

FEBRUARY 2023 GROUP OF SESSIONS

Report of the General Synod Business Committee and Guide to the Group of Sessions

Introduction:

1. The Business Committee is an elected committee of the General Synod. It is charged under Standing Order 4 with settling the agenda for each group of sessions and determining the order in which business is to be taken. Subject to Standing Order 1, it is also responsible for all matters relating to the sessional arrangements of the Synod (Standing Order 125).
2. The Business Committee prepares a report for each group of sessions. This report sets out the business and practicalities for the February 2023 group of sessions and gives an overview of the work of the Committee since its last report in July 2022.
3. The Business Committee keeps under review whether a November Group of Sessions will be required in November 2023 or 2024. Members will be informed as soon as possible.

Setting the Agenda for the February group of sessions

4. The Business Committee strives to set the agenda in a way that ensures that there is a balance of subjects, and a mix between items brought by dioceses through Diocesan Synod Motions (DSMs) or individual members through Private Members' Motions (PMMs) and those put forward by the Archbishops' Council or its sub-committees. It ensures that there is adequate time available for legislative business and sufficient time for standing items such as questions and farewells.
5. For the February 2023 group of sessions, being held from Monday 6 February to Thursday 9 February, the Business Committee has considered the importance of the work related to Living in Love and Faith, and has allocated significant time for Synod members to engage with this.
6. This has meant that there is limited time available for DSMs and PMMs. As the DSM from Lincoln on Insurance Premium Tax was not taken at the July 2022 group of sessions, the Committee has decided to allocate time for this item. The Blackburn DSM to Reduce Parochial Fees for Marriages which was contingency business at the July 2022 group of sessions has been designated as contingency business for this group of sessions.
7. There are eight legislative items at this group of sessions, three of which are for Revision Stage, Final Drafting and Final Approval. Two will have the Revision Stage only and three are for approval. Further details can be found below.
8. As with the July 2022 group of sessions, the Business Committee has decided to schedule two periods for 'question time' to allow more time for this important part of the Synod process, but time constraints have made these periods shorter than the committee would ideally have wished. These will take place on the evening of Monday and Tuesday morning.
9. There will be group work, followed by an informal plenary discussion taking place on Tuesday afternoon. This will give members the opportunity to engage again with

the Living in Love and Faith work.

10. The Business Committee is delighted that this group of sessions will be attended by a number of guests from the Anglican Communion. Details about those attending, including a brief biography can be found in Notice Paper Six.
11. There will be a Loyal Address be presented to His Majesty The King on the occasion of his accession to the Throne.

Practicalities for the February group of sessions

12. The Convocation of York will be meeting at 12pm in the Convocation Hall to consider co-option of a second UKME member.
13. This group of sessions will be held at Church House, Westminster. The meetings will be held in the Assembly Hall.
14. There will group work on Tuesday afternoon. This will be in relation to the Living in Love and Faith work. It will take place in Church House and Mary Sumner House. Further details will be available on a Notice Paper and members are encouraged to engage with this group work to ensure their views are heard by the Bishops.
15. As at the July 2022 group of sessions, we will be providing basic Zoom access to the meeting to those unable to attend in person due to illness or other reasons. The Synod Support Team will contact members regarding this, and will arrange access to the Zoom call and voting platform.

Worship

16. Worship is arranged on behalf of Synod by the Synod Chaplain. There is currently a vacancy for this role, and a former Synod Chaplain, The Revd Canon Michael Gisbourne will be arranging worship at the February group of sessions. He can be contacted on synodchaplain@gmail.com.
17. As this is a body of the Church of England, worship is integral to the Synod meetings. Each session starts with worship and concludes with worship. Holy Communion is celebrated in the Chapel daily, and there will be a Synod Eucharist in the Chamber on Tuesday morning.
18. The Business Committee has agreed that closing worship on Monday 6 February will take place during the group of sessions. The Committee wanted Synod to be able to pray together and agreed to allocate time during the session to ensure members were able to participate before going on to any evening meetings.
19. Pastoral support will be available during this group of sessions and further information will be available in the Worship Notice Paper.

Agenda items for the February group of sessions

20. The following sets out a brief summary of each of the papers being presented at the February group of sessions. It is hoped that members will find this useful.
 - In order to facilitate a hybrid meeting of Synod, the first item of business will be to propose that the Standing Orders made under Section 1 of the [General Synod \(Remote Meetings\) \(Temporary Standing Orders\) Measure 2020](#) which lapsed in August 2022, be revived for three years. It is only if these are passed by Synod that the hybrid elements of the meeting can take place. If it is not passed, we will continue the meeting with those in the Chamber.

- [GS 2283 Agenda](#): This is the key paper for the group of sessions as it sets out the business for the meeting. This should be read alongside the Order Papers which will be published about an hour before each session starts on the Synod App and website (and available printed on orange paper in the Bishop Partridge Hall). Please note that the agenda is subject to change during the group of sessions if business necessitates; the Chair of the Business Committee will explain any proposed changes to Synod.
- [GS 2284 Report of the Business Committee](#): This report will be discussed as one of the first items on the agenda. Members will have the opportunity to comment on the agenda or on the content of the Report during the take note debate.
- [GS 2269A Amending Canon No 42](#): This Amending Canon implements a recommendation from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse that the role of diocesan safeguarding adviser be changed to one of diocesan safeguarding officer. Diocesan safeguarding officers would have responsibility in the diocese, independent of the bishop, for the professional leadership on and management of matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults.
- [GS 2255A Diocesan Stipends Funds \(Amendment\) Measure](#): This legislation will allow dioceses more freedom to be generous with their historic wealth to other dioceses in the Church of England, and enable a more equitable sharing of this wealth.
- [GS 2264 Church of England Pensions \(Application of Capital Funds\) Measure](#): This Measure further extends the period during which the Church Commissioners are permitted to resort to capital to meet their obligations under the pre-1998 clergy pension scheme.
- [GS Misc 1329](#) and [GS 2289 Living in Love and Faith](#): These items will invite Synod to engage with the proposals being brought forward by the House of Bishops as a result of the Living in Love and Faith process.
- [GS 2285 Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 \(consequential amendments to regulations under Canon B12\) Regulations](#): This legislation makes amendments which are consequential on the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure.
- [GS 2272A Church of England \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Measure](#): This Measure covers a wide range of provisions which would not merit free-standing legislation. Many of the provisions are of a technical nature
- [Loyal Address](#): This loyal address will be given on the occasion of the Accession of HM The King
- [GS 2286 Resourcing Ministerial Formation](#): This item updates Synod on a proposed new method of funding theological education institutions to give them greater stability with an innovation fund to encourage entrepreneurship and partnership working.
- [GS 2287 Cost of Living](#): This item reflects the impact of the highest level of inflation for over 40 years (in the UK), and the very significant increases in energy prices adversely affecting individuals and organisations.

- [GS 2288 Draft Parochial Fees Order 2023](#): This Order will propose that parochial fees should be set at 5% above the 2022 level (rounded up to the nearest pound) rather than the 9.9% increase in line with CPI inflation, rounded up to the nearest pound, which applies from 1 January 2023 for the remainder of 2023
- [GS 2273 Amending Canon No 43](#): This Amending Canon covers a wide range of provisions which would not merit free-standing legislation. Many of the provisions are of a technical nature
- [GS 2290 Governance Review](#): This item will provide the General Synod with an update on the work of the National Church Governance Project Board.
- [GS 2291 Electronic Register Book of Services Form and Conditions 2023](#): This item allows a register of services to be kept in an electronic form approved by the General Synod as provided for in Canon F 12, as amended by Amending Canon No. 41
- [GS 2292 61st Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): This sets out a number of proposals to amend the Standing Orders.
- [GS 2293 Safeguarding](#): This item will include a presentation by the new Director of Safeguarding followed by a take note debate.
- [GS 2265A](#) and [GS 2265B Insurance Premium Tax](#): This Diocesan Synod Motion from Lincoln seeks to address the impact of insurance premium tax on churches and other charities.

Contingency Business

- [GS 2294A](#) and [GS 2295B Contribution of Faith to the Rehabilitation of Offenders](#): this is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Worcester and puts forward that faith can have a positive impact on an offender's behaviour.

Work of the Committee

21. The Business Committee has met three times since the July 2022 group of sessions.
22. The Business Committee considered the petitions submitted at the July 2022 group of sessions by Mr Sam Margrave. In the judgement of the Committee, there was no further action for the Committee to take on the first petition. In regards to the second petition, it was noted that nothing could be done without the express permission of the individual named in the petition. The Committee has not contacted the individual and there has been no further action.
23. The Business Committee has met with members of the Panel of Chairs to share feedback from Synod members after the July group of sessions.
24. The Committee has taken forward a number of suggestions from Synod members' feedback after the July 2022 group of sessions, including the following :
 - Members appreciated the ability to join remotely through Zoom. As noted above, the Business Committee are continuing with this offering and has made time available on the agenda for the Temporary Standing Orders to be revived to enable this to happen.
 - Members welcomed the additional question time but suggested that it might be

beneficial to have one session in the morning. The Business Committee has allowed time for this and it will be trialled on Tuesday morning.

- Members expressed concern that using only two microphone podiums slowed the debates. It is expected that there will be four podiums at Church House for this group of sessions.
 - There was feedback about the behaviour of members. The Business Committee has revisited the informal code of conduct ([GS Misc 1175](#)) and a working group of the Business Committee is considering this in more detail.
25. Following the Business Committee fringe during the July group of sessions and subsequent engagement by members, the proposal for a Grand Committee will not be taken further. The suggestion of Select Committee/Scrutiny Committees will be considered and more work will be done on this in connection with the Governance Review.
26. The Business Committee would welcome feedback from members on any aspect of Synod. This can be done formally through the post-Synod feedback questionnaire or more informally by email to synod@churchofengland.org.
27. The Appointments Committee is a committee of Synod, responsible for appointing members to Synodical bodies, as well as other bodies. The Business Committee would encourage members to engage with this and either put forward yourself or others for roles which match your skills and experiences. Further details can be found in [GS Misc 1324](#).

Elections Review Group (ERG)

28. The Business Committee and the Appointments Committee has appointed members to the Elections Review Group which is a sub-committee of the Business Committee. The ERG is chaired by Clive Scowen (London) and the terms of reference are as follows
- Reviewing the process for the 2021 General Synod elections, including engagement with stakeholders such as dioceses, Synod members and Civica Electoral Services.
 - Putting forward proposals for amendments to the election rules for the next General Synod elections
 - Acting as steering committee for amendments to the Church Representation Rules and other rules pertaining to the election of members of the General Synod.
 - Advising the Business Committee on any other changes related to elections and produce a report to the Business Committee for consideration by General Synod.
 - Considering amendments to the Church Representation Rules relating to proceedings of parochial church councils.
29. Further details can be found in the separate [GS Misc 1337](#).

Accessibility

30. The Business Committee's statement on Accessibility ([GS Misc 1201](#)) was last reviewed in December 2020 but the Committee regularly engages with the Accessible Synod Group to bring improvements to each group of sessions.

Feedback from members on how to improve this would be welcomed.

Synod App

31. Members are encouraged to download the Synod App. This gives you access to all papers, supporting documents; and the ability to submit requests to speak and amendments. If you have any issues accessing this, the Synod Support team can advise.

Record of Business Done

32. The transcript from the July 2022 group of sessions is now available on the website [here](#).

Clerk of the Synod

33. It is expected that the appointment of the Clerk to the Synod will take place after the February group of sessions, and Synod's approval will be sought in July 2023.

Business Committee Policies

34. The Business Committee has a number of policies covering various aspects of Synod's activities which are reviewed regularly and updated as necessary. These and other guidance may be viewed on the Members' [resources section](#) on the Church of England website.
35. The [Guide to the General Synod](#) and the [Synod Members' Survival Guide](#) may be especially helpful as members prepare for the group of sessions.
36. Synod members are encouraged to be proactive in publicising the work of Synod, and social media is a great platform for this. The hashtag used on Twitter is #Synod. There are several social media channels which members have used in the past. However, members are reminded of the importance of being respectful to each other and that social media comments are seen by many both within and outside the Church.
37. Synod business is recorded and livestreamed on the Church of England YouTube channel, and occasionally broadcast on the BBC Parliament Channel as well. Members should consider this when participating in the chamber.

On behalf of the Business Committee,
Robert Hammond, Chair
January 2023

Membership of the Business Committee January 2023

Chair (elected by General Synod)

Canon Robert Hammond

Elected by the House of Bishops

The Rt Revd Martin Gorick, Bishop of Dudley

Elected by the House of Clergy

Fr Paul Cartwright (Vice-Chair)

The Ven Mark Ireland

The Revd Jody Stowell

Elected by the House of Laity

Mr Clive Scowen

Mrs Michelle Obende

Mr Nic Tall

Appointed by the Archbishops' Council

Mrs Alison Coulter

The Revd Canon Tim Goode

The Secretary to the Committee is the Head of Governance, Jenny Jacobs.

Forecast of future General Synod business

This contains potential items that are likely to come to a future group of sessions, it is not an exhaustive list as other items may be added and does not guarantee that an item will be scheduled.

The dates for the July 2023 group of sessions are still to be finalised but members are requested to hold the date envelope of Friday 7th to Tuesday 11th July 2023 for Synod.

July 2023

Legislative business

- Clergy Conduct Measure – First Consideration
- Safeguarding Redress Measure – First Consideration
- Miscellaneous Provisions Measure and Amending Canon No 43 – Final Drafting/ Final Approval
- Faculty Jurisdiction Rules Amendment – For Approval
- Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2023 (deemed business)
- Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order 2023 (deemed business)

Non-legislative business

- Debate on disability
- Update on review of Mission and Pastoral Measure
- Motion on land and nature
- 5th Anniversary of 2018 climate change motion from the National Investing Bodies
- Appointment of Clerk to the Synod (deemed business)

For and on behalf of the General Synod Business Committee
Canon Robert Hammond, Chair
January 2023