

COVENTRY DIOCESAN SYNOD MEMBERS

CODE OF CONDUCT

A INTRODUCTION

- (a) This Code of Conduct is adapted from the General Synod Members Code of Conduct which was itself produced with consideration of the Charity Commission's six principles of good governance for a Board and the Nolan Principles on Standards in Public Life (Selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership) which are recognized to be also Christian values. It is designed to be something that members and trustees of all committees and boards can support and abide by, as a means of recognizing the need not merely to debate robustly but where necessary to disagree respectfully and courteously and thereby further the mission of the Church.
- (b) This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of behaviour which members and Trustees should expect of themselves, and their colleagues, when carrying out their roles in Synod or in their committees/commissions/groups.
- (c) This is a voluntary Code, but all members of Synod and members of its committees and commissions are encouraged to make themselves aware of this Code and to make every effort to follow it.
- (d) Members are asked to ensure that they are familiar with the Code of Conduct and that they seek guidance from the Diocesan Secretary at an early stage if they are uncertain as to what is asked of them.
- (e) This policy applies to all members working in the Diocesan Synodical governance structure including those nominated by the Bishop.

B VALUES

- (a) Adapted for the purposes of the Church, the Nolan Principles are as follows:
 - (i) Christian Values. Synod members will be prayerful and seek to model and espouse Christlikeness and servanthood, with a commitment to support the Church of England and in particular the work of the Diocese of Coventry.
 - (ii) Selflessness. Synod members act solely in the interests of the Church, as the body of Christ, the Diocese and the wider public. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends. They should take seriously their role as representatives, bringing parish and Deanery views to meetings and reporting back to their parishes and Deaneries;
 - (iii) Integrity. Synod members should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
 - (iv) Objectivity. In carrying out their Synodical role, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals rewards and benefits (including membership of Boards or Committees), Synod members should make choices on merit.

- (v) Accountability. Synod members are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their role.
- (vi) Openness. Synod members should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.
- (vii) Honesty. Synod members have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their charitable, synodical and other church duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the interests of the Diocese, the Synod, the wider Church and society;
- (viii) Leadership. Synod members should promote and support these principles by leadership and by example.

C SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

- (a) Declarations of Interest.
 - (i) It is important to disclose declarations of interest because they disclose context which may be relevant to the way in which the members' arguments may be heard and evaluated by other members. Although the Synod is not a charity, in the light of the factors set out above, members who contribute to debates or other Synod business should declare any interest which could reveal a conflict of loyalty, or which could otherwise affect other members' ability to form a balanced judgement of their arguments.
 - (ii) Synod members should therefore declare relevant interests orally at the beginning of their contribution to any item of business on the Synod's agenda. In particular, members should consider the need to make an oral declaration of the following, when contributing to the Synod's debates:
 - Financial interests, whether direct or indirect, in any matter which is under consideration by the Synod (for example, shareholdings or other financial interests in organisations which may be materially affected by the decisions of the Synod);
 - Personal non-financial interests, including those which arise from membership of, or holding office in Church and other bodies (such as acting as a trustee or office-holder of any organisation whose affairs are likely to be affected by the decisions that the Synod takes).
 - (iii) Members should declare any interest which might reasonably be thought to influence what they say and do and which is relevant to the issue under debate.
 - (iv) Members should also consider the need to declare the financial, or personal non-financial, interests of close family members.
- (b) Conduct of Synod and Committee Meetings
 - (i) Meetings allow for debate and discussion, and views may be expressed with which others disagree or by which they may be offended. However, when speaking on controversial matters, members should express themselves responsibly, being aware of how their views may be received by others. In particular, members should not use abusive or insulting language, or make personal remarks about other members.

Standing Order 31 empowers the Chair to call a member to order should they use 'unbecoming language'.

- (ii) Members should use the same level of consideration when commenting on social media or via electronic means on Synod business or on members or their speeches as they would do at a meeting. Members should apply the following guiding principle:

"If you wouldn't say it to their face, please do not say it on social media."

- (iii) Members should notify fellow members whenever they intend to refer to them in a debate or presentation, other than making passing reference to what they have said on the public record, possibly elsewhere in the debate. All reasonable efforts should be taken to notify the other member as failure to do so is discourteous.
- (iv) Synod papers are now available electronically and may be accessed on a range of devices. For this reason, members may use hand-held electronic devices in a meeting, provided that they cause no disturbance and are not used in such a way as to disrupt proceedings. Similarly, members may choose to use electronic devices in place of paper notes as an aide memoire in debate. All such devices must be in silent mode. The taking of telephone calls or listening to voicemails in a meeting during sessions is prohibited. Electronic devices may not be used to film, take photographs or make audio recordings in or around the chamber during votes.
- (v) Members should give their full attention to a debate and minimise the use of electronic devices for non-Synod-related business when in a meeting room.
- (vi) Members should try to attend all meetings, sending apologies to the Diocesan Secretary for any necessary absences.
- (vii) Members should prepare for the meeting by reading the agenda, papers and any emails before the meeting.
- (viii) Members should talk to the Chair before the meeting if clarification of any matter is needed.
- (ix) Members should arrive on time, participate fully and stay to the end of the meeting.
- (x) Members should listen quietly to the views and comments of others, not interrupt or talk over others, keep an open mind and contribute positively to the discussions.
- (xi) Members should be concise and avoid over long speeches and frequent repetition. They should seek to add to the discussion only in a way relevant to the matter under discussion and not raise or pursue tangential or irrelevant points.
- (xii) Members should help others concentrate on the meeting by avoiding side conversations.
- (xiii) Members should treat everyone with courtesy and respect and observe the authority of the Chair of the meeting.
- (xiv) Members should challenge ideas, not individuals.
- (xv) Members should be courteous and respectful, both in their communications with others and with members of the Diocesan Staff. As stated in the Standing Orders discourteous or otherwise inappropriate speech or behaviour will be addressed by the Chair or the President.

- (xvi) Members should not seek to attempt to dominate the agenda of Synod meetings but should work collaboratively for the common good of the Diocese of Coventry.
- (c) Relationships with other parts of the synodical governance structure and the treatment of employees.
- (i) The Diocesan Bishop and Diocesan Secretary have a responsibility for all matters relating to the sessional business of the Diocesan Synod and Diocesan Governance meetings. Ensuring that synodical governance is upheld with unity of purpose across those bodies under synodical oversight is the responsibility of the Diocesan Secretary guided by the Bishop as President of Diocesan Synod. In doing so the Diocesan Secretary works collaboratively to enable meetings to be conducted in a manner that is fruitful, expeditious and worthy of the Christian Vision that we share.
 - (ii) The representatives for Coventry Diocese on General Synod shall, on a rota basis, prepare reports on the business and proceedings of General Synod following each meeting of the General Synod for distribution amongst the members of Diocesan Synod.
 - (iii) The Diocesan Bishop and Diocesan Secretary reserve the right to exceptionally cancel or postpone meetings where good relationships between parts of the diocesan governance structure are at risk, so that further attempts can be made to resolve the issues.
 - (iv) The effectiveness of the Diocese turns partly on the way that members and Diocesan colleagues work together. Members and staff have a shared responsibility to behave towards each other in a professional and respectful manner. This guidance is intended to help both members and staff develop an effective working environment.
 - (v) As an employer, the Diocesan Board of Finance has a legal duty of care to ensure that all of its staff are safe and are treated with courtesy, dignity and respect.
 - (vi) While relations between trustees/members and staff are generally excellent there have been and there is always the possibility of incidents occurring which should not. These could lead to perceptions of staff being bullied by volunteers.
 - (vii) Synod members should lead by example by demonstrating respect for others, valuing diversity and avoiding discriminatory conduct. Equally, members should at any time feel at liberty to contact the Diocesan Secretary if they believe that a member of the staff team has not treated them with courtesy, dignity and respect. Members may contact the Bishop direct regarding any concerns they have in this regard in relation to the Diocesan Secretary.
 - (viii) Appendix 1 contains a relevant extract from the “Dignity at Work” policy that applies within the Diocesan policies and that has been derived from the National Church’s own policy. Contractors providing services to the Synod will have similar policies in place. This policy sets out some of the standards of behaviour and communications which are expected from Diocesan staff and from those who communicate with them.
- (d) Breaches of the Code of Conduct
- (i) As stated at the beginning of the Code, this is a voluntary Code of Conduct. If any member believes that another member has acted in a way that conflicts with this Code of Conduct, they are encouraged in the first instance to speak directly to their brother

or sister in Christ. If a member continues to act in such a manner, this should be reported to the Diocesan Secretary or one of the Chairs of Synod, who will consult the Bishop if considered appropriate.

- (ii) The Diocesan Secretary may choose to write to the relevant member if this Code is considered to have been breached, with a request (which may be made public) that the member ceases to do so in future.
- (iii) A member of Synod may move that a member or members be censured and shall withdraw immediately from the remainder of the day's meeting where their conduct has been grossly disorderly and which has or has the potential to have a material adverse effect on the operation of and business of Synod. Upon such a motion being moved, Synod will vote on the motion. For any motion to pass it will require a two thirds majority of members present to vote in favour.

APPENDIX 1 – COVENTRY DIOCESAN SYNOD

Dignity at work policy

The aim of the dignity at work policy is to ensure that all employees:

- are treated with dignity and respect;
- are able to work and flourish in an environment free from harassment on the grounds of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, political opinion, marital status, disability, or nationality;
- are aware that bullying and harassment are not acceptable and will not be tolerated; and
- understand how to raise concerns about bullying and harassment.

Summary

The Church is required by God to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. The Diocese of Coventry therefore promotes equality and believes in the dignity and worth of each individual.

- Bullying is behaviour which humiliates or demeans the individual involved and includes persistent criticism and personal abuse, either in public or private,
- Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, gender, sexual orientation or religion or belief, including church tradition) that violates people's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This includes third party harassment where an employer is potentially liable for harassment of employees by third parties who are not employees, where the employer fails to take reasonable steps to prevent it. Harassment is from the perspective of the recipient of the treatment, and may vary between persons.
- Discrimination may take a number of forms:
 - Direct discrimination - treating people less favourably than others because of an applicable protected characteristic;
 - Indirect discrimination - applying a provision, criterion or practice which disadvantages or would disadvantage people who share an applicable protected characteristic (and disadvantages the individual complainant), and which is not justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim;
 - Associative discrimination – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses an applicable protected characteristic;
 - Perceptive discrimination – discrimination against an individual because they are mistakenly perceived to possess an applicable protected characteristic.
 - Victimisation – subjecting someone to a detriment because they have done (or the perpetrator believes they have done or may do) a "protected act", e.g. made a formal complaint of discrimination or given evidence in a tribunal case.

The Diocese of Coventry will not tolerate abuse, harassment and bullying, discrimination or victimization, however rare. All complaints of abuse, harassment, bullying, discrimination or victimisation will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.

Persons affected by such behaviour may complain informally or formally to their line manager or other appropriate person including the Director of HR, the Deputy Diocesan Secretary or the Diocesan Secretary. Informal complaints can be made directly to the perpetrator, verbally or in writing, either directly or via an intermediary.