



Westminster
FAITH DEBATES



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Enquiry on the future of the Church of England launched this week

This Thursday sees the launch of a series of [five debates on the future of the established Church of England](#).

"I believe we've got about 10 years to do something with the Church of England"

The Right Reverend Tim Thornton, Bishop of Truro, warned recently.

The CofE is one of Britain's great cultural institutions, but recent research shows that it is at a crisis point. In the UK as a whole only about 10% of under-20s now identify as "CofE", compared with a majority of over-70s. More younger people now identify as having "no religion."

The debates are organised by the team behind the [Westminster Faith Debates](#), and have been designed as an unofficial commission of enquiry into the Church's future, and its role in the life of the nation.

Experts from within and outside the Church will give evidence and propose solutions. They include:

- Lord Mawson the social entrepreneur on the future of the parish system
- Dame Fiona Reynolds of the National Trust on the future of church buildings
- Sir Tony Baldry MP, Second Church Estates Commissioner, on how the church can re-engage people
- Canon David Porter of Lambeth Palace on dealing with splits within the church
- Historian Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch on what the CofE can offer the next generation

The debates are informed by a specially-designed survey of Anglican clergy administered online by YouGov in August 2014. It was completed by 1,500 clergy.

The opening debate on Thursday 9th October asks whether the parish system, designed for a rural society, is appropriate for an urban, mobile population. The survey finds overwhelming support for the existing system amongst the clergy and bishops – is this simple nostalgia, or is the parochial system worth preserving at any cost?



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Future debates will consider the CofE's buildings and assets, people, diversity, and vision.

[Professor Linda Woodhead](#), who has organised the debates with the [Revd Professor Martyn Percy](#), commented:

“The Church of England is one of five great British cultural institutions, but it is in crisis. If it is to survive it needs an urgent injection of fresh thinking and radical reform. These debates are designed to offer just that. They grow out of research which shows how rapid the Church's decline now is. In living memory it has gone from being the church of the majority to that of a shrinking minority. The debates ask whether the CofE has a future as a national church, and if so in what form.”

All of the debates are free to the public and being held at the [University Church](#) of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, from 5:30-7pm.

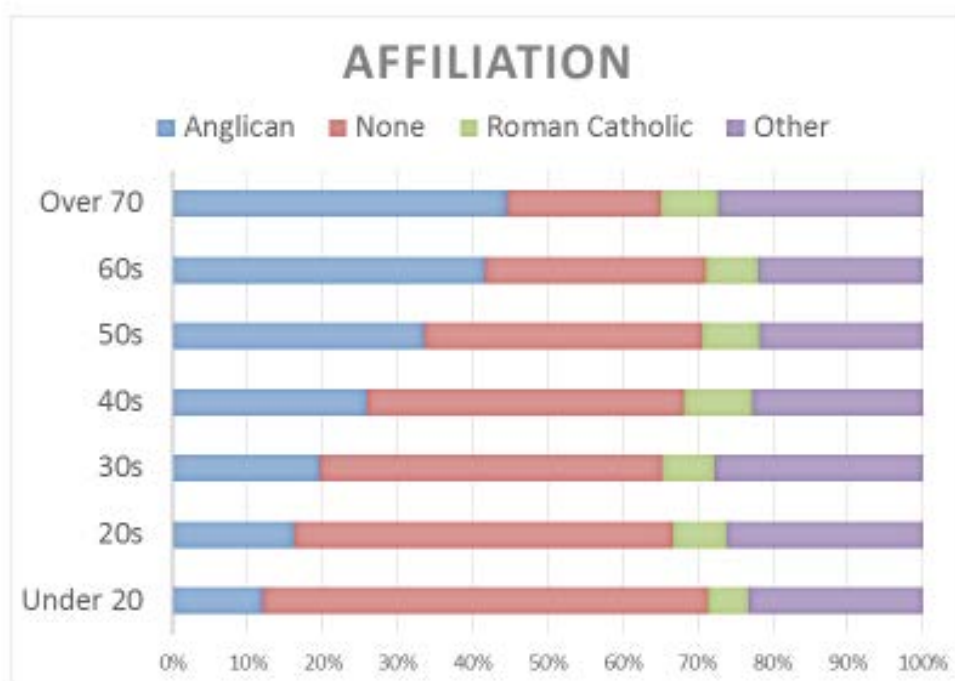
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Notes to Editors

Bishop of Truro quoted in September 2014 by the [BBC](#)

[Graph showing declining affiliation to CoFE \(self-identified Anglicans\)](#)[YouGov for Westminster Faith Debates 2013](#)



The Five Debates

1. Parishes – what future for the parochial system? (9th October)
2. Heritage – how can buildings, endowments and pensions become assets not burdens? (23rd October)
3. People – how can Anglicans of all kinds be engaged in the church of the future? (6th November)
4. Diversity – what kind of unity is appropriate nationally and internationally, can diversity become a strength? (20th November)
5. Vision – what does the Church of England offer the next generation? (4th December)

The debates are generously supported by Ripon College Cuddesdon, the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, two of the UK research councils (AHRC and ESRC) and Lancaster University. They are held in association with the Church Times.