

GENERAL SYNOD

FEBRUARY GROUP OF SESSIONS 2012

THIRD NOTICE PAPER

SYNOD QUESTIONS: SOME ADVICE TO MEMBERS

1. The procedure for Synod Questions is covered by the Standing Orders 105-109 of the General Synod (pp. 72-75 of the October 2010 edition). The key points are:
 - You can ask a maximum of two questions per group of sessions;
 - The question has to be relevant to the business of the body whose Chair/representative is answering (or in the case of the Secretary General/Clerk to the Synod relating to their respective duties);
 - Your question should not contain any argument or imputation (ie adverse reflection or criticism);
 - You should not seek an expression of opinion (including a legal opinion), or the solution of a hypothetical problem;
 - Normally a maximum of two supplementary questions is permitted for each question (with priority being given to the person who asked the question);
 - Supplementary questions must be relevant to both the original question and the answer given.
2. If you wish to submit a question, please consider doing so in good time, rather than waiting until the last minute to do so, as this will allow time for you to be contacted if necessary about any changes that may be needed to the text of the question to bring it into order. If a question is out of order, the Legal Adviser will endeavour to suggest ways in which it can be brought into order, but if a question which is out of order is received close to the questions deadline, it may not be possible for steps to be taken to bring the defective question into order in time to meet the deadline – with the result that it will not appear on the notice paper. Please note the deadline that is set for the receipt of questions – 5.30pm seven clear working days before Synod

starts (excluding Saturdays and Sundays): the first page of the Synod agenda normally sets out when this is.

3. All questions are logged and acknowledged on receipt: if you haven't received an acknowledgement within a couple of working hours of sending, please contact the Questions Clerk to check whether your message has arrived.
4. It would help if in drafting your question you could give some careful thought to framing it in such a way that it would match the requirements of the Standing Orders above. For example, if you wanted to know if the House of Bishops (theoretically) backed the consumption of Stilton Cheese, don't ask whether the Archbishop of Canterbury likes Stilton (a matter of opinion, and questions cannot in any case be addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury *as such*), but rather ask whether the House of Bishops has set out a policy on the types of cheese that it would recommend for consumption. (If you are in any particular doubt as to whether your question would be permissible, please send it into the Questions Clerk – Sue Moore – as early as possible and we will aim get back to you as soon as we can.)
5. Questions can be either for oral or written answer. Please indicate when submitting your question whether an oral answer is needed; if you do not state that an oral answer is required it will be assumed that the question is for written answer.
6. If your question is in order it will be printed on the yellow notice paper which is normally available at the start of the session. The Questions Clerk will also ensure that you have a copy of the answer that has been approved by the person answering the question (via your diocesan tray). The answer will be available at least one hour before Question Time is expected to begin. This of course gives you a head start in considering asking a supplementary question: the same considerations apply as for the original (see paragraph 1).
7. Recently the pace of Question Time has left something to be desired. In order to maintain momentum, I would encourage you to keep your question – and particularly any supplementaries – as concise and to the point as you can. Mini-

speeches are to be avoided; and indeed the Chair will call you to order if your supplementary is not in the form of a (single) question.

8. If you are intending to ask a supplementary – and if you did not ask the original question it is up to the Chair whether you are called to do so – please try to position yourself close to one of the fixed microphones in advance, so that the Synod does not have to wait for you to cross the Hall first.
9. It is often the case that more questions are tabled than there is time for oral answer. The answers to questions which have not been reached by the end of the sitting will be made available for all to see in the Hoare Memorial Hall (Church House) or the Concourse (in York). All questions (including questions for oral reply which have not been reached) and the answers to them are also printed in the Report of Proceedings.
10. Questions may be submitted direct to the Questions Clerk (Sue Moore, Central Secretariat), or to the Clerk to the Synod (for forwarding to the Questions Clerk), either:
 - in writing, or
 - by facsimile (to 020 7898 1369), or
 - by email to questions@churchofengland.org
11. Please include in your letter, facsimile or email a telephone number and/or email address at which you may be reached in the time up to the deadline.
12. If you have any queries about this advice, please contact:
The Questions Clerk – Sue Moore
(sue.moore@churchofengland.org)
The Administrative Secretary – Jonathan Neil-Smith
(jonathan.neil-smith@churchofengland.org)
The Legal Adviser – Stephen Slack
(stephen.slack@churchofengland.org)
The Clerk to the Synod – Dr Colin Podmore
(colin.podmore@churchofengland.org)

JONATHAN NEIL-SMITH
5 January 2012