

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

1. **David Kemp (General Synod, Reculver Deanery)** asks the following question to the Bishop of Dover:

*The report by Dr Bev Botting and the Venerable Bob Jackson shows that Average Weekly Attendance in Canterbury Diocese fell by 2% in 2023, in contrast to the national average of all other dioceses. Bearing in mind that this seems to call into question the effectiveness of a diocesan strategy will you and the Archbishop's Council arrange a substantive debate on the report at the next meeting of this Synod?*

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**Answer:**

**The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover** responds:

We are, of course, disappointed in the results. However, the strategy that Synod has put in place by adopting our Three Bold Outcomes for 2030 is all about growth – growth in the number of children and young disciples, growth in the number of new Christian communities and growth in every parish, benefice and deanery. The results should serve as an important reminder to us all that we need to seek to make an urgent personal, proactive contribution. This is why we have put evangelism as the topic for the Open Synod.

We have been encouraging and supporting deaneries to work with their parishes and benefices to develop plans that will lead to growth. As common themes emerge we seek to find ways to resource these. With limited investment capability in the diocese, we are working hard to draw investment from the national Diocesan Investment Programme. If successful, our latest request will fund two resourcing churches in Margate and Maidstone to help bring revitalisation across those areas, and this will be followed by a programme of further resourcing churches in other locations.

Growth is not all about national investment though. I was a little disappointed to hear that only a half of our larger churches have Mission Action Plans! If we fail to plan, we are planning to fail. We will be holding a "Leading Your Church into Growth" conference in July which will help to remind us of the things that can make a difference.

Strategies take time to make a difference and they only work where there is local buy-in and take-up. This is why deanery, benefice and parish growth is at the heart of our approach. Through deanery planning we have opportunities for all to contribute to local strategy and to discuss new ideas. I would encourage Chapters, Mission & Ministry Committees and Deanery Synods to keep growth at centre of all that they do. Where new ideas emerge, Archbishop's Council will of course consider if they have wider diocesan potential and work out how best to support them. My team will always remain open to new ideas and are always ready to discuss them.

At the end of the day, growth comes from faithful living out of the gospel by every baptised Christian being on fire for the Lord! It also means having inspired leaders (lay and ordained) in every parish and benefice full of the joy of the Spirit of God! Growth is also about confident Christians who are not afraid to tell the story of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

2. **Neil Logan-Green (General Synod Canterbury Deanery)** asks the following question to the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance:  
*will the Chair of the DBF please produce a detailed update report with initial recommendations for material savings to deliver the agreed objective of a balanced budget*
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**Answer:**

**Tony Richter, Interim Chair of the Board of Finance** responds

There are two known savings at this point:

- 1) On Clergy pension – we will be saving on the reduction of % contributions from 28% to 25% from April. These will amount to **£67k** saving this year.
- 2) On DL staff pension – we had been notified that there is a surplus of **£205k** which will cover the cost of pension contributions in 2024.

Otherwise, it is too early to say if there are any other material savings.

We are aware that there will be some overspends on property budget because of remedial work that got delayed during the pandemic and now will cost more to carry out. During the pandemic only the critical and necessary work was carried out and significant amount of our properties are in need of external uplift to include roof repairs.

In terms of parish share, if the amounts due were divided equally then we are not receiving the parish share that we should receive by the end of February. However, we do know that a lot of parishes pay at different times in the year and therefore it is difficult to judge whether we are on track or not.

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

3. **Neil Logan-Green (General Synod Canterbury Deanery)** asks the following question to the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance:

*Will the Chair of the DBF indicate how objective 1 can be assisted by joint services provision with Diocese of Rochester.*

*Please indicate the precise areas where this can be utilised*

*Please indicate a detailed timetable to approach Diocese of Rochester to seek to enquire if they would be willing to participate.*

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**Answer:**

**Tony Richter, Interim Chair of the Board of Finance** responds:

We have been working with Rochester for a number of years on some shared provision including training for our curates (IME2).

Opportunities for further closer working have also been explored in recent years. We have recently successfully applied jointly for Net Zero Carbon capacity funding from national church which will see a joint Programme Manager and two Net Zero advisors working as a virtual team. We believe that there are benefits compared to having individual part time Programme Managers.

Other teams work together across the two dioceses where there is synergy such as Media & Engagement/Communications, particularly for covering holidays etc. and regular meetings where beneficial e.g. Strategic Programme Managers.

From the discussion that have taken place between the two dioceses to date, no particular further opportunities have been identified where savings could be made from joint provision. Learning the lessons from Local Government and the formation of the Diocese of Leeds, for example, real savings are generally substantially less than would be anticipated, and can end up costing more due to integration issues such as: different IT systems and infrastructure, different processes, policy and strategy mis-alignment, cultural differences etc.

The discussion remains open but there are no clear, tangible, feasible additional opportunities that have been identified at the present time.

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

4. **Barney de Berry (General Synod Canterbury Deanery)** asks the following question to *In the latest Church of England Statistics for Mission it shows average Sunday attendance for children and young people (under 16s) in Canterbury diocese for 2022 was 1400 down from 4800 in 2012. Has any strategic work been done to identify if there are specific deaneries, benefices or parishes that had significant under 16s Sunday attendance in 2012 but now do not? What the reasons might be as to why they have seen this decline? And how those 2012 numbers which might indicate potential for growth in the future might be regained?*
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**Answer:**

**Jen Tobin, Lead Officer for Children and Youth Ministry** responds:

The Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) team continues to address the decline in average attendance for children and young people in our diocese. Since the appointment of the Diocese's Lead Officer for Children and Youth Ministry in September 2023, a great deal of strategic work has been, and continues to be undertaken to address the decline and understand the reasons for this, of which they are complex and many. Through analysis of the data from SfM (Statistics for Mission) 2022, parish and deanery visits and further research into understanding local demographics, including socio-economic divisions it is apparent that for many rural parishes and benefices there are far fewer families and therefore children and young people who reside in these areas. Additionally, those families, children and young people who do reside in rural areas, tend to travel into more urban settings for worship as well as children and youth activities. Therefore, town and city centre churches have typically seen an increase whilst rural churches have seen decline. The CYPE team are addressing the issue of decline within rural settings and exploring potential strategies to address this. One of which is 'Flourish' which is in its initial planning stages and looks to bring about fresh and revived worshipping communities for our children, young people and their families through active partnerships between schools and parishes.

It has also been evident that churches go through cyclical phases, where often a group of children and young people are part of a church's worshipping community and then they grow up and move on. Although this is not the whole picture, it may partly explain how churches who were larger in 2012 dropped in children and young people's attendance and are now seeing their numbers rising with a new cohort of children and young people.

Many churches, both rural and urban are increasing their engagement with families, children and young people through outreach within their communities. These relational activities have enabled our churches to meet families where they are, and there has been evidence of families transitioning from attending relational/community groups to joining a worshipping community more frequently on a Sunday.

Prior to the pandemic, Fresh Expressions proved to be where growth amongst children and young people's attendance was taking place. Fresh Expressions were disproportionately affected by the pandemic and therefore so too was the attendance amongst children and young people. The data also shows that churches which have planted and developed Fresh Expressions are more likely to see growth. The trauma of a global pandemic cannot be underestimated, and the impact (which was most keenly felt in the declining attendance of children and young people) will have a legacy which will hinder the attendance we see on a Sunday morning further into the future, but the figures we see from SfM 2022 is that there is a modest increase in attendance since 2021.

There is an increasing number of practical steps being taken to facilitate this growth. Our diocese has focused on recruiting and supporting the development of youth ministers. Working in partnership with Ridley Hall and Rochester Diocese, we have our first cohort for Catalyst who will be working on practical projects of engagement with children and young people. We have also developed a good working relationship with Youthscape and are utilising their expertise and training to advance next steps.

The CYPE team acknowledges that there are still more steps to be taken in addressing this ongoing concern and continue to hold this as a priority and look forward to working alongside our churches in creating growing opportunities for children and young people's discipleship.

**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS****5. Barney de Berry (General Synod, Canterbury Deanery) ask the following question:**

*On 24th Jan 2024 – there was a seminar run by the diocese titled Faith at Home which had the brilliant vision of equipping leaders to help people and especially parents to grow the faith of children and young people in the home. It is a seminar that fits perfectly with our bold outcome to double the number of children and young people and yet was attended by only 4 people two of whom were leading the seminar. Similar 'Growing Faith' seminars have had to be cancelled because no one signed up. Where was this seminar advertised? Why when this resource is aligned so closely with our key bold outcome was it not pushed more in our communications and promoted by our leaders? How might we make sure these resources are not wasted in the future? How can we make sure that our bold outcome is not just wishful thinking but a vision we see to conclusion?*

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**Answer:**

**Quentin Roper Diocesan Director of Education** responds:

The Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) team continues to appreciate and be encouraged by its Growing Faith partnership with St. Mary Bredin Church (SMB), which is focused on creative learning, signposting resources and hosting conversations to equip and develop other church communities within the Diocese. For the seminar in question, the arrangement was to advertise through the CYPE team's Ministry Dispatch newsletter, (subsequently entered in both the December and January editions), in addition to appropriate media channels available to SMB. From a diocesan perspective, it is acknowledged that more could have been done; for future training and development opportunities under the Growing Faith banner, the CYPE team will engage closely with Media and Engagement colleagues to ensure that different avenues are explored to reach the relevant audience. In addition, individual parishes are of course welcome and encouraged to share published information to widen coverage.

In terms of addressing the bold outcome highlighted, we trust that parishes and deaneries are prayerfully and courageously discerning how this vision might be achieved. Our CYPE team is keen to hear resulting ideas, projects and suggestions, to enhance the increasing number of practical steps already being taken. Harnessing the impact of young people's ministry on church revitalisation, we have employed an additional group of youth ministers across the Diocese. We have also established projects and partnerships such as Launchpad and Catalyst, helping to build local confidence in designing and implementing initiatives for youth ministry. Furthermore, plans are evolving to join a national pilot, 'FLOURISH', focused on systemic, missional change to establish a network of worshipping communities in schools; a strategic connection through our presence in education offers the opportunity to imagine thousands of new, younger and more diverse disciples.

## MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

6. **Barney de Berry (General Synod Canterbury Deanery)** asks the following question:  
*Can the complete Deanery stats for mission for the whole diocese be given to synod?*
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**Answer:**

**Stephen Taylor Diocesan Secretary** responds

The Church of England Stats dept don't send out the 2023 stats until after Easter – However we commissioned some work to be done on the October count statistics to give us early access to the figures so we can react in a more timely way. This report was made available in the Equipping for Ministry newsletter <https://mailchi.mp/diocant/equipping-for-ministry-february-1452301> with an overview of the report from Steve Conyes.

554 people across the diocese receive this newsletter. If you wish to sign up to receive future editions, follow this link where details of all the diocesan newsletters are:

[Newsletters - Diocese of Canterbury \(canterburydiocese.org\)](https://www.canterburydiocese.org/newsletters)

Individual parish stats are available to every parish through the parish returns section on the Church of England portal. The data administrator will have these details.