

## GENERAL SYNOD

REVIEW OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR PCC MEMBERSHIP AND ENTRY ON THE  
CHURCH ELECTORAL ROLL**Summary**

1. The Church of England encourages greater variety of worship, termed “Fresh Expressions”. Most of these new forms of worship are non Eucharistic. As the Church representation rules requires parochial church councils members to be regular communicants, it is difficult for participants of such acts of worship to join PCCs and take their place in the responsibility for the management and mission of the church. The motion calls for a review of the qualifications for membership of parochial church councils, in the light of the existence of bishops’ mission initiatives.

2. The Church of England application for Electoral Roll membership offers poor user experience. The standard application for Electoral Roll is both unnecessarily detailed and vague, making it difficult for those less familiar the culture of the church to complete the form with confidence. The form does not explain the benefits and some of the expectations of electoral roll membership. In an age when people are increasingly suspicious and reluctant to join organisations, the current Electoral Roll form is further barrier to electoral roll membership. The motion calls for a review of the review of the Electoral Roll application in the light of the existence of bishops’ mission initiatives.

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**Motion**

That this Synod invite the Archbishops’ Council:

- (a) to conduct a review of:
    - (i) the qualifications for membership of parochial church councils, in the light of the existence of bishops’ mission initiatives; and
    - (ii) the qualifications for enrolment on a church electoral roll, and the form of application for enrolment, in the light of supportive people from the wider community feeling excluded; and
  - (b) to report to the Synod on the conclusions of the review.
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## GENERAL SYNOD

### Review of qualifications for membership of PCC

1. This motion originates from St. Michael the Archangel Smarden PCC. The PCC proposed the motion in the light of its own attempts to make itself more representative of the varied nature of the congregation.
2. The variety of the congregation has grown considerably since 2012 when the church started a monthly Messy Church, which in Smarden is called "Active Church". There is regularly an attendance of around 15 adults and 15 children. Most of the children and adults only attend either Active Church or a bi-monthly All Age Family service in Biddenden. Most adults of this congregation are not confirmed. Confirmation is encouraged, but uptake up has been very poor.
3. Smarden PCC wants to encourage the Active Church congregation to see themselves as members of the electoral roll, and we would like them to take a part in shaping the vision and direction of the church, as well as encouraging responsibility for the practical tasks of maintaining the ministry and the building. However, under the current Church Representation Rules, the PCC is unable recruit anybody from the Active Church congregation who is not also a regular communicant, attending regular main services.
4. The Church of England is actively encouraging churches to develop Fresh Expressions of worship, and therefore Smarden PCC believes there will be many other congregations experiencing similar limitations.

### Review of the application form for Electoral Roll membership form.

1. The main issue with the current Church of England Electoral Roll form is to do with its presentation and "user experience".
2. The form is, in places unnecessarily, detailed: see for example the note about those who are approaching 16. However the form is also vague: for instance, how do you define "good standing"?
3. Increasingly we find individuals do not have the patience to read forms. If the form is not immediately clear, people either don't bother applying or apply without reading read the small print. Also we are finding that people are increasingly suspicious and reluctant to join organisations, uncertain of the commitment it places upon them. We find that the Electoral Roll form constitutes a barrier to church membership, instead of an encouragement.
4. The current Electoral Roll application offers no explanation about what membership means, the benefits or responsibilities of Electoral Roll membership.
5. In a church locally, we discovered that a long-standing member of the Electoral Roll was even not baptised. This only came to light when this person applied to join the PCC, causing a difficult pastoral conversation. In this situation, the issue was resolved in a joyous Baptism and Confirmation – but we find that this outcome is the exception rather than the rule.

Rev'd Alexander Bienfait.

Priest in Charge St. Michael the Archangel Smarden, and All Saints Biddenden  
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