Commission Members

Chair

Dame Caroline Spelman served as Second Church Estates Commission from May 2015 until January 2020 (during which time she was an ex-officio member of the House of Laity), having decided to stand down as an MP at the end of 2019. Dame Caroline had a distinguished parliamentary career for over 20 years, and served as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the Cameron administration from 2010-12.

Vice-Chair

The Revd Paul Benfield practised at the chancery bar in Newcastle before ordination. After curacies in the Diocese of Newcastle he served as a team vicar and incumbent in the Diocese of Chichester. Formerly Vicar of St Nicholas Fleetwood in the Diocese of Blackburn, Paul was Registrar to the Diocese between 2018 and 2020, and is currently serving as parish priest in Burnley. As a member of the General Synod since 2005, he has been much involved with legislative matters, including chairing the Steering Committee for the Miscellaneous Provisions Measure which received Royal Assent in 2014 and being a member of the Steering Committee for the final phase of the Women Bishops Legislation. He is also Synodal Secretary of the Province of York.

Elected Members:

The Revd Canon Geoffrey Harbord has served for some 30 years in the Diocese of Sheffield. He has been an incumbent in Doncaster and Rotherham and is now the Bishop's domestic chaplain, and Acting Dean of Sheffield Cathedral. Elected to the General Synod in 2000, he has served on the Clergy Discipline Commission and the Legal Aid Commission as well as the Steering Committee for the 2014 Miscellaneous Provisions Measure. He has particular interests in canon law and the interface between law and religion generally.

The Revd Dr Rob Munro is Rector of a large parish in the Chester Diocese, South of Manchester. He has been a member of the General Synod since 2003, and serves as Chair of the Diocesan House of Clergy. He is also a member of the Bishop's Council, & Finance and Scrutiny and Staff Review Committee. He trained as a teacher of Maths and PE at secondary level. Since ordination he has served in 3 Chester parishes over 24 years of ministry. In wider church, he chairs the Fellowship of Word and Spirit, Concordia Group and Manchester Bible School. He also chairs the Cheadle Village Partnership and local Sure Start Advisory Board.

Mr Gavin Oldham OBE is a former Chair and controlling shareholder of Share plc and The Share Centre (www.share.com). A partner with Wedd Durlacher Mordaunt before the 1986 re-organisation of the London Stock Exchange, Gavin founded Barclayshare (now Barclays Stockbrokers) in 1985, leaving in 1990 to start The Share Centre. In 2005 he established a registered charity, The Share Foundation (www.sharefound.org), which operates the Department of Education's Junior ISA & Child Trust Fund arrangements for young people in care. From 1995 to date Gavin has been an elected
lay member of General Synod for Oxford Diocese. He was a Church Commissioner and a member of its Assets Committee until December 2018, and has also served on the Ethical Investment Advisory Group and the Church Urban Fund. He is lay chair of the Wendover Deanery, and in 2012 established the ‘Resourcing Christian Community Action’ website www.how2help.net for the Church of England, which formed the basis for the community action pages now incorporated into the main Church of England website.

One vacancy

Appointed Members:

Ruth Martin has served as Diocesan Secretary of the Diocese of Southwark since January 2015. Prior to that she was Managing Director of the Chartered Institute of Securities and Investment. She has extensive experience in professional employment, regulation and education sectors, from policy making in Government and strategic planning, to building relationships in universities, regulators and firms, as well as directly managing organisations and learning programmes. Ruth is Member of the Diocese of Southwark Multi Academy Trust and a Lay Canon at Southwark Cathedral. Ruth is also a Lay Reader in the Diocese of Southwark (Richmond Team Ministry) and a Street Pastor.

The Right Revd Dr John Perumbalath is the Area Bishop of Bradwell in the Diocese of Chelmsford. He had previously been Archdeacon of Barking in the same Diocese from 2013 to 2018. Bishop John comes from the ancient Christian community in Kerala, South India. He moved to north India for higher studies and then teaching. He was ordained in the Church of North India in 1994. As Bishop of Bradwell he has oversight of 182 churches in an area covering mid and south Essex consisting of six boroughs/District Councils (Brentwood, Basildon, Rochford, Castle Point, Chelmsford, and Maldon) and two unitary authorities (Thurrock and Southend).

Mrs Jacqueline Stamper has served as a lay member of the General Synod from the Diocese of Blackburn since 2015. She has over thirty years’ experience as a senior manager in universities, involved in strategy development, change management, restructuring, planning, institutional and divisional budgeting, and policy formulation. Jacqueline also brings to the Commission close experience of Diocesan management and the many challenges facing Dioceses in the 21st century, as a member of Bishop’s Council, Diocesan Board of Finance, Vacancy in See Committee, Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, Diocesan Human Resources Committee, and Diocesan Patronage Board.

The Right Revd Paul Williams is diocesan bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, having previously served as Area Bishop of Kensington. In June 2015 he was installed as the 12th Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham, coming to a diocese of 320 churches engaged in mission across the City and County of Nottingham, as well as few parishes in South Yorkshire. He works closely with the nurture of younger vocations and leaders in all areas of society, as well as church planting,
leadership development, and pioneering new forms of ministry in a dynamic young city and diocese with very diverse communities and cultures.

Staff

The Secretary

Mr Simon Stanley has worked for the National Church Institutions since 2008 and is currently on secondment to the Dioceses Commission. His previous responsibilities included managing the parliamentary accountability for the Church Commissioners and resourcing the office of the Second Church Estates Commissioner. As Deputy Head of Parliamentary Affairs, he was also responsible for resourcing the twenty-six Lords Spiritual and providing advice, preparing speeches and amendments to legislation for the senior bishops. Simon has served on his local PCC for over a decade and is an elected Parish Councilor.