

There are three main types of Church of England legislation. Measures, Canons and Secondary/subordinate legislation

Measures

Measures are made by the General Synod. If approved by both Houses of Parliament they receive the Royal Assent and become part of the law of the land, having the same force and effect as Acts of Parliament. They are a form of primary legislation. [Read copies of Measures which have received the Royal Assent since 1920 and are still in force.](#)

Canons

The Canons Ecclesiastical are also a form of primary legislation, but have a more limited scope than Measures, dealing with issues such as who may be ordained in the Church of England, which forms of service may be used, and so on. They are also made by the General Synod, and require the Royal Assent and Licence before they come into force. [View the Canons of the Church of England.](#)

Secondary/subordinate legislation

'Secondary' or 'subordinate' legislation is made by the General Synod under powers contained in a Measure, and usually takes the form of Rules, Regulations or an Order. It must generally then be laid before both Houses of Parliament for approval as a statutory instrument before it can come into force.

There is another category of subordinate legislation which is made by the General Synod under other powers, such as those contained in a Canon. This type of legislation (guidelines, for example) does not need to be laid before Parliament before coming into force.

[Read copies of Statutory Instruments relating to ecclesiastical law.](#)

[Learn more about the legislative process in the General Synod](#)

History

From the sixteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, all Church legislation (other than by Canon) was by Act of Parliament. The [Church of England Assembly \(Powers\) Act 1919](#) gave the Church Assembly the power to legislate by Measure, with Parliament keeping the power to consider the Measures (but not to amend them) and to decide whether or not they should be presented to the Sovereign for the Royal Assent. The [Synodical Government Measure 1969](#) transferred the powers of the Church Assembly to the General Synod (with Parliament's powers unchanged). The 1969 Measure also transferred the power of the Convocations of Canterbury and York to legislate by Canon to the new General Synod. You can find out more about how the General Synod legislates [here](#).

It remains possible for legislation concerning the Church of England to be made by Act of Parliament, but this has happened only rarely since the 1919 Act, and there is a constitutional convention that Parliament will not legislate for the internal affairs of the Church of England without its consent.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/legislation>