

Members' guide to virtual Synod proceedings

26 June 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE GENERAL SYNOD BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Dear Members of General Synod,

As you are aware, the Presidents and Officers of General Synod agreed at the end of April that it was not practicable for Synod to meet for its usual residential meeting in York in July 2020. However, they did agree that it would be helpful for Synod members to meet in some way during one of the dates reserved for this group of sessions in order to hear how the national Church has been responding to the crisis, to exchange views and to ask questions.

Accordingly, Synod members are meeting informally on Saturday 11th July (from 10.30am to 4.30pm) using an internet-based meeting platform called Zoom in order to go through a short Agenda which the Business Committee has prepared. This is not a formal group of sessions and so the Business Committee has not prepared its full Report. Instead, this document takes the place of the formal Report from the Business Committee which is produced for official meetings of General Synod. The guidance which it contains will help you to navigate through some of the technological and process issues which are involved in meeting informally in this way.

As this is not a formal meeting of General Synod, no legislation is being taken at this meeting and any votes or decisions that the Synod makes at this meeting will not be binding. Despite this, the Business Committee has asked for each item to be handled in a similar manner to the way that it would have been handled on the floor of Synod and for the Standing Orders to apply wherever possible. This is particularly the case for the two sessions of Synod Question Time at the meeting. In the event that the Synod does have to meet formally in a virtual setting in the future this will begin to give us a sense of how we might manage our Business.

We would like to draw Synod members' attention to the Synod Policies on the website at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/synod-members-resources>, particularly the Code of Conduct, as the Business Committee considers them applicable for all gatherings of Synod members whether on a formal or informal basis.

Each item on the Agenda will be chaired by a member of the General Synod Panel of Chairs, assisted by an Administrator and a Legal Adviser in the usual way. The

virtual 'platform party' will be communicating with each other using an online messaging service. Chairing in this way will inevitably be extremely challenging for the Chair and members are encouraged to make due allowance for this when observing and participating in the meeting. In order to assist them with chairing the meeting, the Business Committee has asked that Synod members wishing to speak and ask questions on any of the items on the Agenda **notify the Synod team 24 hours in advance** by emailing the Requests to Speak inbox or using the facility on the Synod App. This means that the Chair will be able to have an idea of how many people wish to speak and allocate the time accordingly.

The Business Committee is aware that meeting remotely in this way is challenging for many members particularly as this is the first time that Synod members have been asked to do so. We are also aware that Synod members will have varying experience of using online meeting technology and that for some this will be a new experience. Despite these challenges, it is our hope that Synod members will find this a useful and helpful meeting.

We commend this document to your attention and we hope that this will be a useful and prayerful meeting at this challenging time for the Church and the world

For and On Behalf of the Business Committee

Revd Canon Sue Booy

Chair of the Business Committee

Contents

Section A: Contact List	4
Section B: How Synod proceedings will work	5
1. Introduction	5
2. What are the 'ground rules' for virtual Synod proceedings?	5
3. Electronic voting.....	5
4. Participation	5
5. Order of proceedings	6
6. Speaking.....	6
7. Points of Order.....	7
8. Delays and technology failure	7
Section C: How to request to speak in debates	7
Section D: Synod Questions.....	7
1. How to participate in supplementary questions	7
Section E: Technical advice.....	8
1. Technical preparations.....	8
2. Joining the meeting.....	8
3. During the meeting.....	9
4. Voting	10
5. Accessibility	10
Section E: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)	11

Section A: Contact List

Synod Questions and Supplementaries <i>for submitting Questions by 12 noon on Tuesday 30 June and for submitting supplementary questions by 10.00am on Friday 10 July*</i>	questions@churchofengland.org
Requests to Speak <i>for submitting Requests to Speak 24 hours before the respective item please use the Request to Speak form attached with this guidance*</i>	requesttospeak@churchofengland.org
Zoom support and technical advice	synod@churchofengland.org
Clerk to the Synod <i>for issues directed to the Clerk to the Synod</i>	clerk@churchofengland.org

* You can also 'raise your hand' during the session. Please see Sections C and E below.

Section B: How Synod proceedings will work

1. Introduction

This Guide for Synod members is aimed at helping Synod members navigate their way through an informal meeting. The meeting itself consists of some updates on national initiatives, and two opportunities for Synod members to table questions and to consider the Church's response to the pandemic. This meeting has no official basis and Synod members cannot pass legislation, agree a Budget or pass any binding resolutions at this particular meeting. The ability for Synod to meet remotely on an official basis would require a change to legislation in order to enable it to do so. However, in order to enable the meeting to run smoothly, Chairs will be adhering as closely as is feasible to the Standing Orders and the usual conventions of Synodical meetings.

2. What are the 'ground rules' for virtual Synod proceedings?

Regardless of whether Synod is meeting officially or unofficially, this will be a large meeting by the standards of Zoom meetings and accordingly the Officers have made some changes or adjustments to the chairing and handling arrangements as follows:

- As with usual Synod meetings, this will be a public meeting and members of the press and public will be able to observe proceeding, whether they are formal or informal proceedings. Synod members are asked to bear this in mind.
- The Business Committee has asked Synod members participating in virtual meetings to observe the usual Synod policies, including the Code of Conduct.
- Members are asked to dress appropriately for the meeting and to give it their full attention.
- Members are encouraged to report back on proceedings to their Diocesan Synods and other diocesan meetings in the usual way.
- The 'chat' function on Zoom will be disabled but the General Synod Twitter feed will continue as usual.
- All members of the General Synod Panel of Chairs will be trained in handling Zoom meetings.
- The 'platform party' on the 'virtual' platform (Chair, Administrator, Legal Adviser) will communicate with each other via an online messaging service.
- To prevent members from becoming overtired with excessive screen time, meetings will have built-in break periods.

3. Electronic voting

For an informal group of sessions, Zoom polling will be used if needed. During the polling period, a dialogue box will pop up on your screen, and you will be invited to vote.

4. Participation

Members of the General Synod Panel of Chairs will chair all items at the informal meetings.

Members will be muted at all times unless the Chair asks them to speak, in which case they will be unmuted for the duration of their intervention.

To note: Synod members will not be able to unmute themselves but will get a pop-up request on their screen to unmute themselves if the Chair calls them to speak.

Given the constraints of chairing remotely, those Synod members who wish to speak in a debate are encouraged to send through their Request to Speak 24 hours prior to the item in which they wish to speak in order to enable the Chair to prepare a speaking list. However, members will also be able to use the 'raise hand' function on Zoom during the session (see Section E3 below). The Chair and the administrator will monitor these requests and call these individuals to speak accordingly.

To note: speakers who submit Requests to Speak in advance will be given priority, but they must also use the 'raise hand' function at the appropriate time in order to indicate their presence at the meeting (otherwise they will not be called).

As there is no easy way of indicating to speakers, or those asking questions, that they are nearing the end of their time limit, staff members will simply mute those who run over their allotted time slot without warning.

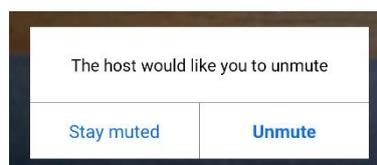
It must be stressed that this is not intended as a rude gesture but is merely a practical way of ensuring the meeting keeps to time. Members may therefore find it helpful to have to hand a stopwatch (as can be found on mobile phones) or a clock with a second hand so they can keep track of time.

5. Order of proceedings

The Business Committee agreed the agenda for this informal meeting of Synod in the usual way. This has been published in the timetable on the website and on the App.

6. Speaking

- If the Chair asks you to speak, you will get a pop-up request on your screen to unmute yourself.

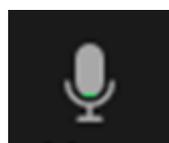


Please speak when you can see that your microphone icon has changed and no longer has a red line through it (see pictures below) and identify yourself as you would normally ie by name, number and diocese.

- As a courtesy to other Synod members, please ensure that if possible your video is enabled when speaking (see section E1 for advice on set up).
- Please be mindful of the need to speak more slowly and to be facing the screen full on (not sideways) and close enough to allow lip reading.



Your microphone is muted



Your microphone is unmuted

7. Points of Order

It will not be possible to raise a point of order during this meeting of General Synod members. The Chairs will draw each item to a close at the scheduled time, so there will be no need to move a Closure Motion.

8. Delays and technology failure

During the meeting, it may be necessary for the Chair to call for a short pause, for example in order to seek clarification from the Legal Adviser or Administrator, if a member of the 'virtual platform party' experiences a technology failure or if staff need to rectify a technical fault. Please bear with us if this should happen.

If the entire meeting is suddenly terminated for everyone (due to a technical issue) then members are advised to monitor their emails as we will send out a replacement Zoom invitation as quickly as possible. Please note you will have to use the new Zoom invitation as the original one will have become invalid.

Section C: How to request to speak in debates

- Members are encouraged to email their Request to Speak to requesttospeak@churchofengland.org indicating briefly what they wish to say **24 hours prior to the debate.**
- Members will also be able to use the 'raise hand' function on Zoom during the session. Please refer to sections B4 and B6 above.

Section D: Synod Questions

Please click [here](#) to refer to the document on the Synod page of the Church of England website regarding Handling of Questions.

1. How to participate in supplementary questions

Any member who wishes to ask a supplementary question should do so by using the 'raise hand' function on Zoom. Priority will be given to the person who asked the original question. Members will be called by the Chair at the appropriate time and they should ensure that they ask a question and not make a speech; they should aim to take no more than one minute to ask their question.

All members, whether they asked the original question or not, must use the 'raise hand' function at the appropriate time in order to indicate their presence at the meeting (otherwise they will not be called to speak).

Any member called on to answer a supplementary question should complete this within one minute after which time they may be muted by a member of staff.

Please refer to section B6 above for more guidance on speaking during the meeting.

Section E: Technical advice (please also read the FAQs which are at the end of this document).

1. Technical preparations

Virtual participation will take place over an online meeting system called Zoom. Zoom can be accessed via your internet browser, the computer app or mobile app. You should ideally use a laptop or desktop computer to help ensure better sound and video quality.

Members are asked to test their sound and video before the meeting begins. Keep a distance of less than two feet between yourself and the microphone.

Please do everything you can to minimise background noise (such as silencing phones and turning off electronic alerts etc...) - we realise this won't be possible for everyone and we will try and be as accommodating as possible if there are interruptions from elsewhere.

To enhance your own experience as well as assisting others, consider your video background (as plain as possible), sit face-on to the camera (not sideways), do not have a window or light source behind you, and if you are called to speak ensure you are close enough for those who need to lip read.

However, if you experience issues with your internet connection then you may find that turning your video off (by clicking on the video icon) may help.

2. Joining the meeting

Members will receive the joining details for the virtual meeting on Friday 10th July. Members **should not share the meeting link**, to avoid anyone unexpectedly joining and disrupting the meeting.

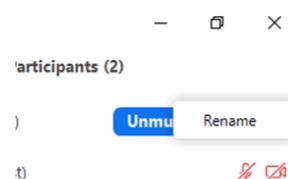
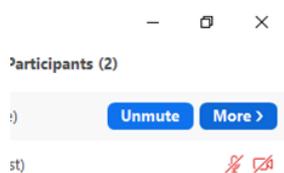
Members are asked to rename themselves as they join the meeting with the following protocol:

3 digit Synod number (including any leading '0's)
Space
B,C or L (to indicate House of Bishops, Clergy or Laity)
Space
Name

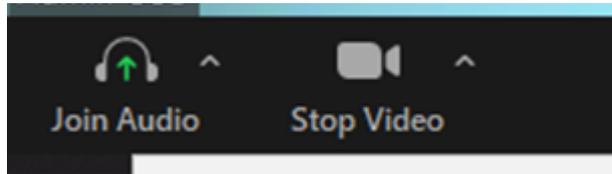
For example: 001 B Justin Welby or 243 C Dylan Redding or 312 L Fiona Bacon

This is really important, particularly to find and identify members who wish to speak or ask questions in order for staff to unmute them successfully.

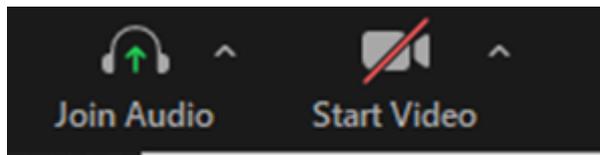
If you forget to rename yourself when you join the meeting, you can rename yourself at any point by opening the participants list, clicking the 'more' button to the right of your name and then clicking rename.



Members will need to enable their video during the joining process or can do so at any point having joined the meeting. If you are not prompted to 'join with video' then you can click on the video icon (see picture below) to start your video.



Video is in operation – click icon to stop



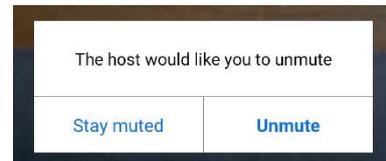
Video is not in operation – click icon to start

If you have any technical issues before or during the meeting, please email Synod Support at synod@churchofengland.org.

3. During the meeting

Once in the meeting, Members will see the panel of controls below at either the bottom or top of their screen.

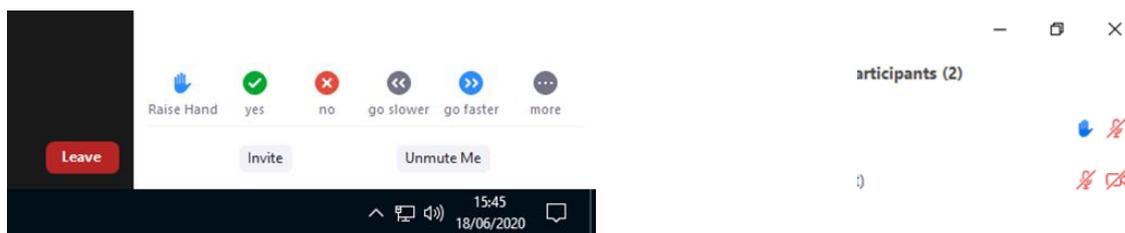
- **Mute** – mute or unmute your microphone. Please do not use this functionality. Members' microphones will be muted centrally. **If you receive a request to unmute, please select unmute to agree to the request.**



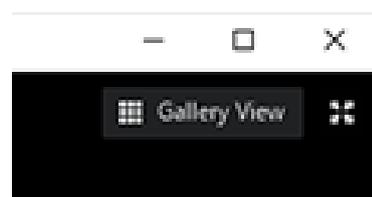
- **Stop Video** – start or stop your camera
- **Participants** – view the meeting participants
- **Reactions** – Members are asked not to use the Reaction buttons during proceedings.
- **Chat functionality** is unavailable by design. Members will not be able to participate in proceedings through the instant messaging/chat function.



The 'raise hand' function can be found by clicking on 'Participants'. On the right-hand side, underneath the list of participants, you will then see the blue 'raise hand' button which you can click when required. It will then display the blue hand icon next to your name in the list of participants. To note: blue hands will be lower by the staff team at the end of an item or after each question in Question Time.



We recommend that you watch in 'speaker view' rather than 'gallery view' as you will see whoever is speaking rather than a large number of small pictures of those in the meeting. To switch between the views, press the button which is usually found in the top right hand corner of your screen (see below) bearing in mind that once you have selected a view, the button will then change to offer you the other option.



4. Voting

At an informal group of sessions, any voting will be done with Zoom polling. During a vote, a resolution will pop up on your Zoom screen, with the options of yes, no, or abstentions. Please click your choice and submit the answers.

5. Accessibility

British Sign Language interpreters will be available on a rota system. Anyone wishing to use this service should 'pin' the appropriate BSL interpreter on their Zoom screen in order that they remain permanently on screen during a debate. Please contact us in advance via email on synod@churchofengland.org to request a rota of BSL interpreters for this meeting and for further instructions.

Section E: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

If I accidentally leave the meeting can I re-join?

Yes, you should be able to re-join by clicking on the link again. If not, go to Zoom.us, click on join a meeting and entering the meeting ID and password (which you can find in the emailed invitation).

Do I have to have my video turned on?

If you are intending to speak it would be a courtesy to all members to have your video turned on so you can be seen. However, if you are having trouble with your internet connection, you may find it helps to turn your video off which may improve things.

Why can't I see everyone in the meeting?

You can only see a maximum of 100 participants on screen in a Zoom meeting – everyone attending is listed in the participants list though (click on participants button to view)

If I need help to access the meeting what do I do?

If you email synod@churchofengland.org we will do our best to respond as quickly as we can.

If I put my 'hand up' to speak for one question will it remain up for the rest of them?

No, staff will 'lower hands' after the chair has called all speakers during an item or after 2 supplementary questions have been asked during Question Time.

Can I use my iPad or other tablet device to access the meeting?

Yes, though the display will look different from that on a laptop or desktop computer

Can I use my mobile phone to access the meeting?

Yes, though you will get a much-reduced display so we recommend that you don't use a smart phone unless you have no other option.

My internet has failed, can I dial in and listen on a phone?

Yes, you can dial in by landline or mobile phone (the phone numbers will be on the email invitation) however due the length of the session you may incur considerable costs so please check with your phone provider before making such a call.

What is the difference between 'speaker view' and 'gallery view'?

In speaker view, you see one large picture of whoever is speaking on your screen, whereas in gallery view you can see more (much smaller) pictures and it may not be obvious who is speaking.