

FEBRUARY 2024 GROUP OF SESSIONS

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

Key points for the February Group of Sessions.

- Synod will meet from 2pm on Friday 23 February and end no later than 4.30pm on Tuesday 27 February in Church House, London. This is the first time that we are holding a meeting in London over a weekend. The Business Committee would welcome your feedback on this.
- Questions will be taken in two groups; on Friday from 5.30pm to 7pm and on Saturday from 10.15am until 11.15am
- To allow sufficient time, the Business Committee has decided that the **deadline for receipt of questions will be 12:00 on Tuesday 13 February**. However, it is always helpful if members submit questions well ahead of the deadline.
- The Business Committee has allocated time for a number of Diocesan Synod Motions (DSMs) and Private Members' Motions (PMMs) on this agenda. There are three DSMs on the agenda and one as contingency; and three PMMs on the agenda, and one as contingency business.
- Looking forward, the Business Committee reminds members to keep the envelope for July free: Friday 5th July until Tuesday 9th July.

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.
2. The Business Committee decides on the scheduling of business, it does not approve the content of an item and takes no view on the merit of any item.
3. 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 February 2024 group of sessions and gives an overview of the work of the Committee since its last report to Synod in November 2023.

Settling the Agenda for the February 2024 group of sessions

4. 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 or individual members through Private Members' Motions and those put forward by the House of Bishops, the Archbishops' Council, its sub-committees or other National Church Institutions (NCIs). It also aims to ensure that there is adequate time available for legislative business and standing items such as questions and farewells.

5. At this group of sessions, the Business Committee has allocated time to a large number of DSMs and PMMs. These items give Synod the opportunity to engage with various issues which impact at diocesan level. Several of these items relate to other items of business. This includes a focus on conduct at different levels of the Church and items relating to Parochial Fees.
6. There will be an opportunity for Synod to engage further with Living in Love and Faith, and there be a debate related to the independent reports on different aspects of safeguarding independence. These reports are independent of staff of the NCIs and it is expected that the report from Professor Jay will be available before Synod meets on 23 February, however the timing of this report is for Professor Jay to determine.
7. There are seven items of legislation. Two items are for First Consideration (Chancel Repair (Church Commissioners' Liability) Measure and Church Funds Investment Measure), two for approval (Parochial Fees Order 2024 and Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 2024), one is for deemed approval (Clergy Discipline Rules) and two for enactment (Amending Canon No 43 and Vacancy in See Committees Regulation Act of Synod). Further details can be found below.
8. First Consideration of the National Church Governance Measure will not be taken at this group of sessions, as it was decided by the Archbishops' Council that any implications for the governance proposals in the findings of the Jay Report should be considered before inviting Synod to consider the draft Measure. An update from the Governance Programme Board has been circulated to Synod as GS Misc 1367.
9. The Revision Stage of the Clergy Conduct Measure will not be taken at this group of sessions. There is further consideration of the submissions to the Revision Committee needed and the Steering Committee would like to be able to bring some draft indicative rules to be presented to Synod alongside the Measure. An update from the Steering Committee can be found in GS Misc 1368.
10. The reappointment of two members of the Archbishops' Council will be taken at this group of sessions, and the 63rd Report of the Standing Orders Committee will be considered.

Practicalities for the February group of sessions

11. 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.
12. This group of sessions is being held over a weekend. During a debate in

February 2019 on future dates of Synod, it was agreed that the Business Committee would look to schedule some February groups of sessions to occasionally include Saturdays. The Covid pandemic intervened, but in February 2022, this Synod agreed ‘envelopes’ which included full weekends for the 2024, 2025 and 2026 groups of sessions. The Business Committee agreed to try a full weekend meeting in London this year and would be pleased to receive feedback from members on this.

Worship

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. Synod members have been invited to attend a Eucharist at St Paul’s Cathedral at 11.15am on Sunday 25 February.
16. 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

17. 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, although the Business Committee strongly recommends that all papers read in full.
 - GS 2332 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 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 2333 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 2334 Vacancy in See Committees Regulations Consolidation: This is a consolidation instrument which brings together the changes in the Vacancy in See Committees Regulations into one document. This will then be proclaimed as an Act of Synod
 - GS 2273C Amending Canon No 43: This Amending Canon received Final Approval at the July 2023 group of sessions and is now being enacted.
 - GS 2331A and GS 2331B Parochial Fees: This was contingency business at

the November 2023 group of sessions and is a Diocesan Synod Motion from London which focuses on fees payable at crematoria and cemeteries. This may have an impact on GS 2342: Parochial Fees Order which will be debated on Monday morning.

- GS 2335A and GS 2335B Code of Conduct for PCCs: This is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Chelmsford which requests the Archbishops' Council undertake a review to consider whether there should be a Code of Conduct for PCC members. The issues raised in this item links to GS 2337; the presentation on a Synod Code of Conduct which is taking place on Saturday afternoon and GS 2339A and GS 2339B; and the PMM on Bullying by Lay Officers which will be debated on Sunday afternoon.
- GS 2336 Safeguarding Independence: This item will give Synod the opportunity to engage with the Wilkinson Report which was published in December and the Jay Report which is expected to be published in February.
- GS 2319 Land and Nature: This item was contingency business in July 2023 and builds on the developing net zero work that has already been agreed by Synod and which dioceses are beginning to implement.
- GS 2337 Synod Code of Conduct: This item builds on the presentation which took place at the July 2023 group of sessions and links into the DSM from Chelmsford (GS 2335A and GS 2335B) and the PMM on Bullying by Lay Officers (GS 2339A and GS 2339B)
- GS 2320A and GS 2320B Future of Work: This Diocesan Synod Motion from Oxford was contingency business in November 2023 and addresses the issue of fair work.
- GS 2338 Racial Justice: This item summarises the work that has taken place since the publication of 'From Lament to Action' to embed racial justice, noting that the Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission ceases its work in November 2024 and proposes further action for dioceses and the Church.
- GS 2339A and GS 2339B Bullying by Lay Officers: This item is a PMM from the Ven Mark Ireland (Blackburn) which seeks to bring forward legislative proposals to disqualify lay members from office if their behaviour merits this. As noted above, this links in with the Code of Conduct for PCCs (GS 2335A and GS 2335B) and Synod Code of Conduct (GS 2337)
- GS 2340 63rd Report of the Standing Orders Committee: This sets out one proposal to amend the Standing Orders.
- GS 2321 Commission on Families and Households: This item was contingency business in July 2023 and invites Synod to engage with the 'Love Matters' Report from the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households.
- GS 2341 Transatlantic Chattel Slavery: This is a presentation from the Church Commissioners and provides an update on the research into links with the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Synod members will be invited to engage

- with this issue both during the group of sessions and throughout the year.
- GS 2342 Parochial Fees Order: This will set the parochial fees payable to diocesan boards of finance and PCCs to be prescribed by a Parochial Fees Order for up to two years from 1 January 2025.
 - GS 2343 Chancel Repair Liability Measure: This Measure is a small discrete piece of work and will detach the Church Commissioners' land-based chancel repair liability from the relevant land and turn it into a free-standing statutory liability.
 - GS 2344 Reappointment of two AC members: This is to formally approve the reappointment of the Revd Charlotte Cook and Mr Joseph Diwakar as members of the Archbishops' Council. Under the provisions of paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 1 of the National Institutions Measure 1998, the approval of the General Synod is required for appointments to the Archbishops' Council.
 - GS 2345 Estates Evangelism: This item is an update on the work done by the Estates Evangelism Task Group and seeks to encourage better resourcing of evangelism in economically marginalised parishes.
 - GS 2330A and GS 2330B Clergy Pensions: This is a Private Members' Motion from the Revd Dr Ian Paul (Southwell & Notts) which was contingency business in November 2023. It seeks to restore the Clergy Pension to its pre-2011 benefit level
 - GS 2346 Living in Love and Faith: This is an update on this work and will invite members to continue their engagement with this work.
 - GS 2347 Church Funds Investment Measure: This Measure enables the trustee of the Central Board of Finance (CBF) investment funds (Church Charity and Local Authority Investment Management Limited or CCLA) to make a scheme of arrangement under which the existing funds that are covered by the Church Funds Investment Measure 1958 can be transferred to a Charity Authorised Investment Fund. The result would be that the funds in question became regulated by the Charity Commission and the Financial Conduct Authority, providing greater assurance to investors.
 - GS 2348 War in Ukraine: This item reflects on the war in Ukraine and the weaponisation of religion. It sets out the challenge to freedom of religion or belief, and to the rules-based liberal international order. It examines the response from the Church and opportunities for further engagement.
 - GS 2349A and GS 2349B Ordination after Divorce: This is a Private Members' Motion from the Revd Mark Bennet (Oxford) which seeks to introduce legislation to remove the impediment to ordination for those who have been divorced.

Deemed and Contingency Business

18. There is one item of deemed business which will be debated if requested:

- GS 2350 Clergy Discipline Rules: This sets out some minor updates to

the Clergy Discipline Rules. They are for deemed approval and will only be debated if requested.

19. There is one item of contingency business and this will only be debated if changes to the agenda during the group of sessions means time is available:
- GS 2351A and GS 2351B Foodbanks and Inadequacies in Social Security: This is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Sheffield which addresses the issue of increased use of food banks and the inadequacy of social security provision.

Work of the Committee

20. The Business Committee has met twice since the November 2023 group of sessions.
21. The Committee considered the petitions submitted at the November 2023 group of sessions by Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry). These petitions were received before the amendments to Standing Order 43 had taken place. The Business Committee considered the petitions and agreed that no action should be taken.
22. 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. As usual, feedback concerning the chairing of debates will be shared with the panel of chairs.
23. The Committee has taken forward a number of suggestions from Synod members' feedback after the November 2023 group of sessions, including the following:
- There were requests for a record of those who had spoken during debates, so this is circulated as a GS Misc paper, GS Misc 1370.
 - The Business Committee would like to thank the Revd Mark Miller for his suggestion for using the Lumi handsets to indicate that members wish to speak. There are discussions taking place to see whether and how this can be implemented.
 - Members have raised concerns about the cloakroom and staff are making additional space available, particularly for Friday 23 and Tuesday 27.
 - There will be designated seating reserved for the Ecumenical Representatives in London as is the practice in York.
24. 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

25. 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

26. 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

27. The transcript from the November 2023 group of sessions is available on the Synod website [here](#).

Business Committee Policies

28. 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.
29. The [Guide to the General Synod](#) and the [Synod Members' Survival Guide](#) may be especially helpful as members prepare for the group of sessions.
30. 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 X (previously 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.
31. 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
January 2024

Membership of the Business Committee January 2024

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

Canon 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 July 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 5 July to Tuesday 9 July 2024.

Business that needs legislation

- Clergy Conduct Measure – Revision Stage
- Church of England National Services Measure – First Consideration
- Chancel Repair (Church Commissioners' Liability) Measure – Revision Stage, Final Drafting and Final Approval
- Church Funds Investment Measure – Revision Stage, Final Drafting and Final Approval
- Safeguarding Redress Measure – Revision Stage
- Mission and Pastoral Measure – First Consideration
- Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2024
- Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order 2024
- Safeguarding Code – Managing Allegations

Non-legislative business

- Living in Love and Faith
- Safeguarding
- Resourcing Ministerial Formation
- Follow up on Review of the Development Funding and Lowest Income Communities Funding
- National Sports Project