

General Synod Shared Conversation – FAQs

1. What should I bring for the Shared Conversation at General Synod?

It is important that you bring with you the programme for the two days and your copy of the St Michael's House Protocols. It would also be helpful to bring a Bible, a notebook and a pen.

2. Can I use social media during the Shared Conversation?

The St Michael's House Protocols (which underpin the Shared Conversation) highlight the importance of creating a private space in which all feel welcome and respected and in which those taking part commit to becoming mutual and interdependent participants for the duration of the process. In order for this to be possible, it is essential that all participants are fully present – physically, mentally and emotionally – in the process. It is also important that only those who have committed to working within the guidelines of the St Michael's House Protocols are part of the Shared Conversation while it is taking place. As such, the Shared Conversation will be private sessions of synod, with no fringe meetings, media presence or live streaming. For the same reason, participants are asked to refrain from using any form of social media throughout the two days and are requested not to communicate information about the Conversation by text, email or phone while the Conversation is going on. Participants are encouraged to take notes of anything you would like to remember from the Shared Conversation, but to do this in writing and not by taking photographs.

You are also encouraged to share any learning that you have acquired from the process after it is over. Any reflections on the Shared Conversations after they have finished must, of course, adhere to the St Michael's House Protocols. In practical terms, this involves:

- Speaking for yourself only and not for others
- Ensuring that your descriptions honour the confidentiality of the conversation by avoiding any information which might disclose the identity or viewpoint of another participant
- Not using any information about another participant to that person's disadvantage
- Not attributing words or actions to any individual

3. What should I wear for the Shared Conversations?

All participants are encouraged to wear casual, comfortable clothes. We have found in the Regional Shared Conversations that both clergy and lay participants found it helpful for clergy not to wear clerical dress, if possible.

4. Will I be in the same group for the whole process?

Yes, you will be with the same facilitator and the same group of around 20 participants for the duration of the Shared Conversation. Sometimes you will work in smaller sub-sets within that group.

5. Do I need to go to every session?

Yes. At the heart of the Shared Conversation is a commitment made by each participant to their fellow participants in the process. This implies a commitment to engage fully with all of the sessions. The Shared Conversation has been carefully designed from start to finish and its benefits, for both individuals and the whole of synod, will be greatly reduced if participants miss sessions.

6. Do we get some time off during the Shared Conversation?

The Shared Conversation is, by its very nature, an intense process, so time for rest and reflection is essential. Participants have free time after dinner on both evenings, as well as an extended lunch break of two hours on Monday. There will, of course, also be a tea and coffee break each morning and afternoon.

7. Will I have to talk about my sexuality?

Participants are encouraged to engage with the Shared Conversation as fully as possible but no one will be forced to disclose any personal information of any kind. If talking about human sexuality as part of your personal faith journey is important to you, please do so. But participants should not disclose anything which they feel unsafe to share.