

Practical Guidance for Synod Members, September 2020 Special Sessions

9 September 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE GENERAL SYNOD BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Dear Members of General Synod,

This is a highly unusual group of sessions. This is the first time for many decades that Synod has had to meet in September and the first time (that I am aware of) that the Synod has met to debate only one matter, and that matter an internal question of how it conducts its own business.

Many have pointed out the paradoxical nature of the fact that the Synod is having to meet physically in order to give itself permission to meet remotely on an official basis. The Business Committee is well aware of this paradox and we have no hesitation in saying that we had hoped that Synod would not have to meet in this way. However, we fully understand that the Government's legislative programme is very heavy indeed and that it was simply not possible for an item of Church business to find time on the Parliamentary agenda.

We are extremely grateful to the Officers of General Synod for their careful work on the sensitive matter of deciding who would attend, and to the forbearance of those who have decided not to attend even if they would otherwise have liked to do so. We hope that those Synod members who are watching the proceedings on the web cast will feel that their views and concerns are fully represented by those who are present physically.

Officers and staff at Church House have planned this meeting very carefully and a thorough risk assessment of the meeting has been carried out. The arrangements which have been put in place for this meeting are vital for the health and safety of all those in attendance. Synod members are urged to pay careful attention to these measures which include the regular use of hand sanitisers, allocated seating, physical distancing, the wearing of face coverings and guided passageways around the building. Whilst burdensome and often inconvenient, we hope that you appreciate that they are necessary in order to allow Synod to conduct its business safely.

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

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Section A: Contact List

Amendments <i>for submitting amendments by 5.30pm, 18 September 2020</i>	amendments@churchofengland.org
Requests to Speak <i>for submitting Requests to Speak please use the Request to Speak form on the App or the template attached with this guidance</i>	requesttospeak@churchofengland.org
General Enquiries	synod@churchofengland.org
Clerk to the Synod <i>for issues directed to the Clerk to the Synod</i>	clerk@churchofengland.org

Section B: How Synod proceedings will work in the September Special Session

1. Introduction

This Guide for Synod members is aimed at helping Synod members navigate their way through the September special sessions. The meeting has been called by the Presidents to consider the Draft General Synod (Remote Meetings) Measure, and this is the only item that will be considered. The officers of General Synod have communicated with members of their respective Houses to ensure that a multitude of voices, including those who are staying home and following the livestream online, are heard in the Chamber. Chairs will be adhering to the Standing Orders in the usual conventions of Synodical meetings.

Members attending the meeting physically are urged to read this guide carefully so that you are aware of the preparations and procedures at Church House and the behaviours that are expected of you. Many of these will be similar to other public venues, but some are specific to Church House Westminster and Synod. Your active observance of these guidelines will protect the health and safety of fellow Synod members and staff members.

2. Preparations at Church House

Staff members have undertaken a detailed risk assessment for the September Synod. The resulting series of rules will alter some logistical patterns that Synod members have been accustomed to. They are outlined in Section C below.

3. Voting

For voting, members will collect their voting cards before they enter the Assembly Hall. Handsets will have been seated inside the Assembly Hall, and an individual sanitizer wipe will be provided for members to use to further clean the handset after the lunch break. PPE will be used by staff members when handling the handsets.

At the end of the day, please leave both your voting card and handset on your chair. They will be collected by staff wearing PPE.

4. Participation

Members must submit any amendments by 5.30pm on Friday 18 September to amendments@churchofengland.org. Members can submit requests to speak through the email addresses provided in Section and through the Synod App.

Members who are not attending physically are encouraged to follow the livestream on the Synod website and Church of England YouTube channel.

5. Order of proceedings

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

Section C: Arrangements at Church House on the day

1. Before your arrival

In line with Government guidance, unless you are exempt, please wear a face covering before you enter Church House and at all times whilst you are inside the building. There are circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances. Please visit the relevant [Church of England](#) and Government website for the most updated guidance.

Please ensure that you bring your green Synod pass with you on the day, as there will be very limited facilities for issuing temporary passes on this occasion. New members of Synod since February are reminded to submit a photo in advance so that a pass can be pre-printed ready for collection from the desk in the Dean's Yard foyer area.

2. Entering Church House

Except for cyclists, members are asked to enter Church House through North Door only. (The North Door is located at 27 Great Smith Street, SW1P 3AZ.) Your body temperature will be taken upon entry, and your attendance will be recorded on the list of nominated participants for track and trace. If circumstances permit, members are encouraged to arrive at the venue in good time. If a queue forms, please be mindful of social distancing as you socialise with fellow members.

Cyclists are asked to email synod@churchofengland.org so that your entry through the garage can be arranged. As with those arriving via the main entrance, your body temperature will be taken, and your attendance will be recorded. Please note that the cloakroom will not be in use, and you will need to keep cycling gear with you at all times.

A one-way system will be in place in Church House, which will take members through to the info desk where they will get their voting card. Handsets will be placed in advance on each individual chair in the Chamber by the staff team. You will be sent a seat number in the Chamber, and you must sit in your designated seat.

The use of lifts is limited to one person at a time. Where possible please use the staircase from Dean's Yard to the first floor and follow the signposted route to the Assembly Hall from there.

3. Moving around Church House

Please follow the signage for the one-way system and be patient with the inconveniences caused. These measures are in place to maximise social distancing, and disability access has been taken into consideration. Members are asked to observe social distancing of at least one metre throughout their time at Church House.

Sanitizer stations will be installed throughout Church House, and an increased cleaning regime will be implemented in common areas, such as lavatories and the information desk.

Packed lunches will be offered for free. In order to minimise wastage, you will be asked to indicate in advance whether you require a lunch, and whether you need vegetarian or non-vegetarian ingredients. Members will be directed through the one-way system to collect refreshments and lunch at the appropriate time and will need to maintain social distancing at all times.

Sealed water bottles are provided at water stations. The usual fountains will not be in use.

Please be aware that certain member areas will have a lower capacity than usual, and that with the exception of the Assembly Hall, there should be no gathering in these areas. Other areas will be closed and signposted accordingly. Your understanding is greatly appreciated when security or staff ask Synod members to refrain from certain areas, or to keep moving.

While the Synod Team will work on a minimised rota to lower the risk of infection, staff members will be available to help. On top of the clear signposting of one-way routes, staff members will also help with the directions of travel in the building and reminding Synod members of social distancing and other measures.

4. During Debates

Please observe social distancing and follow the one-way system when entering the Assembly Hall and leaving after each session. You will be aware that actions in the Hall are livestreamed for the public to view.

Seats have been pre-assigned for each Synod member, and you will be informed of the location of your designated seat through email in advance.

The Chair, Registrar and Administrator will not wear masks. They will be sufficiently spaced from each other and other Synod members.

During debates, Synod members will be called to speak at the podiums in the usual way. Staff members will wipe the microphones between uses to ensure sanitation. While you are encouraged to wear a face covering when speaking, it would be reasonable to remove it for this purpose. If you do remove your face covering, please keep it in your hand rather than placing it on the podium.

5. Accessibility

Members with any accessibility needs should contact synod@churchofengland.org so that advance arrangements can be made.

The Assembly Hall has a hearing loop, and the usual signal boosters will be available from the Information Desk, together with wipes for you to use when you collect a booster unit. We would ask that you please bring your own headphones on this occasion, to avoid the risk of cross-contamination.

6. Leaving Church House

Synod members are asked to leave the Chamber in an orderly manner, maintaining social distancing, and then to leave the building promptly. More instructions will be given on the day.

Section D: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can I join the meeting through Zoom?

No. However, the meeting will be live streamed on the Church of England website and YouTube channel as usual. We advise those that are selected to attend the meeting to engage with their colleagues who are unable to attend to be able to share their thoughts as well.

What if I am exempt from wearing a face covering?

You do not need to wear a face covering.

If lots of members are still waiting to be admitted at the time when the session is due to start will it be delayed to allow everyone in?

The Chair will handle matters such as this according to Standing Orders. We encourage members to arrive at Church House in good time so that they can find their designated seats and be ready for business proceedings.

Other than paper forms, how can I submit a request to speak?

Please submit a Request to Speak through the App or by emailing requesttospeak@churchofengland.org. Please be reminded that paper and electronic Requests to Speak are not sent to the platform party directly. You should therefore not use paper and electronic forms if you wish to request to speak during a debate. As usual, you can raise your hand in the Chamber to ask to speak.

What if I want to move or support an amendment and I am not due/able to attend?

The Archbishops, the Prolocutors and the Chair and Vice Chair of the House of Laity have liaised with members of their respective House regarding the representation of different views by those who are due to attend. Please communicate with them if you have any concerns.

If I bring my own water bottle – will there be somewhere for me to fill it up?

No. This is to minimise the risk of virus infection per health and safety advice.

Do I need to wear my mask if speaking or asking a question at the podium during a debate?

While you are encouraged to wear a face covering when speaking, it would be reasonable to remove it for this purpose.

What happens if I'm due to attend but feel unwell (for any reason, not just Covid-19) – do I need to let anyone know and will it matter if I just don't turn up?

It would be very helpful if you email synod@churchofengland.org and contact the General Synod Officers who represent your House.

Can I claim for a taxi from/to a main line station to avoid using the Tube?

You can claim travel expenses from your diocese the usual way.

What happens after the meeting ends?

Members must vacate the building as soon as business ends.