

Dioceses Commission

Annual Report for 2022

1. The Dioceses Commission is required to report annually to the General Synod.

Membership and staff

2. The Commission consists of a Chair and Vice-Chair appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the latter from among the members of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the General Synod; four members elected by the Synod; and four members appointed by the Appointments Committee.

3. The membership and staff of the Commission are as follows:

Chair:	Dame Caroline Spelman
Vice Chair:	TBC
Elected Members (from 1 May 2022):	Canon Robert Hammond (Chelmsford) The Revd Dr Robert Munro (Chester) The Revd Neil Patterson (Hereford) Mr Clive Scowen (London)
Appointed Members (from 1 May 2022):	The Ven Karen Lund (Manchester) Mrs Ruth Martin (Southwark) Mrs Sue Slater (Lincoln) The Rt Revd Paul Williams, Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham
Secretary:	Mr Simon Stanley (until March 2022) Ms Jenny Axtell (from April 2022)

4. Following the dissolution and inauguration of General Synod in 2021 the membership of the Commission was renewed as set out in the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007. The new members took office on 1 May 2022. The members of the Commission until 30 April 2022, and with whom the first Commission meeting of 2022 was conducted in March, are as follows:

Chair:	Dame Caroline Spelman
Vice Chair (until 30 April 2022):	The Revd Fr Paul Benfield (Blackburn)
Elected Members (until 30 April 2022):	The Revd Canon Geoffrey Harbord (Sheffield) The Revd Dr Robert Munro (Chester) Mr Gavin Oldham (Oxford) One Vacancy
Appointed Members (until 30 April 2022):	Mrs Ruth Martin (Southwark) The Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath, Bishop of Bradwell Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn) The Rt Revd Paul Williams, Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham

Role of the Commission

5. Information about the Commission and its recent work can be found in the Commission's area of the Church of England web site: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/dioceses-commission>
6. As a summary, the Commission's main duties and responsibilities are laid down by the 2007 Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure. Its principal duties and powers relating to:

- the provincial and diocesan structure of the Church of England,
 - good practice in diocesan administration, and
 - the creation and filling of suffragan see.
7. The Commission's primary duty is *to keep under review the provincial and diocesan structure of the Church of England* and in particular:
- the size, boundaries, and the number of provinces.
 - the size, boundaries and number of dioceses and their distribution between the provinces.
 - the number and distribution of bishops and the arrangements for episcopal oversight.

Business undertaken

8. The Commission has continued playing its part in ongoing conversations regarding episcopal ministry and how this can best enable missional effectiveness. Dame Caroline Spelman has attended several regional bishops meetings throughout 2022. These meetings have presented the opportunity to discuss with bishops the work of the Commission, hear their thoughts and experiences of episcopal ministry.
9. The Secretary meets regularly with the West Midlands and the Eastern regions who are both undertaking projects to look at ways in which they might collaborate more within the region. Each has identified 3-4 areas to explore further, these include Net Zero Carbon, Racial Justice, Education, Church Buildings Management and Training. The Secretary acts as the link between the Dioceses Commission and the Transforming Effectiveness work, led by the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.
10. The Commission is keen to ensure that it links well with other areas of the Church's national work and structures. It looks forward to continuing conversations with the Office of the Archbishops' Advisors on Appointments and Developments regarding the filling of suffragan sees and also with those leading the Governance Project and the Transforming Effectiveness work.

Suffragan sees

11. The Commission continues to carry out its responsibilities, notably its statutory role in respect of the filling of suffragan sees. It seeks to ensure that any proposal to fill suffragan sees should make sense in the current financial climate, be rooted in the diocese's mission strategy as well as furthering the Church of England's Vision and Strategy, cohere with the roles of others in the diocesan senior leadership team, and include roles that are inherently episcopal. Members have been particularly keen to ensure that a suffragan bishop will have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, whether geographic or portfolio.
12. Members have been grateful for high quality submissions which have given considerable thought to the needs of the Church at a diocesan, regional and national level. The Commission would like to thank the bishops and their representatives who have taken the time to present their proposals and has enjoyed meeting them to discuss at its meetings. The Commission has recently refreshed its guidance for diocesan bishops wishing to submit proposals to fill a see and looks forward to more conversations in 2023.
13. In exercising its responsibilities under section 17 of the Dioceses and Pastoral Mission Measure 2007, the Commission considered submissions for the filling of the following sees during the year:

14. Beverley – Following the announcement of the Rt Revd Glyn Webster’s retirement, the Archbishop of York’s representative submitted a proposal at the final meeting of 2021 which was approved by Delegated Decision procedure in January 2022 following further consideration. The see is one of the Church of England’s Provincial Episcopal Visitors (PEVs), ministering in the Province of York. The role is envisaged to be more embedded into the life of the Diocese of York, ministering to all traditions of the Church and encouraging mission and ministry in estates and deprived communities, along with an aim to revitalise the catholic mission across the Province. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Beverley.
15. Plymouth – Following the announcement of the retirement of the Rt Revd Nick McKinnel, the Bishop of Exeter presented a submission to the Commission. The Diocese hopes that the new bishop of Plymouth will help to turn the challenges of an ageing population around and give young people a reason to stay in the region, as well providing significant pastoral support to the extensive rural farming community. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Plymouth.
16. Kingston – Following the announcement of the retirement of the Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham, the Bishop of Southwark presented a submission to the Commission. The Bishop noted that the new suffragan would have both geographical area and portfolio responsibilities, and would take the lead on environmental issues for the diocese. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Kingston.
17. Hertford – Following the announcement of the Rt Revd Michael Beasley’s translation to the see of Bath & Wells, the Bishop of St Albans presented a submission to the Commission. The see has geographical responsibilities according to the diocese’s Area Scheme and there is an emphasis on on-the-ground provision of pastoral care, particularly for chaplaincies, schools and parishes. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Hertford.
18. Kensington – Following the announcement that the Rt Revd Dr Graham Tomlin would take on a new role as Director of the Centre for Cultural Witness at Lambeth Palace Bishop Pete Broadbent, as Advisor to the Bishop of London, presented a submission to the Commission on behalf of the Bishop of London. The see has geographical responsibilities according to the London Area Scheme, with additional portfolio responsibilities to be determined upon appointment, but the importance of the postholder continuing to work in mission and evangelism was noted. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Kensington.
19. Ebbsfleet (formerly Maidstone) – Following the announcement of the retirement of the Rt Revd Rod Thomas, the Bishop to the Archbishops and the Special Advisor to the Archbishops presented a submission to the Commission on behalf of the Archbishops. This role will continue to have a national ministry providing episcopal ministry to complementarian evangelical parishes and a voice in the College of Bishops. The Commission suggested that the see should be rooted in a diocese, as was proposed for the see of Oswestry (below), and the Chair wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury to this effect. The see of Maidstone will become vacant and could potentially revert to local use within the Diocese of Canterbury in the future. The role of the previous Bishop of Ebbsfleet – whose ministry was to traditional catholic parishes – will move to become that of the bishop of Oswestry (see below). The Commission approved the filling of the see of Ebbsfleet in line with the proposed changes.
20. Oswestry (formerly Ebbsfleet) – Following the Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall’s resignation in order to seek full communion with the Roman Catholic Church, the Bishop to the Archbishops, the Special Advisor to the Archbishops, and the Chaplain to the Bishop of Lichfield presented a submission to the Commission on behalf of the Archbishops. This role is one of the Provincial

Episcopal Visitors (PEVs) and ministers to traditional catholic parishes in the thirteen western dioceses of the Province of Canterbury. Owing to the change to the use of the see of Ebbsfleet (see above) a new see was required for this ministry. Consultations on the see suggested it would be helpful for the new postholder to be rooted in a diocese and the Commission has agreed that the Diocese of Lichfield provides a good location for this ministry, designating it to the previously dormant see of Oswestry. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Oswestry in line with the proposed changes.

21. Huddersfield – Following the announcement of the Rt Revd Jonathan Gibbs’s translation to the see of Rochester, the Bishop of Leeds presented a submission to the Commission. It is expected that the new bishop will have less of a national portfolio than the previous Bishop had held and so be able to focus more on the episcopal area and seek increased engagement in the public square in the area. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Huddersfield.
22. Bolton – Following the announcement of the retirement of the Rt Revd Mark Ashcroft, the Diocesan Secretary for Manchester presented a submission to the Commission on behalf of the Bishop of Manchester. The see has a geographical area of responsibility which has a particularly diverse community, and is also expected to take a lead in interfaith and ecumenical relations. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Bolton.
23. Ripon – Following the announcement of the Rt Revd Dr Helen-Ann Hartley’s translation to the see of Newcastle, the Bishop of Leeds presented a submission to the Commission. The see has oversight of the largest geographical area of the diocese under the Leeds Area Scheme and is expected to engage with the predominantly rural and agricultural communities and large military presence in the area. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Ripon.
24. Bradwell – Following the announcement of the Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath’s translation to the see of Liverpool, the Chair of the Chelmsford Diocese House of Laity presented a submission to the Commission on behalf of the Bishop of Chelmsford. The new bishop will play a leadership role as the diocese takes a new direction of travel. She/He will have episcopal oversight of the Bradwell Episcopal Area under the Chelmsford Area Scheme and portfolio responsibilities including chaplaincy and lay ministry. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Bradwell.
25. Dorking – Following the announcement of the Rt Revd Joanne Bailey Wells’s move to a new role as Bishop for Episcopal Ministry in the Anglican Communion, the Bishop of Guildford presented a submission to the Commission. The Diocese of Guildford does not have a formal or informal area system. The new bishop will be responsible for three of the diocese’s strategic projects: Children and young people, vocations, and the environment. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Dorking.
26. Thetford – Following the announcement of the Rt Revd Alan Winton’s retirement, the Bishop of Norwich presented a submission to the Commission. The new bishop will have oversight of the Norfolk area and portfolio responsibilities for ministry training, education and safeguarding, as well as providing leadership as the diocese works towards its 2021 diocesan vision & strategy. The Commission approved the filling of the see of Thetford.

On behalf of the Dioceses Commission:
Dame Caroline Spelman, Chair
January 2023