

Note for Diocesan Synod, March 2026

Re: Hereford Diocesan Synod Motion II

We have been asked by colleagues in Hereford and Gloucester Dioceses to put the attached motion to Diocesan Synod for their consideration and potentially endorsement. Their intention is that as many Diocesan Synods as possible submit the same motion to General Synod to show the strength of feeling on this issue before it is debated again, potentially at the July General Synod.

The motion has been considered by Agenda Planning and Bishop's Council on behalf of this Synod and they have agreed that the Motion should be presented to Diocesan Synod for open debate. For clarity, it has not been *commended* to this Synod by either body, simply presented for open debate as a matter which may be of interest to Synod.

In considering whether to adopt this motion, the Synod is invited to reflect on the following:

1. The financial and people planning models that the Motion are asking for are not unreasonable planning tools for a large, highly inter-connected institution such as the Church of England, where shared resources (people and money) are growing scarcer. They will be a useful tool for dioceses to make better decisions about their own resourcing and also will enable the national church to make well informed decisions about the allocation of limited resources. Although progress in creating such models has been slow, not least because of the variability in the way individual dioceses account for their finances and count their ministers, this work is underway already at the national church.
2. The models described the Motion are *helpful* in informing decision-making but by no means the answer itself. The economics of the Church of England are complex:
 - a. How should we use so-called 'inter-generational funds' (ie Church Commissioners' invested funds, diocesan reserves, parish reserves) for today's ministry and also for future generations?
 - b. What actions which could be taken by the national church or by dioceses make a difference in helping churches to grow so that they flourish missionally and are not anxious about money?
 - c. What are the strategic levers we have for increasing vocations to ordained and lay ministries, ie even if we have more data about ministry today, can we actually do anything with the information to ensure there is new ministry for tomorrow?

3. The Motion signals the widely (but not universally) held view that ‘ordinary’ parish ministry has been overlooked for too long by the national church in terms of its priorities for investment. It is clear from recent grant decisions, however, that this message has already been heard by the Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) but this Synod may consider that this message needs emphasising.
4. This diocese is currently engaging very positively with the national church as we seek to gain support for a bid for over £12m over the next 6 years to fund new missional opportunities in some of the poorest parts of our diocese. Is building positive and mutually respectful relationships with national colleagues a way of effecting change which is more aligned with our values as a diocese than doing so through challenge through governance structures?

Synod is invited to consider the attached paper from Hereford and Gloucester Dioceses and decide whether it wishes to adopt the motion as set out in the paper:

“ That this Synod affirms and supports the Hereford Diocesan Synod Motion, known as Hereford DSM II, approved at the Hereford Diocesan Synod & HDBF Meeting held on 26 November 2025 and affixed hereto, and accordingly calls upon:

a) the Business Committee of the General Synod to ensure that the full debate, previously called for by this Synod, enables it to express its view on the approach to disbursement of national funding, including support for local stipendiary ministry, and that adequate time and opportunity is provided for full consideration of the proposed modelling, including examination of statutory core allocations to diocesan stipend funds as distinct from discretionary or time-limited support;

(b) Archbishops’ Council (or its successor), the House of Bishops and the Church Commissioners to ensure that the robust financial modelling, for which this Synod has called to inform the development of the ‘Funding Framework’; to include

(i) national, diocese-by-diocese modelling of the financial support required from the Church Commissioners, not only to prevent the collapse of the diocesan and parish systems but revitalise the parish system across all of the dioceses.

(ii) specific examination of projected clergy numbers and deployment requirements across diverse contexts (urban, ‘market town’, rural) to support evidence-based decisions on how the Church can meet its mission objectives in every community;

(iii) modelling to be undertaken, over appropriate time horizons (indicatively 25 years (generational), 7 years, 3 years and 1 year (for fine-tuning via short-term adjustment)).

(c) the Archbishops' Council (or its successor) and the House of Bishops to establish a suitable, representative team from the dioceses and the National Church Institutions to engage directly with all dioceses in finalising this modelling and determining the financial needs of local ministry; and

(d) the House of Bishops, in consultation with the Archbishops' Council (or its successor), to develop a strategic plan, as part of this review, for sustainable and ongoing growth in clergy numbers, to break the current cycle of managed decline and honour the covenant between the Church and those offering themselves for ordained ministry, ensuring this plan informs both the financial modelling and the development of the Church's future 'Funding Framework'. “

Sam Rushton

March 2026