2**

The Revd Dr A J Bawtree, Dover Deanery

Two years into adopting three bold outcomes as our diocesan strategy, can I ask what progress has been made on each of them?

There are many initiatives that may not have been recorded, for example a new café church in St Mary's Bay with a further one launching soon in Dymchurch. Also on the Marsh, New Romney has worked in partnership with a school and has had over 40 confirmations of young people in 2 years, resulting in a new youth initiative there. Hythe can report the strong youth work through its choir and building on through that.

**Darren Miller
Archdeacon of Ashford**

The **Three Bold Outcomes** were adopted by Diocesan Synod in the first half of 2023 which is therefore our baseline year. 2024 stats will be a first opportunity to see what progress has been made. Unfortunately, we will not get a complete picture of these until some way through 2025.

The bold outcome for "200 new Christian communities" by 2030 does not specify whether these are simply the number that start up or the number that are sustained. However, it would seem appropriate to use a net figure i.e. by 2030 we would like to see 200 more Christian communities than 2023 when the bold outcome was adopted. Our overall goal is revitalisation and growth across our parishes. Thank you for helping to clarify that.

In their most recent analysis of our average weekly attendance in October 2024 (which can be read in full here: [canterbury-2024-report-jan-2025-final.pdf](#)) Bob Jackson and Bev Botting suggest that our 14% growth in under 16 attendance is largely down to new initiatives, from services aimed at children and families through to new Christian communities. But they also point out that some are time limited, as the question alludes to. This is a national pattern, not just a Canterbury one. New Christian communities are simply more volatile than established forms of church.

A national outcomes framework measure has recently been introduced for new worshipping communities funded by the Diocesan Investment Programme (DIP) overseen by the Strategic Mission and Mission Investment Board (SMMIB) . We will be reviewing this to see if it is suitable to use as a diocesan measure for our own bold outcome.

From Bob Jackson and Bev Botting's report it seems parishes are quite good at organically establishing new Christian communities which is very encouraging.

In addition, there are several diocesan-wide projects and programmes that we expect to contribute to that:

- Our resourcing churches (currently Maidstone and Margate) will establish new Christian communities as part of their growth plans.
- Ignite has been a successful diocesan approach to reaching disadvantaged communities, both adult and children/families. CDBF has funded two new Ignites - at St. Peter's Aylesham and most recently at All Saints Canterbury. Our next DIP funding request will include provision for further Ignites. We are working with several parishes that have expressed an interest in hosting one.
- We are piloting the Flourish initiative which is aiming to plant new Christian communities in schools in partnership with the parish.
- We are grateful to you, Barney, and Gareth Dickinson in your work together to launch a first cohort of those seeking to plant new Christian communities, working with the national Myriad process.
- A slightly simpler model, Greenhouse, is also available to us. Both Myriad and Greenhouse form 'learning communities' of those having a go at this approach to church planting.
- We expect to learn valuable lessons from this initiative, which might lead to more focused action as a diocese.

There is much still to learn and to plan together but there are some initial encouraging signs and some helpful plans in place.

At the heart of our strategy is the desire to empower the local church to deliver God's mission. Mission Action Plans capture what is planned at the local level, backed by support from Diocesan House and deaneries.

Colin Evans
Strategic Programme Manager
Steve Coneys
Mission and Growth Adviser

No supplementary question

Julian Hills, Thanet Deanery

What is the cost of the legal advice incurred during the latter part of 2024 and the early part of 2025 in respect of the issues relating to the formation of the diocese's Vacancy in See Committees? Will this fall as a cost on the diocese and if so, will this be funded from reserves or be borne by parishes through Parish Share contributions perhaps through

contingencies?

This has been covered in full under the retainer in accordance with Schedule 2, section 1(a) of the Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order which states that the following is included in the retainer:

“giving advice to the diocesan bishop, suffragan bishops, archdeacons, chairs of the houses of the diocesan synod, rural deans, lay chairs and secretaries of deanery synods, incumbents and all other clergy, beneficed or licensed in the diocese, on any legal matter properly arising in connection with the discharge of their respective ecclesiastical or synodical offices, and giving of advice to chairs and secretaries of diocesan boards, councils and committees on any legal matter properly arising in connection with the business of the respective boards, councils and committees”

Iain Blythe
Diocesan Secretary

No supplementary question