In the light of the national situation relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) the bishop has exercised his powers contained in the Churchwardens Measure 2001 and the Church Representation Rules to allow parishes more time to hold a meeting of parishioners, and their APCM, and to hold the associated elections.

For 2020, the time for holding a meeting of parishioners to choose churchwardens is extended until 31 October (instead of 31 May). Similarly, the period for holding an annual meeting of parishioners (APCM) is extended to 31 October.

Churchwardens who were chosen in 2019 continue to hold office until 31 January 2021 unless their successors are admitted to office before that. If a churchwarden is serving the sixth successive period of office, that sixth successive period is extended so that disqualification under section 3 of the Churchwardens Measure 2001 (disqualification after six periods of office) arises only at the end of that extended period.

The term of office of current representatives of the laity on deanery synods is extended until 30 November. As a result, it will be the current members of the houses of laity of deanery synods who will comprise the electorate for the House of Laity of the General Synod in elections to the General Synod this year.

The term of office of representatives of the laity on parochial church councils is also extended. A representative of the laity whose term of office was due to expire this year will continue in office until the end of the deferred APCM.

If a parish has already held its annual meeting of parishioners and APCM for 2020, the following will apply:

- the churchwardens chosen in 2019 remain in office, and the churchwardens chosen in 2020 will take up office when they are admitted to office (which could be as late as 31 January 2021);
- the previously elected representatives of the laity on the deanery synod (i.e. those elected in 2017 or to fill casual vacancies since the 2017 elections) continue in office until 30 November 2020 (rather than 30 June, as would otherwise have been the case) and the newly elected representatives of the laity on the deanery synod (i.e. those elected in 2020) will not take up office until 1 December 2020 (rather than 1 July);
- newly elected representatives of the laity on the PCC will already have taken up office immediately at the conclusion of the 2020 APCM.

Secretaries of deanery synods must, as already required by the Church Representation Rules, give the diocesan electoral registration officer the information specified in rule 20(1)(a) and (b) (i.e. name and addresses of members of house of clergy and house of laity etc. of deanery synod) by 1 July 2020. That will, as a result of the extension of their terms of office, involve the secretary of the deanery synod giving the diocesan electoral registration officer the names of the existing members of the house of laity (i.e. those elected in 2017 or subsequently to fill casual vacancies).

As a consequence, the Archdeacons’ visitations scheduled to take place in May will be postponed and you will be notified of new dates in due course.

PCCs should still aim to finalise the 2019/20 reports that they would have presented to the APCM and should publish them and send copies to the DBF by the end of June 2020.