



of Sessions.

David Smart

The General Synod of the Church of England will meet later this month in London to discuss the biodiversity agenda of the Church's overall Environment Programme, racial justice, and Prayers of Love and Faith which ask for God's blessing for same-sex couples. General Synod will meet at Church House on February 23 to 27.

A Land and Nature Motion will seek to give biodiversity equal consideration with net zero carbon, recognising the need to respond urgently to the ecological crisis. The motion also addresses land and property owned by the Church, at parish, diocese and national level. Dioceses would be encouraged to develop a 'Land' action plan. A separate net zero carbon [routemap](#) was approved by General Synod in July 2022.

The Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher, said: "With this motion, we have the opportunity to demonstrate the Church's responsibility to safeguarding God's creation by adding commitments to be responsible stewards of the land to our existing Net Zero ambitions.

"There are around 17,500 acres of churchyards in England – that's around twice the size of a City like Oxford. I want them to be places for the living as well as the dead.

"With these free programmes, church and local communities can answer this call straight away by counting species, planning mowing regimes, allowing plants to flower and joining the Eco-Church scheme.

"The Church is also setting out clear commitments to be at the forefront of responsible investment and, in partnership with our tenants, responsible land ownership."

"I hope Synod will vote strongly in favour of this motion, and send a clear signal to those all around the country, and to Government, that responsible land stewardship is good for nature, good for business and good for people."

Synod will be invited to discuss and endorse the process for engaging with two reports on safeguarding in the Church: firstly a report on lessons learned by the barrister Sarah Wilkinson, published in December, and secondly recommendations from the forthcoming review from Professor Alexis Jay into the Future of Church Safeguarding. The Archbishops' Council has set up a group to advise it on how to respond to the reviews.

There will also be an update from the Redress Project Board, outlining the significant progress that has been made in designing a National Redress Scheme for survivors of Church-related abuse, since the draft Redress Measure was brought to General Synod for First Consideration in November 2023.

An update will be shared on the work of the [Estates Evangelism](#) Task Group, which was set up in 2016 to renew the Church on social housing estates and other low-income communities.

There will be a report on progress on the work on Living in Love and Faith. The Bishop of Leicester, Martyn Snow, has produced a paper—

proposing that the Church work towards adopting a set of commitments for love, faith and reconciliation, to provide a way to implement the decisions that the Synod has previously taken in a way that encourages reconciliation and unity.

The Bishop of Leicester, Martyn Snow, said: "Synod has set a clear direction for us to move forward, but there remains profound disagreement across the Church. As we move to implement what has been decided, we must also find ways to unify and reconcile these disagreements, mindful particularly of the narrow majorities in key votes.

"The leadership of the Church of England has apologised to LGBTQI+ people for the lack of welcome and pastoral care they have received, and it is time that all churches show this apology in action.

"At the same time, there is a weariness among many in the Church and a longing to focus on other questions related to our calling to serve the nation.

"The 10 Commitments I have suggested to Synod do not represent words to be agreed upon, but a basis on which we can continue to pursue the implementation of motions previously passed on Living and Love and Faith."

Synod will also discuss racial justice and the Church Commissioners' response to its research into historic transatlantic slavery; the war in Ukraine and its wider impact; and the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households, "Love Matters". There will also be an update on the Governance Programme.

The Synod will also be invited to consider various items of Church legislation.

More information

[Read papers and information about the February General Synod](#)

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