

Letters: The Church of England has embraced bureaucracy at the expense of ministry

By Letters to the Editor
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SIR – Allison Pearson is right to [highlight](#) the extravagant growth in the number of Church of England bishops from 26 to some 116 in less than 200 years, while congregation numbers have plunged by more than 90 per cent.

The bureaucracies of the 42 dioceses have grown commensurately. In 2018, the Diocese of Leicester had 108 employees. In 1926, it had only one: the bishop’s driver.

Meanwhile, the chronic paucity of clergy numbers is accentuated by the Church’s lamentable failure to train enough new recruits. Only an unspecified fraction of the 11 per cent portion of its triennial budget is to be spent on clergy training. And yet the Church has known for well over a decade that 20 per cent of its clergy are due to retire by 2025.

Jonathan Baird
Member, General Synod (Laity)
Conock, Wiltshire



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SIR – Emma Thompson [describes](#) how parishes are suffering.

Mine is in a group of four, without a single clergyman. Before Covid we had a service every Sunday; now it is fortnightly. We usually manage a communion once a month with the assistance of a retired vicar.

In closing churches for such a long period during the pandemic, the diocese did a great deal of harm and permanently reduced congregation numbers. Why are more bishops being appointed? These people should be working at parish level.

Heating in churches is another great problem. Our own has an ancient oil-burning boiler, which is most inefficient, but the diocesan authority will not let us buy a new one, and the Church is seeking to phase out gas and oil heating. When I sat down in the pew last week, the temperature was 5C, in spite of the heating being on for three hours. By the end of the service, which was well attended, it had risen to 11C, with the heat coming from the bodies of the congregation. I had purchased a high-powered hot-air machine used in factories. It can heat the church to 20C in two hours, running on diesel oil, but I had to remove it because of safety fears.

This is a Christian country which is not being supported by our Church leaders. Very sad indeed.

Colin Dawson
Canterbury, Kent

SIR – Emma Thompson observes that the “bloated Church administration is a self-inflicted wound.” How true.

Her assessment instantly reminded me of the NHS and its hugely expensive non-clinical administration.

Michael Threlfall
Preston, Lancashire