

Welcome to Diocesan Synod

Thank you for responding to God's call and being elected to the Diocesan Synod. As a member you will be playing an important role in the life and mission of the Church of England in Suffolk and shaping our strategic priorities for the next three years.

This guide is to help you with that responsibility and provide a brief introduction to the Diocese.

Further information about the Synod can be found on the website:

www.cofesuffolk.org > 'About Us' > 'Diocesan Synod' or

<http://www.cofesuffolk.org/synods-committees/diocesan-synod>

An Overview of the Diocese

The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich was founded in 1914 and serves the county of Suffolk, except for an area in the north east around Lowestoft and one parish in the county of Essex. It serves over 660,000 people living in a geographical area of 1,400 square miles. Of this population 3% (c.19,000 people) identify themselves with the Church of England by being members of the church electoral roll and about 2% (c.14,000) attend a service in their parish in any given week, with 1.75% (c.11,500) attending Sunday services once a month or more. For the next six years ambitious targets have been agreed to strengthen engagement with our communities, increase the number of people we reach and grow new Christian disciples, through the work, mission and ministry that you as a Synod member help govern.

Communities throughout the diocese are served by 445 parishes within 129 benefices and 18 deaneries. There are 478 church buildings, of which 457 are listed. There are the full-time equivalent of 117 Stipendiary Clergy and curates, 47 Self-Supporting Ministers, 169 Licensed Lay Ministers including Readers, Licensed Lay Pastors and Local Evangelists, and 507 commissioned Lay Elders. There are 88 Church of England Controlled and Aided Schools and 15 Church of England Academies in the diocese.

The Cathedral Church of St James and St Edmund is in Bury St Edmunds on the old Abbey site, famous for being the burial place for St Edmund until Henry VIII closed the Abbey, and the place in 1214 where the barons of England met and swore to force King John to accept the Charter of Liberties, later known as the Magna Carta. In 2020 we will celebrate the 1000th Anniversary of the founding of the Abbey.

Leadership

The Diocesan Bishop, The Rt Revd Martin Seeley, leads a team of Senior Staff (Bishop's Staff), who report to the Bishop's Council (as the Standing Committee of the Synod), that oversee the implementation of strategies, plans and initiatives to advance the vision to be a diocese of "Flourishing Congregations, Making a Difference". This team comprises of; a Suffragan Bishop, The Rt Revd Mike Harrison; two Archdeacons, The Ven David Jenkins and The Ven Ian Morgan; the Dean of St Edmundsbury, The Very Revd Joe Hawes; the Diocesan Secretary, Mrs Anna Hughes; the Director of Mission and Ministry; The Revd Canon Dave Gardner; the Director of Strategic Planning and Communications, Mr Gavin Stone; the Dean for Rural Mission Consultancy, The Revd Sally Gaze; and the Bishops' Ministry Officer, The Revd Jeanette Gosney.

Led by the Diocesan Secretary, staff in the Diocesan Office located near Ipswich town centre collectively support and enable the work of parishes throughout the diocese; amongst many other things, examples are:

- day-to-day support, training and housing of stipendiary clergy
- the exploration of vocation and calling so as to develop future lay and ordained ministers
- support to manage, upkeep and transform church buildings
- management of investments including glebe land and property
- resourcing and enable parishes to communicate well with their congregations and the wider community
- supporting parishes with their safer recruitment and the safeguarding of children and adults, particularly those most at risk of harm or abuse.
- supporting Church Schools via the Diocesan Board of Education
- Synodical and charity governance, including triennial elections to various boards and committees.

These activities, some of which are statutory or are required by the national church, are funded largely through the collection of parish share. Annual revenue is c £8million. Net assets are c£80million, most of which is invested in parsonages. For more information about the life and activities of the diocese visit www.cofesuffolk.org.

What is Diocesan Synod?

The Church of England is "Episcopally led and Synodically governed" ie Diocesan Synod is the democratically elected decision-making body of the diocese. Its membership comprises both clergy and laity (houses), representing the 18 deaneries. Members are elected for a period of three years (triennium), beginning on 1 August in the year of their election.

Three meetings are normally held each year—on Saturdays in March, June and October.

Diocesan Synod

- Considers and debates issues of concern to the Church of England and makes provisions for such matters specifically in relation to our diocese.
- Considers and expresses opinions on any other matters of religious or public interest.
- Advises the Bishop on any matters on which he may choose to consult.
- Considers and expresses opinion on any matters referred to it by the General Synod—the ruling body of the Church of England—and approves or disapproves provisions referred to Diocesan Synod under Article 8* of the General Synod Constitution.

**This article requires Measures involving permanent changes to the public forms of service of the Church of England or to its relationship with other Christian bodies, to be approved by a majority of dioceses at meetings of their Diocesan Synods.*

How does it function?

The Synod consists of three Houses: Bishops, Clergy and Laity. The Bishop is the President of the Synod. From time to time, when a need arises, the individual Houses hold separate meetings. The Houses meet together for meetings of Synod.

The work of the Synod is normally carried out through Diocesan Boards and Committees most of which are formed following the Diocesan Synod elections. They report regularly to the Synod about their work, and the Synod approves their annual expenditure as part of the Diocesan Budget.

The body that relates most closely to the Diocesan Synod is the Bishop's Council — the Standing Committee of the Synod. The Bishop's Council also acts as the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) under the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Mission and Pastoral Committee under the Mission and Pastoral etc. (Amendment) Measure 2018.

The other main Boards and Committees of the diocese are the Board of Education, the Finance and Investment Committee, the Governance Committee, Parsonages Committee and the Diocesan Advisory Committee [DAC] for the Care of Churches.

What Business does it cover?

- A Presidential address on a topical subject, delivered by the Bishop.
- Discussion and discernment of our vision and strategy – Growing in God.
- The Diocesan Budget for the coming year.
- Receipt of the annual accounts of the Diocesan Board of Finance.
- Presentations and reports for Diocesan Boards and Committees.
- Matters raised by deanery synods.
- Matters referred by the General Synod, including draft legislation.
- Other items of concern for the Church in our Diocese.

The procedure of the Synod and its method of functioning are regulated by its Standing Orders.

How is the agenda agreed and circulated?

The agenda for the Diocesan Synod meeting is drafted by a small working party Chaired by the Bishop, discussed by his Staff Team and approved by the Bishop's Council.

Rural Deans and Deanery Synod Lay Chairs receive a preliminary notice which outlines what is proposed, allowing time for response before the agenda papers are circulated three weeks in advance of the meeting.

Questions

There is always a space on the Synod agenda for questions. This is available to all members within the spirit of openness, shared faith and shared responsibility. Any member who would like to ask a question at Synod can contact the Diocesan Secretary in advance, who can arrange appropriate assistance as required and enable answers.

Who are the Members of the Diocesan Synod?

House of Bishops

- The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich (President of Synod)
- The Suffragan Bishop of Dunwich

House of Clergy

- The Dean of the Cathedral
- The Archdeacons
- The Clerical members of the Diocese on General Synod
- Members elected by the houses of clergy in Deanery Synods to the Diocese
- Up to five members co-opted by the House of Clergy of the Diocesan Synod

House of Laity

- The lay members of the Diocese on General Synod
- Members elected by the houses of laity in Deanery Synods to the Diocese
- Up to five members co-opted by the House of Laity of the Diocesan Synod
- Certain ex officio members including the Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Finance

In addition, the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich may nominate up to ten additional members of the Diocesan Synod, who may be clergy or laity.

The House of Clergy and Laity meet separately to elect chairpersons at the first meeting of the Synod in each three-year period, or triennium. They serve as Vice-Presidents of the Synod.

Officers of the Synod

Secretary	The Diocesan Secretary & CEO, Anna Hughes, Diocesan Office, St Nicholas Centre, 4 Cutler Street, Ipswich, IP1 1UQ. Tel: 01473 298500 Email: diocesan.secretary@cofesuffolk.org
Legal Adviser	The Diocesan Registrar, Mr James Hall, Diocesan Registry, Providence House, 141-145 Princes St, Ipswich IP1 1QJ Tel: 01473 232300 Email: james-hall@birketts.co.uk
Chancellor	Mr David Etherington QC, Diocesan Registry, Birketts, as above.

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