



DIOCESE OF BRISTOL

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Report title	Church Representation Rules Deanery Synod Election Formulas 2026-2029
Author	Amy Wakeford; Governance Support Officer
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Background

Every three years each parish's Annual Parochial Church Meeting elects lay representatives to their respective Deanery Synod and the next elections will take place at the APCMs in 2026.

The effective date for the new triennium of Deanery Synods is 1st July 2026.

Lay members of Deanery Synods form the electorate for both the Deanery's lay representatives on the Diocesan Synod and the Diocese's lay representatives on the General Synod.

The number of lay representatives from each parish to their Deanery Synod must be determined by resolution of the Diocesan Synod not later than 31st December in the year preceding the APCM elections and the numbers have been calculated by reference to the number of names on the Electoral Rolls of the parishes, as certified in accordance with CRR Rule 10.

Under [Rule 21\(2\)\(a-b\) of the Church Representation Rules \(CRR\) 2025](#), the Diocesan Synod must ensure that the total number of members of each Deanery Synod (House of Clergy and House of Laity) shall not be more than 150 (including co-options) and, so far as is practicable, shall not be less than 50. The House of Laity of a Deanery Synod must not be less in number than the House of Clergy.

The Bishop's Council considered two options for a formula with the ratios given below. The main difference is for whether parishes with an Electoral Roll of 26-50 have one representative (A) or two representatives (B). The formula for the current triennium (2023-2026) is Formula A.

Formulas and Proposals

Amy Wakeford, Governance Support Officer, Governance Support Team

Email: Amy.Wakeford@bristoldiocese.org

Diocesan Office, First Floor, Hillside House, 1500 Parkway North, Stoke Gifford, Bristol BS34 8YU

0117 906 0100 | www.bristol.anglican.org | 

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Formula A

Number on Electoral Roll	0-25	26-50	51-100	101-200	201-300	301-500	501+
Deanery Synod Reps	1	1	2	3	4	5	6

Formula B

Number on Electoral Roll	0-25	26-100	101-200	201-300	301-400	401-500	501+
Deanery Synod Reps	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Applying these formulas, the proposals for consideration are as follows:

Proposal Using Formula A							
Deanery	House of Clergy			House of Laity			Total
	Members	Co-Opted	PTO Repre	Elected	Co-Opted	General Synod Representatives	2026-2029
Bristol South	20	3	1	31	3		58
Bristol West	32	3	3	42	3	1	83
Chippenham	14	3	1	35	3	1	57
City	55	3	3	51	3		113
Kingswood & South Gloucestershire	45	3	2	50	3	1	104
North Wiltshire	15	3	2	37	3		60
Swindon	34	3	2	46	3		88
	215	21	14	292	21	3	563
Total Clergy			250	Total Laity		316	

Proposal Using Formula B							
Deanery	House of Clergy			House of Laity			Total
	Members	Co-Opted	PTO Repre	Elected	Co-Opted	General Synod Representatives	2026-2029
Bristol South	20	3	1	40	3		67
Bristol West	32	3	3	45	3	1	86
Chippenham	14	3	1	42	3	1	64
City	55	3	3	61	3		123
Kingswood & South Gloucestershire	45	3	2	58	3	1	112
North Wiltshire	15	3	2	49	3		72
Swindon	34	3	2	55	3		97
	215	21	14	350	21	3	621
Total Clergy			250	Total Laity		374	

Considerations

The number of lay representatives for the 2026 -2029 triennium have decreased which is reflective of the lower electoral role numbers for each deanery between 2022 (used for 2023 – 2026 triennium) and 2025 (used for 2026 – 2029). The overall difference in House of Laity representatives is less when Formula A is used. However, when applying Formula A, the House of Clergy members on City Deanery would exceed the number of House of Laity membership, which is prohibited by [Rule 21\(2\)\(a\) CRR](#).

To address this, Bishop's Council considered the feasibility of using Formula A to calculate the number of representatives for all Deaneries apart from City Deanery, where Formula B would apply.

The Church Representation Rules allows Diocesan Synod to make a scheme to address special circumstances within the Diocese or its Deaneries to secure better representation, provided the scheme is approved by Diocesan Synod and laid before General Synod for final approval. Several challenges with using this approach were identified:

Time Constraints

The proposed timeline presents challenges, particularly for parishes preparing to hold their Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs) and elect Deanery Synod representatives. As the Scheme of Variation is subject to approval by General Synod, which next meets in February 2026, the Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) would be unable to proceed with elections until a decision is made by General Synod and communicated, thereby reducing the time available for APCMs.

Uncertainty

While it is highly probable that General Synod will approve the Scheme of Variation, this outcome cannot be guaranteed. The lack of certainty introduces a degree of risk into planning and communications.

Risk of Confusion

The Scheme of Variation will only take effect following formal approval by General Synod. Until that point, the Diocese must operate under the existing Formula B. Accordingly, the Governance Support Team would, in accordance with the Church Representational Rules, need to communicate the current formula to all PCC Secretaries and Deanery Synod Secretaries by 31 December 2025. A subsequent communication would be required following General Synod's decision.

Despite efforts to clearly explain the unique circumstances in all correspondence, there remains a risk of confusion. Some PCCs may inadvertently use differing formulas to elect their Deanery Synod representatives, potentially resulting in imbalanced representation. While corrective measures could be taken, implementing these prior to the General Synod elections would be challenging.

Impact on General Synod Elections

The year 2026 marks a General Synod election year. The House of Laity of each Deanery Synod constitutes the electorate for these elections. It is therefore essential that the results of all Deanery Synod elections are communicated to the Governance Support Team as promptly as possible. This will ensure that all eligible individuals are included in General Synod communications, nominations, and the election process, which commences in July 2026.

Bishop's Council Recommendation

After careful consideration of the options, Bishop's Council recommends Formula B to Diocesan Synod for approval, to be applied uniformly across all deaneries. This option ensures compliance with Church Representation Rules and avoids the administrative and electoral complexities associated with a split formula approach.