

GENERAL SYNOD

FEBRUARY 2025 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 2.30pm on Monday 10 February and end no later than 4.00pm on Friday 14 February in Church House, Westminster.
- There is one session scheduled for Question on Monday afternoon. To allow sufficient time for the questions to be properly considered, the Business Committee has decided that the **deadline for receipt of questions will be 12:00 noon on Tuesday 28 January**. However, it is always helpful if members submit questions well ahead of the deadline.
- The Business Committee has allocated time for one Diocesan Synod Motion (DSM) and one Private Members Motion (PMM) on this agenda. In addition, a further DSM is on the agenda as contingency business.
- The Business Committee is expecting the July group of sessions to take place from Friday 11 July until Tuesday 15 July, exact timings will be published after the February 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.
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 2025 group of sessions and gives an overview of the work of the Committee since its last report to Synod in July 2024.

Settling the Agenda for the February 2025 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. This was a particularly complex agenda to settle with significant items needing decisions and the considerable amount of business requiring legislation all

GENERAL SYNOD

against a constantly changing environment for the Church of England. Because of these factors, the Business Committee is aware of the fact that it cannot accurately predict how much time will be needed for items to be considered. Should more, or indeed less, time be required, changes may need to be made to the agenda and timings at short notice and members are advised to be alert to that.

6. At this group of sessions, there are several important items relating to the work on safeguarding, including an update following the Makin Report and a debate on the future of Church Safeguarding, as well as significant legislative items. Members are reminded that there will be survivors and victims present at Synod, and this should be taken into account when considering these items.
7. There are fourteen items of legislative business, this includes one Measure for First Consideration (*Mission and Pastoral Measure*), one Regulations for First Consideration (*Mission and Pastoral Regulations*), one Measure for Revision Stage (*National Church Governance Measure*), one Measure for Final Drafting and Final Approval (*Clergy Conduct Measure*), and ten for Approval (*Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2025*, *Safeguarding (Clergy Risk Assessment) Regulations*), *Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution*, *House of Bishops Election Rules*, *House of Clergy Election Rules*, *House of Laity Election Rules*, *Single Transferable Vote Rules*, *Abuse (Redress) Regulations*, *Vacancy in See Committees Regulation*, *Safeguarding Code of Practice: Managing Allegations and Safeguarding Code of Practice: Religious Communities*). Further details can be found below.
8. Because of pressure on the agenda, the Business Committee made the difficult decision to timetable only one session of questions. This does not indicate a permanent move away from the recent practice of having two sessions for questions. There will be an opportunity for Synod to engage further with Living in Love and Faith through a short update presentation with questions.
9. There will be an update on racial justice as the Archbishops' Commission on Racial Justice concludes its work, and an update on the further work related to engaging with young adults following previous discussions by Synod.
10. There will be a debate on working class ministry. This is a PMM led by the Revd Alex Frost (Blackburn). The DSM relating to redistribution of funds will be taken. This DSM has been submitted by seven dioceses.
11. The 10th Anniversary of Thy Kingdom Come will be recognised and the work relating to sport and wellbeing ministry will be debated.
12. There will be an address by an Ecumenical guest, as well as the formal appointment of one member of the Archbishops' Council.
13. The Standing Orders relating to the Crown Nominations Commission will be discussed and members will be invited to agree the envelope of dates for General Synod meetings in 2027, 2028 and 2029.

GENERAL SYNOD

Practicalities for the February group of session

14. 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 for 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

15. As this is a body of the Church of England, worship is integral to the Synod meetings, and all Synod members are encouraged to take part in worship. Each session starts with worship and concludes with worship. Holy Communion is celebrated in the Chapel daily. Members will also be invited to join a Eucharist on Wednesday morning in the Assembly Hall.
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. 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

18. 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 be read in full.
- [GS 2374 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 Assembly 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 2375 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 2736 Makin Report](#): This will provide Synod with an update on the work undertaken since the publication of the Makin Report.
 - [GS 2377 Affirming the Racial Justice Agenda](#): This paper provides important updates on the final report of the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice, specifically its 'appeal' to the Church, along with Commission's key findings and recommendations. The report highlights the new governance arrangements for Racial Justice and a possible five-year review of *From Lament To Action* (FLTA).

GENERAL SYNOD

- [GS 2378 Future of Church Safeguarding](#): This item will invite Synod to consider future models for safeguarding in the Church.
- [GS 2379 Report of the Crown Nominations Commission](#): This will be a take note debate on a report from the Crown Nominations Commission which updates Synod on matters relating to the CNC so far in this quinquennium, including its membership, appointment processes, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, proposed Standing Order changes and the pipeline to senior appointments.
- [GS 2380 Diocesan Finances Review Update](#): This will provide an update on the work relating to Diocesan Finances.
- [GS 2381 Sports and Wellbeing Ministry](#): This will provide an update on the National Sports and Wellbeing Project which has been running for the last 4 years with 7 dioceses to see how sports and wellbeing can be integrated into diocesan mission strategies.
- [GS 2369 Safeguarding \(Clergy Risk Assessment\) Regulations 2025](#): These regulations relate to safeguarding risk assessments of clergy under Canon C 30. They had been circulated at the July 2024 group of sessions, and are presented for debate at this group of sessions.
- [GS 2382A and GS 2382B Strategy for Working Class Ministry](#): This will be a debate on the Private Member's Motion from the Revd Alex Frost (Blackburn) calling for a national strategy supporting people from a working-class background into ministry.
- [GS 2383 Appointment of one member of the Archbishops' Council](#): This is a formal item to appoint one new member of the Archbishops' Council.
- [GS 2311B Clergy Conduct Measure](#): This will be final stages of the Clergy Conduct Measure which will set out a new statutory framework and establish the jurisdiction for dealing with cases relating to clergy conduct.
- [GS 2384 Legal Officers \(Annual Fees\) Order 2024](#): This is an updated Order following the debate at the July 2024 group of sessions.
- [GS 2385 'Growing Younger and More Diverse' – Hearing and Responding to the Voices of Young Adults \(18-25\)](#): This will be a debate on the continuing work taking place to enable the voice of young adults to feed into the life of the national Church.
- [GS 2386 Living in Love and Faith](#): This will provide an update on the work related to Living in Love and Faith.
- [GS 2387 65th Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): Proposed Changes to the Standing Orders relating to the Crown Nominations Commission
- [GS 2360A National Church Governance Measure](#): This will be the Revision Stage for the National Church Governance Measure which will introduce new governance structures for the national Church.
- [GS 2388 Church Representation Rules, GS 2389 House of Bishops Election Rules, GS 2390 House of Clergy Election Rules, GS 2391 House of Laity](#)

GENERAL SYNOD

- [Election Rules](#) and [GS 2392 Single Transferable Vote Regulations](#): This legislation relates to the Election Rules for the Houses of Synod which will need to be in place for the elections to General Synod summer 2026.
- [GS 2393 Thy Kingdom Come – Renewing the Call to Prayer and Evangelism](#): This item outlines the journey of ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ over the last decade, reflecting on its reach, impact and influence in both the UK and across the world and to renew the call for prayer in evangelism and mission within the Church of England and beyond.
 - [GS 2394 Mission and Pastoral Measure](#): This will be the First Consideration stage of the revised Mission and Pastoral Measure.
 - [GS 2395 Mission and Pastoral Regulations](#): This will be the First Consideration stage for the Mission and Pastoral Regulations
 - [GS 2396A and GS 2396B Redistribution of Funds](#): This will be a debate on a Diocesan Synod Motion relating to redistribution of financial resources which has been passed by Hereford, Gloucester, Coventry, Bath & Wells, Blackburn, Chichester and Lincoln.
 - [GS 2397 Vacancy in See Committees Regulation](#): This item will update the Vacancy in See Committee Regulations.
 - [GS 2398 Pattern of Future Dates 2027-2029](#): This item will set the envelope for Synod meetings in 2027, 2028 and 2029.
 - [GS 2399 66th Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): This provides an update on the work of the Standing Orders Committee since the July 2024 group of sessions.

Deemed and Contingency Business

19. There are two items of deemed business:

- [GS 2372 Safeguarding Code of Practice Managing Allegation and Reporting Allegations](#): These Codes of Practice is circulated under section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. This means they are deemed to be approved unless 25 members give notice in writing to the Clerk by 29 January 2025 that they wish the Code to be debated.
- [GS 2373 Safeguarding Code of Practice Religious Communities and Acknowledged Communities](#): These Codes of Practice is circulated under section 5A of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016. This means they are deemed to be approved unless 25 members give notice in writing to the Clerk by 29 January that they wish the Code to be debated.

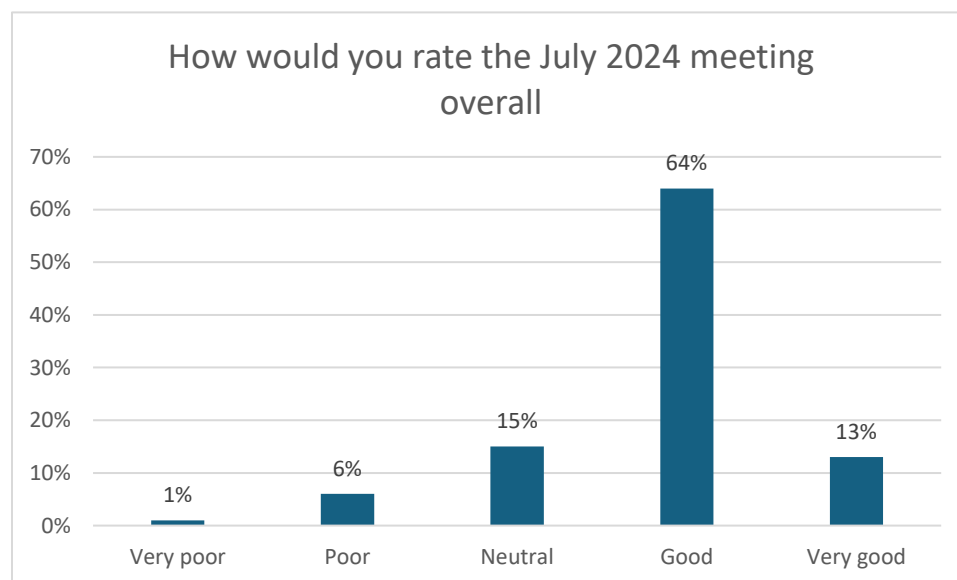
20. There is one item of contingency business and this will only be debated if changes to the agenda during the group of sessions means time is available:

- [GS 2371A and GS 2371 Add Confirmation Numbers to Statistics for Mission](#): This is a DSM from Canterbury seeking to include confirmation numbers on the annual Statistics for Mission online return.

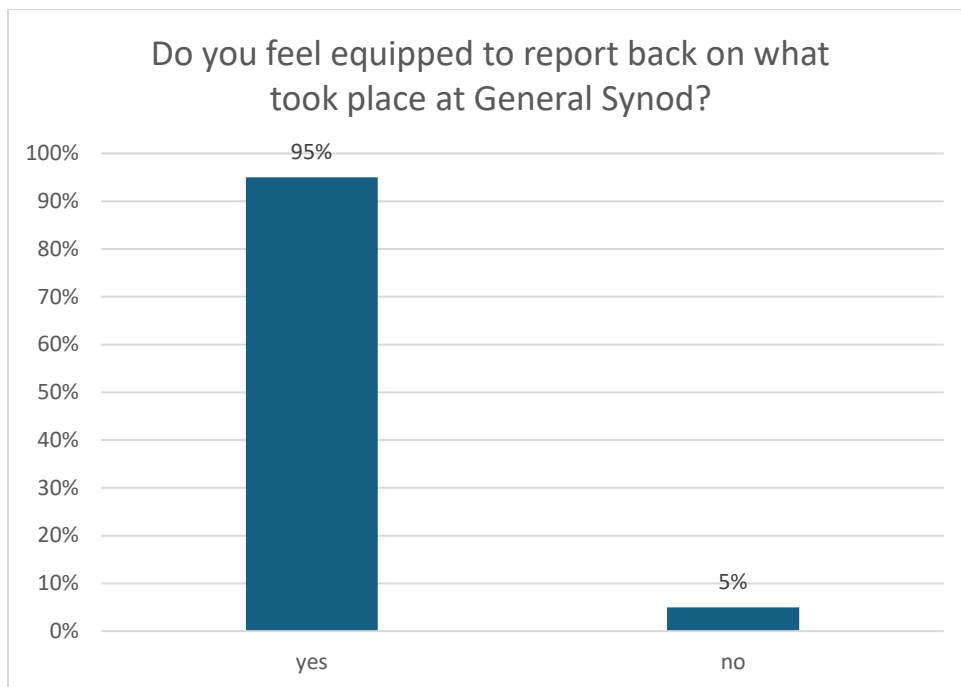
GENERAL SYNOD

Work of the Committee

21. The Business Committee has met twice since the July 2024 group of sessions.
22. The Chair of the Business Committee received complaints related to the behaviour of two members of Synod at the July group of sessions. Following consideration, these individuals were written to under the provisions of the current Code of Conduct for Synod members.
23. The Business Committee is currently revising the process on how members can raise concerns about behaviour of Synod members, and it is hoped that an update can be shared later this year. In the interim, members can contact the Clerk, clerk@churchofengland.org, if they have any concerns about the behaviour or conduct of Synod members.
24. 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 Business Committee wanted to share some overall results from the feedback as well as the specific suggestions that will be taken forward.
25. There were 158 members who responded to the survey, 2% from the House of Bishops, 47% from the House of Clergy, 49% from the House of Laity and 2% of non-voting members.
26. The Business Committee wanted to share some general responses and has included graphs that demonstrate the overall rating for the July 2024 and how equipped members feel to feed back to their dioceses and parishes on what took place at the group of sessions. The Business Committee will continue to monitor these specific results to measure any changes over time.



GENERAL SYNOD



27. The Committee has taken forward a number of specific suggestions from Synod members' feedback after the July 2024 group of sessions, including the following:

- Synod papers to include an executive summary, this will help members to navigate the papers received at each group of sessions.
- Reference to "maiden speeches" will be replaced with "debut speeches".
- A number of members who attended the group of sessions on Zoom raised the concern that they were unable to sense the "mood" of the meeting as there is silence when members are not speaking. Staff will look at how ambient background noise can be facilitated for those on Zoom.

28. As usual, the comments related to chairing will be shared with the Synod panel of Chairs.

29. 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

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.

GENERAL SYNOD**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 are always happy to advise.

Record of Business Done

32. The transcript from the July 2024 group of sessions is available on the Synod website [here](#).

Business Committee Policies

33. 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.
34. The [Guide to the General Synod](#) and the [Synod Members' Survival Guide](#) may be especially helpful as members prepare for the group of sessions.
35. 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.
36. 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 2025

Membership of the Business Committee January 2025

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 2025 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 2025 group of sessions are Friday 11 to Tuesday 15 July 2025.

Business that needs legislation

- Abuse (Redress) Measure – Final Drafting, Final Approval
- Abuse (Redress) Rules – For Approval
- Church of England National Services Measure – Final Drafting, Final Approval
- Clergy Conduct Rules – For Approval
- Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2024 – For Approval
- Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order 2024 – For Approval

Non-legislative business

- Living in Love and Faith
- Safeguarding
- Wisdom of Trust Final Report
- Route map to Net Zero Carbon by 2030: update on progress
- Triennium Funding Working Group Update
- 2026 AC Budget
- Mental Health
- Reimaging Care
- Appointment of one member of the Archbishops' Council