

NOVEMBER 2023 GROUP OF SESSIONS

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

Key points for the November Group of Sessions.

- Synod will meet from 1.30pm on Monday 13 November and end no later than 4.45pm on Wednesday 15 November in Church House, London.
- Synod will be in informal session between 4.30pm and 6.15pm on Monday 13 November. This session will be livestreamed.
- Synod will revert to formal session after 6.15pm on Monday 13 November to finish the business on the agenda for that day.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated in the Assembly Hall at 9am on Tuesday 14 November.
- Questions will be taken in two groups; on Monday from 2.50pm to 4.30pm, any questions relating to Living in Love and Faith matters will be taken first, followed by other questions rotating through the boards and councils as is customary. Questions will resume at 11.45am on Tuesday 14 November until 12.45pm
- To allow sufficient time to deal with questions, during what is expected to be an extremely busy time, the Business Committee has decided that the **deadline for receipt of questions will be 12:00 on Thursday 26 October**. However, it is always helpful if members submit questions well ahead of the deadline.
- There are some administrative and legislative matters that the Business Committee considers it expedient to consider in this short group of sessions. This includes the re-appointment of the Chair of the Pensions Board; first consideration of the Safeguarding Redress Measure; the Churches Conservation Trust Order 2023; the Standing Orders Committee Report and the Vacancy in See Committees (Amendment) Regulation relating to the Chanel Islands.
- The remaining time will be given to Living in Love and Faith.
- The Business Committee has decided that the deadline for amendments to the Living in Love and Faith item will be **10am on Thursday 9 November**. Again, it is helpful for members to submit amendments well ahead of the deadline.
- Should time become available, there are three items of contingency business. This includes Diocesan Synod Motions on the Future of work and on Parochial Fees, and a Private Members Motion on Clergy Pensions. If members want to contribute to these debates they are advised to be prepared for them to appear with short notice.
- The Business Committee is pleased to have been able to arrange for papers to be sent out over three weeks before the group of sessions. We hope this enables members to have sufficient time to read and prayerfully reflect on them.
- Unfortunately, building works in Church House means there are fewer rooms available for Fringe Meetings than usual. However, we are happy to share that all those that requested a fringe have been allocated one, even if the allocation is not the first choice.
- Looking forward, the Business Committee has agreed to hold the February group of sessions over the weekend Friday 23 to Tuesday 27 February 2024. This is in response to a decision of the previous synod to hold a weekend group of sessions in London. This will be reviewed afterwards.

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). This report sets out the business and practicalities for the November 2023 group of sessions and gives an overview of the work of the Committee since its last report in July 2023.

Review from the July 2023 group of sessions

2. The post-Synod survey completed by members provided a number of reflections for the Committee to consider and the Business Committee is grateful to everyone who responded . The first issue raised by a number of members was the conduct demonstrated by some Synod members. There was feedback that some members did not behave in line with the behaviours expected of a Christian body.
3. The Business Committee considered this feedback and agreed that the behaviour of some members was sometimes not that which is expected. The Chair of the Business Committee wrote to one member of Synod to inform them that their conduct was not that expected and their behaviour at the July group of sessions breached the code of conduct that all members are expected to abide by.
4. The Business Committee would like to remind members that when engaging in debates, they should express themselves responsibly and be aware of how the views expressed may be received by others. It is important that robust debate should not spill over into abusive language, and Synod members should be able to disagree well, noting that the final decision on any ruling is that of the Chair of that debate.
5. Another theme which came through strongly was the sense of distrust. We recognise that this is not something that the Business Committee can address alone and there needs to be a concerted effort from everyone to address this.
6. There was criticism from some members that the same people were repeatedly called to speak during debates. The Business Committee will continue to monitor this, but would encourage all members who wish to speak to submit a 'Request to Speak Form' and provide as much information as possible to help the Chair in deciding who to call to speak. Please remember that you do need to stand or otherwise indicate that you wish to speak in addition to submitting the form; the Chair will not be aware that you are in the Chamber if you do not indicate.
7. The final significant point from the feedback is a lack of clarity of the role of a Synod member and what the responsibilities they have are. The Business Committee will be offering the chance to participate in more regular ongoing briefings, and will aim to share further guidance with members. We note that in

2021 there was about 60% of new members joining Synod, and reflect that the Business Committee and staff could perhaps have done even more than was done to help these members with their understanding. It is something that the Business Committee will be monitoring.

Settling the Agenda for the November 2023 group of sessions

8. When settling the agenda, the Business Committee strives to ensure 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 or other National Church Institutions. It also aims to ensure that there is adequate time available for legislative business and standing items such as questions and farewells.
9. A November group of sessions is always short and this group of sessions is no exception. As outlined in the key points, we will be meeting from 1.30pm on Monday 13 November to 4.45pm on Wednesday 15 November. Brief information on the individual items on the agenda are set out below and members should read the relevant associated papers.
10. A significant amount of time has been allocated to the Living in Love and Faith debate.
11. However, there will be other items for Synod to consider. There are three legislative items at this group of sessions. One item will have its first consideration stage and two will be for approval.
12. As with recent groups of sessions, the Business Committee has decided to schedule two periods for 'question time' to allow more time for this important part of the Synodical process. These will take place on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning.
13. Synod will be invited to consider the reappointment of the Chair of the Pensions Board, and there will be a Joint Presidential Address from the Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop of York.
14. The Business Committee noted that Standing Order 25: *Reconsideration* sets out that it is not in order to move a motion or amendment which is in the same form or substantially to the same effect as a motion decided by Synod in the preceding 11 months, or to move a motion or amendment which proposes a course of action contrary to or substantially inconsistent with a decision made by Synod in the preceding 11 months. Members should be aware that this Standing Order is always considered when reviewing amendments which are submitted for inclusion on an Order Paper. The Business Committee note that this may be of particular relevance at this group of sessions in relation to *Item 7 Living in Love and Faith*, and members are recommended to seek advice early from the Clerk in the first instance to ensure any amendments are in order.

Practicalities for the November group of session

15. The group of sessions is being held at Church House, Westminster. The meetings will be held in the Assembly Hall. As with previous groups 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. Please ensure you let Synod Support know if you are joining a session by Zoom.

Worship

16. Worship is arranged on behalf of Synod by the Synod Chaplain, The Revd Dylan Turner. If you have any comments or suggestions on worship, he can be contacted at synodchaplain@churchofengland.org.
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, celebrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury.
18. 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 November group of sessions

19. The following sets out a brief summary of each of the papers being presented at the November group of sessions. It is hoped that members will find this useful, although the Business Committee strongly recommends that all papers read in full.
- [GS 2322 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 in hard copy 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 2323 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 2324 Appointment of the Chair of the Pensions Board](#): This is a formal item which Synod will be invited to consider the reappointment of Mr Clive Mather as Chair of the Pensions Board for a second term.
 - [GS 2325 Abuse \(Redress\) Measure](#): The first consideration stage of this Measure. This will enable there to be a consistent approach across the Church to redress following abuse.
 - [GS 2326 Payment to the Churches Conservation Trust Order 2023](#): This sets

- the level of Church funding for the Churches Conservation Trust for the period 2024 to 2027.
- [GS 2327 62nd Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): This sets out a number of proposals to amend the Standing Orders. There are eleven amendments which will be for deemed approval and eight will be debated.
 - [GS 2328 Living in Love and Faith](#): This will be a substantive item for consideration by Synod. The Business Committee would like to remind members of the importance of Standing Order 25 *Reconsideration*, paragraph (1)(b) which provides that it is not in order for an amendment to propose a course of action contrary to or substantially inconsistent with the decision made by the Synod within the preceding 11 months ie at the February 2023 group of sessions.
 - [GS 2329 Vacancy in See Committee \(Amendment\) Regulation](#): This will update the Vacancy in See Committee membership for the Diocese of Salisbury so that the Deans of Jersey and Guernsey are included as ex officio members of Salisbury's Vacancy in See Committee.

Contingency Business

19. Some or all of these items will only be debated if changes to the agenda during the group of sessions means time is available:
- [GS 2320A and GS 2320B Future of Work](#): this is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Oxford and addresses the issue of fair work.
 - [GS 2330A and GS 2330B Clergy Pensions](#): this item is a Private Members' Motion from The Revd Dr Ian Paul which seeks to restore the clergy pensions to its pre-2001 benefit level.
 - [GS 2331A and GS 2331B Parochial Fees](#): this item is a Diocesan Synod Motion from London which focuses on fees payable at crematoria and cemeteries.

Work of the Committee

21. The Business Committee has met twice since the July 2023 group of sessions.
22. The Committee considered the petition submitted at the July 2023 group of sessions by Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry). The petition requested that the Committee write to all committees within the "national Church or Synodical government" to ask them to provide Synod members with access to agendas, minutes, report and meetings dates. Staff are currently in the process of doing this work and will update Synod in due course.
23. The Business Committee continues to reflect on the feedback from the presentation at the July group of sessions on a Synod Complaints Process. The responses received so far have been mixed with no clear direction on a way forward. The Committee would welcome further thoughts from members and will aim to bring something back to Synod to engage with in due course.
24. The Committee has taken forward a number of suggestions from Synod members' feedback after the July 2023 group of sessions, including the

following:

- Comments related to the chiring of sessions in July have been shared with the panel of chairs and will be discussed as part of a pre-Synod briefing with Chairs.
- The App has been updated so that the current voluntary Code of Conduct and the Standing Orders are available as permanent tabs. The Business Done will also be made available on the App at the November group of sessions.
- It was raised that the additional pastoral support was not made available for those on Zoom; this will be considered for the November group of sessions.
- Other points raised in feedback are also being looked at or monitored.

25. 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.

Accessibility

26. 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

27. 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 are always happy to advise.

Record of Business Done

28. The transcript from the July 2023 group of sessions is available on the Synod website.

Business Committee Policies

29. 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.

30. The [Guide to the General Synod](#) and the [Synod Members' Survival Guide](#) may be especially helpful as members prepare for the group of sessions.

31. 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.

32. 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,
Canon Robert Hammond, Chair
October 2023

Membership of the Business Committee October 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 Charlotte Cook

The Secretary to the Committee is the Clerk to the Synod, Jenny Jacobs.

Forecast of future General Synod business

This contains potential items that could be taken at the February 2024 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.

Synod will meet from Friday 23 February to Tuesday 27 February 2024.

Business that needs legislation

- Clergy Conduct Measure – Revision Stage
- Amending Canon No 43 – for enactment
- Church of England National Services Measure – First Consideration
- Chancel Repair (Church Commissioners' Liability) Measure – First Consideration
- Parochial Fees Order 2024 – for approval

Non-legislative business

- Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households
- Debate on Estates Evangelism
- Debate on conflict
- Debate on Racial Justice
- Safeguarding
- Synod Complaints

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