

FAQs – Annual Parochial Church Meetings (APCMs), Electoral Rolls, Churchwardens, PCCs, Deanery Synods and General Synod in 2020

What does the decision to extend the period in which APCMs can take place in 2020 mean for lay representatives on the PCC if our annual meeting has already taken place?

If you have already held your 2020 APCM, the meeting is valid and you do not need to hold another one. The lay people who have been elected to the PCC can start in their roles straightaway as normal and will serve through until the APCM in 2021.

Our APCM is in the diary for before 31st May – can we go ahead with it?

No. The Government's increasingly strong guidance on social distancing and the avoidance of groups of people meeting, particularly in relation to 'at risk' groups, in effect means that APCMs must be postponed until a time yet to be determined when the relevant restrictions have been lifted. In the circumstances it is hard to see this happening before 31st May 2020. It would be sensible to start thinking about a provisional date for the APCM in September or October.

Our parish has not yet held its APCM and I am a member of the PCC having been elected to this position in 2016. Our parish requires PCC members to remain in post for three years. I am therefore due to retire from the PCC this year? What happens now?

As a member of the PCC your time in office will always expire at the end of the next APCM. Your time in post will therefore be extended until the end of the APCM, which must now take place by 31st October 2020. So you will remain a member of the PCC for a further period of months until the new PCC member to replace you has been elected. This applies even though you will have been in office for more than three years. The same would be the case if your parish has annual elections for all PCC members.

I am the electoral roll officer and I don't know whether I need to be concerned by the changes in dates

If you have already held your APCM you will have already completed your electoral roll revision and so you don't need to do anything more. The changes that have been made to the roll are valid for the forthcoming year.

If your parish has not yet held its APCM then you will need to revise the electoral roll not more than 28 days before the revised date of the APCM (whenever that takes place). This is the case even if you have already undertaken the revision this year. It is important that the revision is tied to the date of the meeting.

It has not been possible to hold the annual meeting of parishioners yet. I was elected churchwarden in 2019 but I am planning to retire, so what happens next?

Under the Bishop's Instrument your term in office will continue until 31st January 2021, unless before that date another person has been admitted into office at a Visitation as your replacement churchwarden. The Visitations will take place at some point between 1st November 2020 and 31st January 2021. At the Visitation the new churchwarden will be admitted to the post and your period of office will end. However, if the person is not for some reason admitted as churchwarden by 31st January 2021 then your office of churchwarden will automatically end on that date.

What is a Visitation?

This is the formal service when churchwardens and other officers of the parish are formally sworn in and admitted to their offices. This is usually done in the presence of the Archdeacon who has been delegated this task by the Bishop. This process creates a legal agreement or connection between the officers and the Church and validates the appointments that have been made. Such services are public ones and at the current time it is not possible for them to be held so the Bishop has made the direction to extend the time for meetings so that all parishes can continue to have legal governance.

I was elected as churchwarden in 2019 but I am intending to stand again. What is the situation if I am elected at the annual meeting in 2020?

You will remain as the 2019 Churchwarden until either you are again sworn in and admitted at a Visitation (see above) or until 31st January 2021 (whichever is the earlier event). Your role as the 2020 churchwarden will commence once your old role has ended.

I have been churchwarden for 6 years and I am due to retire this year. Does the extension of time for the annual meeting affect me?

Yes it does. You will continue in post as churchwarden until either the new churchwarden is admitted at a Visitation or 31st January 2021 (whichever is the earlier event).

We have already held our annual meeting for 2020 and I was elected churchwarden. Is this still a valid election?

The election remains valid but you won't take up your office until the Visitation occurs and you are sworn in and admitted. The previous churchwarden will remain in office until then. So you are going to have to wait until after 31st October (and possibly as late as 31st January

2021) before you can take up office. You should speak to the 2019 churchwarden about this as they may not realise that they are still responsible!

If you were a churchwarden who had been admitted in 2019 then you will continue in post until you are re-sworn at a Visitation.

What does this mean for the lay membership of Deanery Synods?

In all cases (whether or not the 2020 APCM has taken place) existing parochial lay representatives on deanery synods will continue to serve until 30th November 2020. This extension of their term of office relates to all of their functions, including in terms of participating in elections to other bodies. The new lay representatives to deanery synods will serve from 1st December 2020.

What if our APCM has already taken place and we decided to fill a casual vacancy for a lay representative on deanery synod?

An election to fill a casual vacancy does not have to wait until 1st December to take effect. Please let your deanery synod secretary know and e-mail the details to synod@exeter.anglican.org so that the details can be entered straight away on the diocesan database.

What are the implications for this summer's elections to General Synod?

Assuming that the elections to General Synod go ahead on the basis of the published draft timetable, the only major difference is that the electorate for the House of Laity will be made up of the existing members of deanery synods rather than those elected at the 2020 APCMs. Again, people elected to fill a casual vacancy will be the exception to the general rule. All of the other agreed innovations (eg electronic nominations and voting) will be implemented as planned. That said, there is a possibility that the elections will be delayed to a date yet to be determined.