

## GENERAL SYNOD – INTRODUCTORY GUIDE FOR MEMBERS

This Guide has been produced by the Synod Team of the Central Secretariat of the Archbishops' Council to assist Members of the General Synod in the new quinquennium which will start in November 2021. It is intended to provide basic administrative information, and also point to other documents which provide more detailed information on a range of matters, and will be made available in the Synod Members' Resources online at [the Church of England website](https://www.churchofengland.org). We would welcome feedback on its style and content. You are welcome to send further queries to [synod@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod@churchofengland.org).

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### Introduction

This Guide is intended to provide members, new and old, with basic information about the administrative details of the Synod's working, and to indicate what facilities are available and where they can be found. The other materials which have been produced for members are:

- The [Standing Orders](#) ("SO") which govern the procedure of the General Synod;
- The Guide to Synodical Procedure explains the procedure of the General Synod
- [Synod Member Survival Guide](#), a guide by members for members which explains the conventions of Synod

- [Elections and appointments by and from General Synod](#) which sets out the different boards, committees and commissions of the General Synod and the Archbishops' Council, and how members can engage with them.
- Guide to the [Synod Legislative Process](#).
- Guidelines on signing [Private Members' Motions](#).
- Guidance on [expenses](#) and [declarations of interest](#).

The last quinquennium was exceptional, in that the difficulties caused by COVID meant that the session had to be extended to six years rather than the usual five, and sessions in November 2020, April 2021 and July 2021 had to be held remotely. It is intended that the inaugural meeting of the new General Synod in November 2021 will be held in person in the usual way.

### **What does the General Synod do?**

The Synod's business can be broadly divided into:

- [making legislation](#);
- [liturgical business](#) (authorising forms of service);
- scrutiny of Church-related bodies;
- Financial Business and
- considering matters of religious and public interest.

See the Guide to Synodical Procedure and the Guide to Legislative Process for more detail.

### **Who's who**

Please see the Staff and useful [contacts section](#) at the end of this document for details of how to contact specific people.

### **The Secretary General**

The Secretary General, William Nye, acts as Secretary to the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops. He directs the activities of the Secretariat and co-ordinates the work of senior staff.

### **The Clerk to the Synod**

The Clerk to the Synod, Jacqui Philips, is responsible for keeping a register of members of the Synod, receive notice of vacancies and appointments, elections and co-options to fill vacancies. She makes the arrangements for the sittings of Synod under the direction of the Business Committee and the Presidents, and heads the Synod Support Team

### **The Synod Support Team**

The Synod support team is responsible for providing general support, staffing the information desk and responding to enquiries from members.

### **The Chaplain to the Synod**

The Chaplain, Revd Andrew Hammond, leads the morning and evening worship during groups of Synod sessions and is also available by email at [synodchaplain@churchofengland.org](mailto:synodchaplain@churchofengland.org).

## **The Registrar and members of the Legal Team**

The Registrar and members of the Legal Team are responsible for the legislative business and supporting the Chairs. The Registrar is in charge of the voting, and advises the Chair on procedural matters.

## **The General Synod Business Committee**

The General Synod Business Committee meets at least four times a year to set the Agenda for the next group of sessions and to review policies of the General Synod. They are elected from members of Synod and the next elections will take place in November and December 2021.

## **When and where does the Synod meet?**

Under its Constitution, the Synod must meet at least twice a year. Its traditional practice has been that one of these meetings is held during a working week in February in Church House, Westminster, and the other residentially, over a long weekend in July at the University of York. In addition to these two meetings, a date in November is reserved for a shorter group of sessions for use in the inaugural year of a new quinquennium, or if there is urgent legislative or other business.

As a result of COVID, the Synod's pattern of meeting was disrupted. The Synod which should have been held in July 2020 was replaced by an informal Zoom meeting, and in September 2020 a special session was held solely for the purpose of passing the General Synod (Remote Meetings) (Temporary Standing Orders) Measure 2020. That enabled the Synod to meet and transact business remotely. Remote sessions of the Synod were held in November 2020, February 2021, April 2021 and July 2021. It is hoped in the new quinquennium to return to the usual pattern.

## **Church House, London**

In London, the day on which meetings begin and end vary. In recent years it has generally been the custom for morning sittings to begin at 9.30 a.m. and end for lunch at 1.00 p.m. Afternoon sittings begin at 2.30 p.m. and go on until 7.00 p.m. Sittings may, however, be extended by up to fifteen minutes if the Synod agrees.

The Business Committee is mindful of the desirability of finishing the final sitting of a group of sessions early enough to enable the majority of members to get home on the same day.

Members arrange their own accommodation and meals when the Synod meets in London (a café within Church House is provided for breakfast, lunch and snacks) and reclaim their travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses from their dioceses.

Different arrangements for meeting the cost of expenses obviously apply to those members who do not represent a diocese. If you are a non-diocesan member and you are uncertain what these arrangements are, please contact the Synod Team ([synod@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod@churchofengland.org)).

## **University of York**

The July group of sessions at the University of York is held over a long weekend, usually beginning on Friday afternoon and continuing until the following Monday or Tuesday.

Sittings at York usually run from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. Again, sittings can be extended by up to fifteen minutes with the agreement of the Synod.

Every effort is made to ensure that the final sitting of the group of sessions ends early enough to enable members to get home on the same day.

All meals and accommodation are provided at the University and you will be sent a booking request by email for completion and return to us before the group of sessions. We reclaim the cost of your accommodation and meals direct from your diocese (so you do not have to pay for those directly yourself), but you will still need to reclaim any travel and additional subsistence costs from your diocese yourself.

### **Dates of future groups of sessions**

Dates for groups of sessions have been agreed until 2023. Dates for future meetings will be considered at a group of sessions in 2022. Please note that the start and end dates may vary according to the amount of business that needs to be done:

#### 2021

15 – 17 November – Inauguration of the new Synod (Church House, London)

#### 2022

7 – 11 February (Church House, London)

8 – 12 July (University of York)

14 – 16 November (Church House, London)

#### 2023

6 – 14 February (Church House, London)

7 – 11 July (University of York)

13 – 15 November (Church House, London)

### **Separate meetings of the Houses and the Convocations**

The House of Bishops meets separately from the other two Houses, both in the course of groups of sessions and on other occasions through the year. The Houses of Clergy and Laity have occasional separate meetings, usually during the course of a group of sessions or immediately before they start or end.

The Convocations of Canterbury and York (which comprise all the ordained Synod members from each Province) also have occasional meetings.

The contact information which you give us for General Synod purposes will also be used to send you information relating to meetings and business of your House and Convocation. See our Privacy Notice for the detail of how we process your data.

### **Resources**

This Guide and other general resource documents will be made available at [Synod members' resources | The Church of England](#). For each session, all official papers are put online here [General Synod meetings | The Church of England](#) and are also available to members via the Synod app.

You may also find the following documents useful:

[Church Representation Rules \(available free online\)](#)

[The Canons of the Church of England \(available free online\)](#)

The Church of England Yearbook (available to buy or as an online subscription but Diocesan Offices should have a copy)

### **Communicating with members**

The Synod team will mainly communicate with synod members by email, often from Synod Support. However, there is a Synod App which has been developed to help engage with members. Members can find the agenda, papers and other resources on the App.

There are occasions when documents will be 'laid before Synod' between groups of sessions. This is usually the case for items that need to be presented to Synod due to requirements set out in any relevant legislation. Members will be informed by email when this takes place.

### **Fringe meetings and displays**

Limited space is available at London and in York for fringe meetings and displays, and COVID restrictions may impact on the space that can be made available for them. These may be organised by groupings of the National Church Institutions or by individual Synod members or groupings. Fringe meetings and displays operate separately from Synod proceedings. All organisers and participants are required to comply with the Business Committee's Policy on Fringe Meetings and Displays which is available [here](#).

Flyers advertising when and where these meetings are to take place are published online in advance of groups of sessions. If you wish to attend any of the fringe meetings, you will need to respond to the person indicated on the flyer. Please do not respond to the Synod Office. It is especially important to respond by the time indicated on the flyer if catering is offered at the fringe meeting. This information is essential to enable the organisers to order the right amount of food.

You will also notice exhibition stands and displays on various matters to do with business on the agenda or of more general interest in the designated areas of Church House and at the University of York.

If you wish to arrange a fringe meeting or display, please contact [synod@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod@churchofengland.org) for advice.

### **Accommodation booking forms (July only)**

Around two months before the July group of sessions we will send you accommodation forms for the University of York. It is important that you complete the forms accurately and submit them to us as soon as possible, certainly no later than the date specified.

Confirmation details of where you will be staying and eating at the University will be sent via e-mail.

## **What can I expect during a group of sessions?**

### *Security passes*

The Business Committee is responsible for all the operational workings of Synod, including overseeing the security arrangements at Synod. The General Synod Security Policy may be viewed [here](#).

These measures are in place to ensure the safety and security of all those attending Synod, whether Synod members, guests, members of the public or staff. All Synod members, guests and visitors are reminded of their responsibility to comply with this policy to ensure the safety of all, to remain vigilant and to report any concerns to security staff or staff on the Information Desk.

There is a pass system in operation both at Church House and the University of York. We will ask you to provide us with a passport-style colour photograph (preferably by email) so that we can issue you a photo pass to identify you as a member of Synod.

The pass is valid for the period of the quinquennium and you will need to remember to bring it with you – and wear it visibly – at all times during the group of sessions, both in London and York.

If you forget your pass, we can issue a temporary replacement; and if you have lost your pass we can issue you with a replacement, although an administration fee of £10 may be charged.

### **Voting cards and handsets**

The Synod uses a system of electronic voting. In order to vote, you must have a valid voting card. Voting cards are issued at the beginning of each group of sessions. To avoid being caught out by an unexpected vote early in a group of sessions, please collect your personalised voting card at the start of each group of sessions.

Voting cards must be returned at the end of the group of sessions. They are expensive to replace and you won't be able to use them again at the next group of sessions. A replacement fee of £10 will be charged for any missing cards.

As you go into the Assembly Hall (Church House) or the Central Hall (York), you should collect a voting handset to use with your voting card. Please return it to the stand when you leave the Hall.

If your handset doesn't work, you can use a neighbour's once they have finished voting. If your voting card doesn't work, you'll need to get a replacement - ask at the Information Desk or contact [synod@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod@churchofengland.org). If this happens during a vote do this promptly so that your vote can be added manually.

The Business Committee issues instructions in relation to electronic voting, with which members must comply. This is in the Synod Members' Resources.

### **Worship**

The Archbishops in their role as Presidents of General Synod have appointed a Synod Chaplain to oversee the delivery of General Synod worship. This includes formal worship at each group of sessions and the Continuous Praying Presence which supports the work of Synod, as well as pastoral support for Synod members. Synod members are welcome to volunteer to take part in the worship of Synod and may contact the Chaplain by email [synodchaplain@churchofengland.org](mailto:synodchaplain@churchofengland.org)

Each morning sitting starts with a short act of worship and there is a short act of worship following the afternoon sitting.

Holy Communion is celebrated at the University of York each morning, and at lunchtime in the Chapel at Church House.

In York, members of the Synod join the regular Sunday morning congregation at York Minster. Each morning sitting starts with a short act of worship and there is a short act of worship following the afternoon sitting.

### **In the chamber**

While the physical layout of Church House and the University of York is clearly quite different, the arrangement of the chamber in which the Synod meets is very similar in both.

The Assembly Hall in Church House is circular with a gallery just below the dome where visitors and the press sit. There is reserved seating for ecumenical representatives and representatives of Deaf Anglicans Together (and their interpreters). Other members of Synod can sit anywhere else.

There is a walkway, called the Ambulatory, all the way around the outside of the Assembly Hall with a large number of doors into the Assembly Hall. The doors are lettered (both inside and out), so it is a good idea to check which door you are sitting near if you need to leave the Assembly Hall during a debate but intend to come back shortly.

The Central Hall at the University of York is more like a theatre. Again, there is reserved seating for ecumenical representatives and representatives of Deaf Anglicans Together (and their interpreters). Other members of Synod can sit anywhere else. There is no physically separate gallery in the Central Hall, so visitors and the Press are allocated special areas towards the top of the seating areas, which are known as the 'public gallery' and the 'press gallery'.

There are only two access points to the Central Hall from the Concourse, both at ground floor level.

There is a raised area at the front of the Assembly Hall and the Central Hall, called the Platform. This is where the Chairs of debates sit, with an administrator (to their right) and a registrar (to their left) to advise them during the debate. Their roles are explained in the Guide to Synodical Procedure. When the Synod is in session, members are not permitted to speak to, or give messages directly to, the Chair or the advisers.

Behind them on the Platform sit other members of staff and the members of the Synod who have been involved in the business the Synod is debating.

In London, the Archbishops sit on one side of the Platform and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the House of Laity and the two Prolocutors sit on the other. In York, they have desks allocated to them on the floor of the Central Hall.

The stenographers (who record the Synod's proceedings) sit immediately below the Platform in London and in the gallery in York.

### **Entering and leaving the chamber**

Five minutes before a sitting is about to begin, a bell will ring in the Ambulatory and Bishop Partridge Hall (in London), or downstairs in the Concourse (in York), to warn members that the sitting is about to start.

If you need to enter or leave the chamber while a debate is in progress, you should wait to do so until the person speaking has finished.

Please take any papers with you when you leave the chamber at the end of each sitting. Recycling bins are provided at the information desk for the disposal of unwanted papers.

### **Information Desk**

The Information Desk will be a valuable reference point for you during groups of sessions. It is be staffed while the Synod is in session and only closes at meal times.

In London, the Information Desk is set up in the Bishop Partridge Hall, just a couple of steps away from the Assembly Hall. In York, it is on the lower level (or Concourse) of the Central Hall, immediately opposite the main entrance to the building.

At the Information Desk you can:

- get practical advice on any aspect of the Synod
- pick up and leave messages
- find and submit request to speak forms (you can also do this on the Synod app or by email)
- find and submit forms to put down amendments or following motions
- collect your electronic voting card
- pick up hard copies of Order or Notice Papers
- pick up hard copies of specific papers if required
- buy meal tickets for guests (York only)
- reserve tickets for the coaches to York Minster (York only)

### **Messages**

You are advised to leave any urgent messages for members with the information desk.

### **Notice boards**

There are notice boards for posting general information in the Bishop Partridge Hall in London and in the Concourse in York. Members are asked to contact the information desk with any information for the notice board.

Please note that these notice boards will have information regarding any fringe meetings taking place that day.

### **Members with a disability**

Please let the Synod team know if you need particular assistance during your time at Synod. A member of the team will also work with you to complete a Personal Evacuation Plan in the event of fire or other emergency need to vacate the building.

A hearing loop is available in the Assembly Hall at Church House and in the Central Hall at the University of York.

Limited parking is available for blue badge holders at Church House, and must be arranged well in advance. At the University of York there is ample parking in pay & display car parks, and any member can request a parking "hanger" to display in their car for the duration of Synod. There is no charge for disabled parking in either location.

Disabled access to Church House is via the North Door entrance in Great Smith Street. There are ramps in other parts of the building, but the routes can be a little circuitous.



The University of York is generally very accessible for disabled people (though the Central Hall is less so and the distances to be covered are greater). If you require a specially equipped room at the University of York, please let the Synod team know when you book your accommodation.

There are accessible toilets in the basement of Church House and on the first floor (where the Synod meets). At York, they are on the ground floor of the Central Hall.

### **Toilets, Lifts and Cloakrooms**

Cloakrooms and toilets are located in the basement of Church House. Further toilets are all situated on the first floor of the building. However, there are no cloakroom facilities at the University of York.

There are lifts (located between the North Door entrance and the Dean's Yard entrance) and stairs (inside the Dean's Yard entrance) serving the basement, ground floor and first floor. It would help greatly if members could use the stairs where possible, in order to allow those with accessibility needs to have priority use of the lifts.

Despite the generally high level of accessibility at the University of York, the Central Hall itself is less well served. The Concourse (with the Information Desk) and toilets (including accessible toilets) are located on the ground floor. The chamber where the Synod meets is on the first floor. There is a lift, but it is only available for those who require disabled access. The route from the lift to the seating area is not immediately obvious so please contact the Synod team in advance so that we can assist you.

The lifts must not be used in the event of a fire or fire alarm. If you would need assistance to enter or leave the building in the event of an emergency, please let the Synod team know that before the session starts.

### **Security**

All Synod members will be issued with a security pass incorporating their photograph. These passes must be worn visibly at all times in Church House and at the University of York. Entry will be refused unless a member is wearing their pass.

Members are asked never to leave luggage or briefcases unattended except in the cloakrooms. It is particularly important not to leave briefcases in the Assembly Hall or Central Hall between sittings. All items found by staff in either place will be removed and can be collected from the Information Desk.

### **Visitors**

In London, members can invite visitors to join them in the Hoare Memorial Hall for refreshments, but must accompany them at all times. Visitors must wear the temporary sticky badge provided by the reception staff at the Dean's Yard or Great Smith Street entrances.

Visitors are not permitted in the Bishop Partridge Hall, which is for members only, in the Ambulatory (the circular walkway surrounding the Assembly Hall) or in the Assembly Hall itself.

The public gallery to the Assembly Hall (which is open to visitors) is situated on the second floor and access is gained by the main staircase.

Access to the public gallery is by ticket only. These are made available on a first come first served basis and can be obtained only on application in person to the receptionists on duty

at the desks in the Dean's Yard or Great Smith Street entrances to Church House. There are separate tickets for each morning and afternoon sitting.

In York, access to the public gallery is again by ticket only. Members are not permitted to invite visitors into the Concourse as access to the Central Hall is strictly by photo pass only.

In all cases, guests are expected to adhere to any security arrangements which are in place. These arrangements are outlined in the [Security Policy](#) on the CofE website.

### **Refreshments**

Tea and coffee (both free of charge), hot lunches and a variety of sandwiches, pastries and biscuits (for which a charge is made) are available in the Hoare Memorial Hall in Church House. There are no restaurant facilities on the premises, but there are a number of restaurants, supermarkets and sandwich bars in the vicinity of Church House.

The group of sessions in York is fully catered. Tea and coffee are available in the Concourse for limited periods during the morning and afternoon.

Please note that food and drink (except bottled water) may **not** be consumed in the Assembly Hall or the Central Hall. Visitors are not permitted to take water or other food or drink into the Public Gallery, but a water dispenser is available for those who require it.

### **Smoking**

Church House and the University of York operate strict no smoking policies (including the use of electronic/vapouriser cigarettes). If members wish to smoke then they should leave the premises and find an appropriate place to do so.

### **Mobile phones and other electronic equipment**

Mobile phones should be set to vibrate or silent mode in the Assembly Hall and the Central Hall. Members may use laptops and tablets in the Assembly Hall and the Central Hall, again with all sounds switched off.

### **Photography**

Members are advised to restrict the taking of photographs, and to consider other members if they chose to take any photographs.

### **Church House Bookshop**

Church House Bookshop in Great Smith Street is one of the largest religious booksellers in the UK and provides a mail order service worldwide. During Synod meetings in York the Bookshop has a stall near the Information Desk offering a more limited range of stock. In London you can just pop next door.

### **Staff and Useful contacts**

You can contact us using the contact button in the app, or send a general enquiry to [synod@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod@churchofengland.org)

### **Secretary General**

William Nye LVO tel: 020 7898 1360

### **Clerk to the Synod (and Secretary to the Business Committee)**

Dr Jacqui Philips tel: 020 7898 1385, email: [clerk@churchofengland.org](mailto:clerk@churchofengland.org)

**Secretary to the House of Clergy**

Sue Moore tel: 020 7898 1376, email: [sue.moore@churchofengland.org](mailto:sue.moore@churchofengland.org)

**Secretary to the House of Laity and Secretary to the Appointments Committee**

Jenny Jacobs tel: 020 7898 1363, email: [jenny.jacobs@churchofengland.org](mailto:jenny.jacobs@churchofengland.org)

Questions: [questions@churchofengland.org](mailto:questions@churchofengland.org)

Amendments: [amendments@churchofengland.org](mailto:amendments@churchofengland.org)

Passes: [synod.passes@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod.passes@churchofengland.org)

Changes of e-mail address [synod@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod@churchofengland.org)

**Chaplain:** The Revd Andrew Hammond, email [synodchaplain@churchofengland.org](mailto:synodchaplain@churchofengland.org)