



Dr Phillip Rice

Tower Hamlets - St Pauls Shadwell

Proposer: Jacquie Driver Chair of Diocesan Finance
Committee Saint Church – Hackney

Seconded: Duncan McAndrew,
St Peters, London Docks Wapping.

About me

- Former church warden, lay chair of Hackney Deanery and recently lay chair of Tower Hamlets.
- I was vice chair of the Friends of St Pauls Cathedral during the Covid period and played a part in working with the Canon Treasurer on the design and implementation of the fund raising for the £3.5 million successful “Remember Me” appeal for the Covid memorial in St Pauls.
- I was on general synod 2024-26, previously 2010-15

What about the Church politics – looking back

I found General Synod to be a deeply spiritual place in my time there. Yes. Surprise? Surely it should not be otherwise? I enjoyed the company and meeting with many saints of God from across the range of traditions represented there. It was the time of the debates about safeguarding, financial crisis, Women Bishop’s measure, so there was plenty of argument and pain for sure. But I think Synod got it right in the vote at the second attempt – mainly because the provision to those in profound disagreement was generous and necessary. Could the above be a pattern for LLF/PLF/New structures ?

Church Politics big issues ahead – lots of problems for new members

First, One big win: The Church Commissioners (CC) report into historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery was a masterpiece of research. The offer of £100 million in reparation was a proper and fully argued response. Well done so far. But I cannot say the same for the elaborate and convoluted way that the money appears or when it is to be made available. **I would say so in Synod.** Now the **ABC** of problems.

Astonishingly: Church Commissioners (*Annual Report 2025 page 38*) borrowed £275 million. Yes, in November 2025, borrowed for 10 years. This is not the usual story of an Endowment Fund worth £11.6 billion. Synod regulates with a light touch, but this is a liquidity issue and what are guardrails for prudential practice. (And expensive they have a further £550 million debt issued in 2022)? **I would want to ask in Synod** to investigate if this is an amber light flashing?

Beyond Belief: The Ecclesiastical Committee (EC) of the UK Parliament (15MPs and 15 Lords) blocked the “big idea” to reform the National Church Institutions into essentially one CofE National Services (CENS). This rolling into CENS included the Archbishops Council and new access to Church Commissioners funds, and a swathe of reforms to the roles of the Second and Third Church Estates Commissioners. This was a really big

Church State deal, backed totally by the bishops. But lobbying by the Save the Parish team and some veteran synod members persisted as the Endowment Fund and its charitable objectives were compromised. That is a money grab by the CENS. But reform this was not, it was a mess. Over period November 2025 to March 2026 the unprecedented step was taken to deem the Church's plan not expedient. CofE chief exec William Nye wrote to Synod in March 2026 explaining that the reform was withdrawn.

Concerning the state of safeguarding legislation, many hours have been spent on this by Synod and legislators. Members will spend **many more**. The Ecclesiastical Committee found muddled Church plans and questioned how an independent safeguarding body could fit into CENS. The committee blocked legislation for lack of credibility/independence. Also I note *CC Annual Accounts 2025*, provision of £137 million for Redress Scheme cost. I note the perception and the implication of **far more to be done**: The Church has failed repeatedly to understand our safeguarding responsibility and duty of care. We need humility, honesty and radical change – and to set aside the right money to do it.

Other matters - to take from London to Synod

The parish model of ministry in London is a cornerstone to keep. At a recent diocesan synod one participant from the floor (Rev E. G.) made a passionate plea for resources that should be used to support people and clergy in developing parish ministry for situations where one vicar was being asked to do it all, and meet increased common fund! This was greeted by sustained applause. This is a **plea** for *real* money to go more locally. How is by scaling back weak £-million Strategic Development Fund bids and their onerous diocesan on-costs. A renewed vision of parish can honour tradition and celebrate how looking for growth enables more people to participate in church life.

Wilding actually Rewilding church lands where soil condition is poor, Money for taking steps in the climate emergency to build for carbon zero for 2030's is a priority with me. I spoke to this in the last Synod to argue that prudential care should require the Church Commissioners to follow the lead of the Crown Estates whose commissioners have ambition x10 (rewilding on their agricultural land holdings). Also given the parlous state of tenant farming rewilding would be harmonious with Save The **Rural** Parish.

Yes to: Jesus' life, example and teaching call us to the great commission. Too many people remain on the margins of society. Church on the edge becomes a place of growth and human flourishing.

Z symbol for time. To do the synod role fully will need candidates to find a lot of it.

X symbol for voting – look carefully at manifestos. Now is the time to support those who have understanding, vision and the potential to have a clear “presence” in Synod.

PS: In this election second preferences will be like gold dust and third preferences good too.

Kindly contact me if you would like to know more

Email: phillipricex@gmail.com Text only please to 07879324432

23 Christchurch Square London E9 7HU