

# CHURCH TIMES

## Bishop of Winchester steps back after diocesan rebellion

by

[A STAFF REPORTER](#)

20 MAY 2021



DIOCESE OF WINCHESTER

### *The Bishop of Winchester, Dr Tim Dakin*

THE [Bishop of Winchester](#), Dr Tim Dakin, has “stepped back” from work for six weeks after he was threatened with a vote of no confidence at the next diocesan synod.

On Tuesday evening, [the Suffragan Bishop of Southampton](#), in Winchester diocese, the Rt Revd Debbie Sellin, announced: “Bishop Tim has today informed me that he will be stepping back from his role as Bishop of Winchester for the next six weeks, so that he can focus on discussions about future leadership and governance reform in the diocese.”

The letter gives no further details, but it is understood that between 20 and 30 senior church members in the [diocese](#), clergy and laity, threatened to pass a vote of no confidence in his

leadership at the diocesan synod.

The letter also states that Bishop Sellin, who has been in post for less two years, has been asked to lead the diocese. The reason for this is that the senior suffragan bishop in the diocese, the [Bishop of Basingstoke](#), the Rt Revd David Williams, is said to be in sympathy with the protesters, and has also stepped back. He is said to have represented the protesters' views to both Dr Dakin and Lambeth Palace, which is involved in the discussions.

A spokesperson for the Church of England said on Thursday: "As the diocese of Winchester has already announced, Bishop Tim Dakin has stepped back for a period of six weeks, so that issues raised re: leadership and governance reform in the diocese can be addressed. This process is now under way."

Bishop Sellin is instigating a weekly prayer meeting for the diocese on Zoom on Monday mornings, beginning next week.

Discontent about Dr Dakin's management style and agenda has been growing in the diocese for several years. He comes from an Evangelical background, having started his ministry in East Africa and then serving as general secretary of the [Church Mission Society](#) (CMS) for 12 years before being consecrated to serve as Bishop of Winchester. Although he was an honorary curate during his time with the CMS, he has never worked in full-time parish ministry.

Critics say that the issue goes beyond his church tradition and includes the lack of pastoral care for clergy and the imposition of a particular approach to the Church's ministry. It is said that the diocese has lost 22 clergy posts through pastoral reorganisation. It is, none the less, seeking to appoint a Church Planting Missioner, who will be given the task of planting 30 new churches by 2030; and a Church Growth Missioner to develop capacity for growth in the diocese.

Another source said that Dr Dakin, who was awarded a Ph.D. last year, had been largely invisible in the diocese.

Little of this criticism has been made public before now; but, in 2019, the [General Synod](#) agreed to transfer episcopal oversight of the [Channel Islands](#) from Winchester diocese to Salisbury. The presenting issue was the temporary suspension of the Dean of Jersey by Bishop Dakin over a safeguarding concern. The Dean apologised and was reinstated a month later. The standing committee of the deanery of Guernsey wrote to the Archbishop's commission set up to examine the affair: "While the handling of the Jersey safeguarding issue may have been the trigger for the current position, it is not the only matter which has so seriously strained the relationship. "Bishop Timothy has consistently been resistant to the Islands' special relationship to the diocese, and his apparent wish to treat Guernsey and Jersey as English deaneries is unacceptable to both the secular authorities and the church communities in the Islands" ([News, 11 October 2019](#)).

It is not clear what the outcome of the governance discussions might be. Dr Dakin is in his early sixties. He was approached for comment, but the only response was to be directed to Bishop Sellin's statement.