GENERAL SYNOD

NOVEMBER 2026 GROUP OF SESSIONS

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

Welcome to the first report of the Business Committee for the quinquennium 2026 to 2031. This report outlines the business for the group of sessions and provides a summary of work undertaken by the Committee since the last report. It is a key document for members to help navigate the group of sessions.

Key points for the November Group of Sessions.

- Synod will meet at Church House, Westminster from 3pm on Tuesday 17 November and end no later than 3.15pm on Wednesday 18 November.
- The House of Bishops and House of Laity will be meeting separately on Wednesday 18 November from 3.45pm. Details relating to these meetings are sent directly to members.
- An induction programme will take place on Monday 16 November. This is intended for new members but it is open to any member to attend.
- There is one session scheduled for Questions on Tuesday 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 12pm on Tuesday 3 November.** However, it is always helpful if members submit questions well ahead of the deadline.
- It is possible that the Safeguarding in the Church Code of Practice will be laid before Synod after the November group of sessions. This will be published under the Safeguarding Code of Practice Measure 2021, which means that it is deemed to be approved unless 25 members of Synod request that it is debated within three weeks**.** If 25 members make that request and the Code is required to be debated, the Presidents will summon a special session under Standing Order 2(6)(b). This will take place on **Saturday 12 December** as an online session of Synod. Members will be informed as necessary.
- The envelope for the February 2027 group of sessions is Monday 22 February until Friday 26 February. The actual dates for the group of sessions will be confirmed after the meeting of the Business Committee on 8 December.

Introduction:

1. The Business Committee is a committee of the General Synod, consisting of a Chair elected directly by the Synod, one bishop, three clergy and three laity elected by their respective Houses and two members of the Archbishops' Council appointed by the Council. 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, except for the very small number of items which fall under its direct purview, eg matters concerned with elections, allocations of seats, etc.
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 November 2026 group of sessions and gives an overview of the work of the Committee since its last report to Synod in July 2026.

Settling the Agenda for the November 2026 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 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 introductions.
5. As this is the first group of sessions for the quinquennium, there is less time available for business to be taken. The Business Committee has made time available for items which provide the new Synod with an update on decisions taken to date and an outline for future business to be considered by Synod.
6. There is no legislative business at this group of sessions. As a legislative body, it is unusual for there to be no legislation at a group of sessions. However, it is expected that there will be a number of legislative items for the February 2027 group of sessions.
7. There will be a Presidential Address by the Archbishop of Canterbury.
8. The Business Committee has scheduled one Diocesan Synod Motion; Blackburn's motion on Maintaining Church Buildings. This addresses the issue of maintaining church buildings, particularly in deprived areas, and calls for a national strategy to support their preservation, upkeep, and development for community use. The Business Committee was pleased to note this diocesan synod motion originated from the Lancaster and Morecombe Deanery showing how Deanery Synods can ultimately bring items to the General Synod.
9. The Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing, which was contingency business at the July 2026 group of sessions, will be taken.
10. There will be two items which provide updates on work in progress, an update on Safeguarding and Funding our Church's Mission. These will be presentations with time for questions and will set out the background for items coming to future groups of sessions.
11. There will be a Loyal Address given to HM the King in response to the inauguration of the Synod.

Practicalities for the November group of sessions

12. The group of sessions is being held at Church House, Westminster. The meetings will be held in the Assembly Hall. There will be 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.
13. Before the group of sessions takes place, there will be an induction programme taking place on Monday 16 November, and the formal inauguration on the morning of Tuesday 17 November, preceded by a Eucharist in Westminster Abbey.

Worship

14. 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.
15. As well as the Holy Communion in Westminster Abbey, Holy Communion will be celebrated in the Chapel in Church House on Wednesday 18 November at lunchtime.
16. As with all groups of sessions, pastoral support will be available and further information will be available in the Worship Notice Paper and from Synod Support.

Agenda items for the November group of sessions

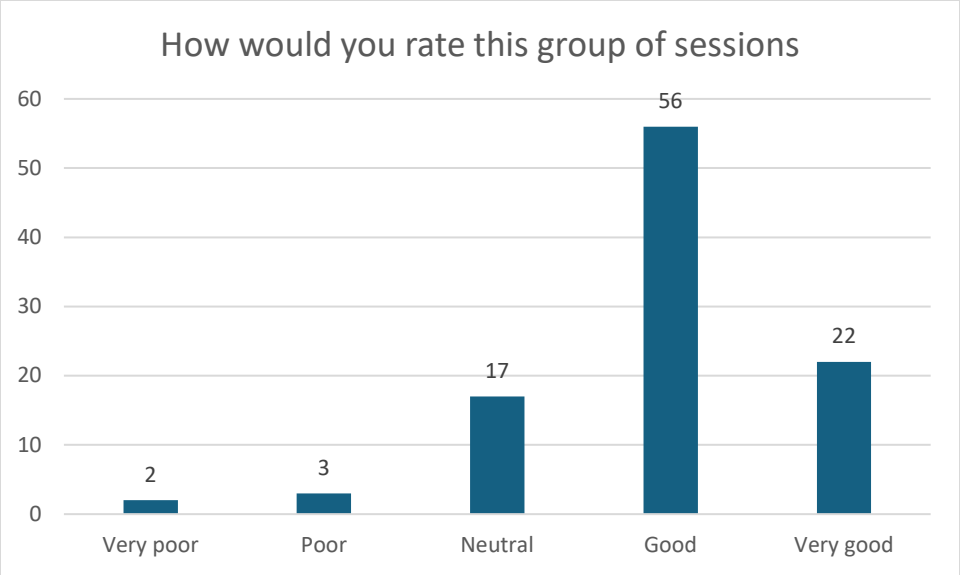
17. The following sets out a brief summary of each of the items being presented at the November group of sessions. It is hoped that members will find this useful, although the Business Committee strongly recommends that all papers be read in full.
    - GS 2468 Agenda: This is the key paper for the group 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.
    - Presidential Address: The Archbishop of Canterbury will address Synod.
    - GS 2469 Report of the Business Committee: This report will be 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 2470 Safeguarding Update: The Rt Revd Robert Springett, Lead Advocate Bishop for Safeguarding will give an update on work relating to safeguarding.
    - Questions: There will be one session for Questions on Tuesday afternoon.
    - Loyal Address: This loyal address will be given on the occasion of the

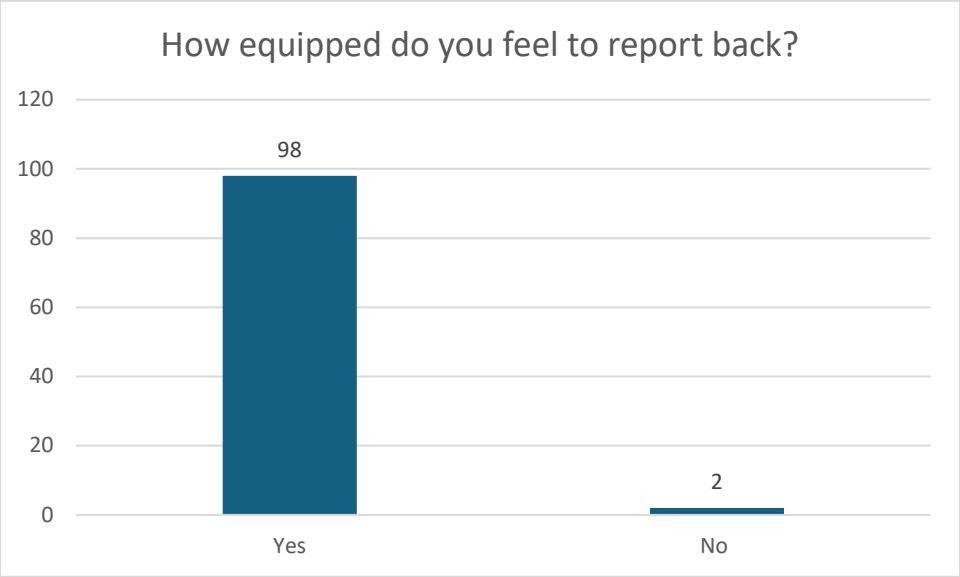
inauguration.

- GS 2471A and GS 2471B Maintaining Church Buildings: This is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Blackburn addressing the issue of maintaining Church buildings.
- GS 2466 Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing: This is a report back on developments and learning in the field of clergy care and wellbeing since the Covenant was passed in 2020, highlighting progress that has been made in supporting clergy wellbeing at a local, diocesan and national level.
- GS 2472 Funding Our Church's Mission: This item updates Synod on the economy of the church, mission and ministry statistics, as well as national Church Spending plans.

Work of the Committee

18. The Business Committee has met twice since the July 2026 group of sessions.
19. The Chair of the Business Committee received complaints related to the behaviour of a member of Synod at the July group of sessions. Following consideration, the Committee agreed to wait until the results of the elections to the new Synod were known before deciding on how to respond.
20. The Committee agreed to review the Guidance for those preparing group work at Synod meetings.
21. The Business Committee will be establishing a new Elections Review Group to review the autumn 2026 elections to Synod and make recommendations for the elections in 2031. Expressions of interest from members of Synod to join this group and contribute to its work will be sought in early 2027.
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. There were 120 members who responded to the survey. Of the respondents, 7% were from the House of Bishops, 41% from the House of Clergy, 49% from the House of Laity and 3% were non-voting members.
23. The rating for the July 2026 group of sessions overall showed 78% of respondents rating it as either good or very good, compared with 81% for the February 2026 group of sessions.
24. The graph relating to how equipped members feel to report back on what took place at Synod showed an improvement with 98% feeling equipped compared to 91% in February 2026.





25. The Committee uses the feedback form to make improvements to the arrangements for Synod and 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.
26. The Committee spent considerable time reviewing the induction process and materials for new members before and at this group of sessions. It hopes members will feel informed and prepared to participate fully in the life of Synod.

Accessibility

27. The Business Committee's statement on Accessibility (GS-Misc-1201.pdf) was reviewed in the last quinquennium and the Committee will be looking to review it again in 2027. In addition, 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

28. Members are encouraged to download the Synod App as it provides access to Synod papers, Notice Papers and Order Papers, forms and other helpful resources.

Record of Business Done

29. The transcript from the July 2026 group of sessions is available on the Synod website here.

Conduct

30. The Synod Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour the Business Committee hopes members would expect of themselves and their colleagues in carrying out their role in the General Synod or its committees and commissions.
31. The Business Committee has developed a complaints procedure to ensure that all members of the General Synod, as well as guests formally addressing the Synod, and staff, are treated fairly and respectfully, with a transparent process for resolution where formal concerns are raised.

Business Committee Policies

32. 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.
33. Synod members are encouraged to be proactive in publicising the work of Synod, and social media is a great platform for this. 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.
34. 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.

Thanks

35. This is the last report from the 2021 – 2026 Business Committee, and the Chair, elected by the whole of Synod, would like to thank on Synod's behalf, all those who have been members in those five years including The Revd Charlotte Cook, the Ven Mark Ireland and Joseph Diwakar who have also served for part of that time. The Business Committee has a somewhat unenviable job in settling agendas and overseeing arrangements, but it is encouraging to see that

Synod members have generally been pleased with what we have done.

36. A new Business Committee will be elected later this year ready to begin work on the February group of sessions and the Chair would be happy to talk to anyone considering standing for election from any House about what it entails.
37. Finally, the Committee also wishes to record its thanks to all the Synod Support Staff and the Legal Team for the incredible amount of work they do to ensure Synod operates and conducts its business so well, and particularly to the Clerk to the Synod, Jenny Jacobs.

On behalf of the Business Committee
Canon Robert Hammond, Chair
October 2026

GENERAL SYNOD

Membership of the Business Committee October 2026

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 Revd Jody Stowell
The Revd Claire McArthur

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 Canon Kate Wharton

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 2027 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.

Business that requires legislation

- Clergy Conduct Code of Practice – For Approval
- Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) (Amendment) Order – For Approval

Non-legislative business

- Mission and Ministry in Covenant Report
- Funding update
- Safeguarding Structures
- 68th Standing Orders Committee Report
- Appointment of one member of the Archbishops' Council.

Future Dates

The dates below are the envelopes of dates within which the Groups of Sessions will be held. The envelopes for February 2028 and 2029 allow for the possibility of the Synod meeting over a weekend instead of during the week, which will be for the new Business Committee to decide.

2027

- 22 to 26 February (London)
- 9 to 13 July (York)
- 15 to 17 November if required (London)

2028

- 14 to 22 February (London)
- 7 to 11 July (York)
- 20 to 22 November if required (London)

2029

- 19 to 27 February (London)
- 6 to 10 July (York)
- 19 to 21 November if required (London)