

## Synod update for Diocesan Secretaries

### Introduction

General Synod met at the University of York from 11 to 15 July at the University of York. This briefing provides an update on the items discussed at Synod and the decisions made. It also gives some further information relating to the elections which will be taking place next summer following the dissolution of the current Synod.

### Synod Business

The Business Done and voting records can be found on the [website](#); the report of proceedings will follow in due course. The details below provide an update on each item.

**Item 1: Introductions and Welcomes:** The Revd Jane Evans, the new Pro-Prolocutor for the Convocation of Canterbury was formally introduced to the Bishop of London. There were 18 new members welcomed, four Anglican Communion Guests and one Ecumenical Guest; and the six bishops acting while there is a vacancy were welcomed.

**Item 2: Presidential Address:** The Archbishop of York gave a Presidential Address.

**Item 3: GS 2401 Report of the Business Committee:** The Chair of the Business Committee, Canon Robert Hammond, spoke to the Report of the Business Committee and answered questions from members. The Synod took note of the Report on a show of hands.

**Item 4: Address by a member of the Armed Forces:** Brigadier Jaish Mahan gave an address to Synod.

**Item 5: GS 2402 Spending Plans:** This was a presentation with questions which gave members the opportunity to engage with the proposed Spending Plans in advance of the debate.

**Item 6: Address by Anglican Communion Guests :** The Most Revd Andrew Chan, Archbishop of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui and Bishop of Western Kowloon, and the Revd Dr Chuck Robertson, the Episcopal Church gave an address to Synod.

**Item 7: Questions:** There were 271 questions submitted for this group of sessions, and questions 1 to 101 to the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops were reached.

**Item 8 GS 2396A and GS 2396B Redistribution of Funds:** This was the Diocesan Synod Motion which had been scheduled for debate in February 2025 but was adjourned. There were two amendments and the final motion was as follows:

*'That this Synod, noting the precarious financial position of many dioceses, concerns about the approach to national funding, and the challenges of sustaining stipendiary ministry in dioceses:*

- a) recognise the successful management of the Church's historic endowment over many years by the Church Commissioners, and the resulting significant uplift in recent triennia in distributions, and calls upon the Church Commissioners to continue to make available the maximum sustainable level of distributions in support of parishes and the work of clergy and other ministers;*
- b) welcome the greater level of stakeholder engagement which informed the spending plans for 2026-28, including the commitment to address concerns about clergy welfare through increasing clergy stipends and a range of other measures, and the commitment to increase funding for ministry in the most deprived communities;*

- c) *call upon the Archbishops' Council and the Church Commissioners to continue that engagement from now on, including ensuring Synod has a more formal role in the development of the future Funding Framework at a formative stage, as proposed in the draft National Church Governance Measure; and*
- d) *call upon the Business Committee of the General Synod to schedule early in the next triennium a full debate that will enable Synod to express its view on the approach to disbursing funding, including support for local stipendiary ministry. This should be based on robust financial modelling to avoid unintended consequences and to inform the development of the Funding Framework.'*

It was carried on a counted vote of the whole Synod with 361 in favour, 7 against and 14 recorded abstentions.

The Business Committee will consider bringing a further debate on this issue in the next quinquennium.

Items 502 and 503 GS 2360B National Church Governance Measure: This was the Final Drafting and Final Approval Stage for the National Church Governance Measure which will introduce new governance structures for the national Church. There were four special amendments brought forward by the Steering Committee. There were two amendments to these special amendments but they were both lost.

There was a vote by Houses as required under the Standing Orders and the results were as follows:

	<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstention</b>
<b>Bishops</b>	27	0	0
<b>Clergy</b>	116	0	0
<b>Laity</b>	133	10	1

This will now be considered by the Legislative Committee.

Items 504 to 509 GS 2403 Armed Forces Chaplains (Licensing) Measure and GS 2404 Amending Canon No 44 (Ministers' Exercise of Ministry): This Measure and Amending Canon provides for the Archbishop of Canterbury to license all armed forces chaplains on a national basis. All the legislative stages were taken at this group of sessions, there were no submissions for revision, so the Measure and Amending Canon remained as originally presented.

There was a vote by Houses as required under the Standing Orders and the results were as follows:

	<b>For</b>	<b>Against</b>	<b>Abstention</b>
<b>Bishops</b>	21	0	0
<b>Clergy</b>	151	0	0
<b>Laity</b>	142	0	0

This will now be considered by the Legislative Committee.

Amending Canon No.44 “(Ministers’ Exercise of Ministry)” was carried following a counted vote by Houses. The voting was as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
<b>Bishops</b>	23	0	0
<b>Clergy</b>	154	0	0
<b>Laity</b>	152	0	0

Items 9 and 10 GS 2405 Appointment of two members of the Archbishops’ Council: Synod approved the appointment of Peter Doyle and Julie Jones as members of the Archbishops’ Council. They have been appointed for a term of up to 5 years.

Item 11: GS 2402 Spending Plans: This was the debate on the Spending Plans. There were two amendments which were both lost, so the final motion was as follows:

*‘That this Synod welcome the financial package set out in GS2402 detailing the 2026-28 Spending Plans, the Diocesan Finances Review recommendations and the clergy pension improvement proposals and invite the Archbishops’ Council to bring forward any necessary legislative changes needed to bring about the relevant policy proposals.’*

This was carried on a show of hands.

Item 12 GS 2406A and GS 2406B Clergy Pensions: This was a Private Members Motion from the Revd James Blandford-Baker which called for legislation to be brought forward to restore the clergy pension benefit and recompense any clergy who have been disadvantaged by changes to clergy pensions. There was one amendment which was carried and the final motion was as follows:

*‘That this Synod:*

- a) Note the unanimous support given by this Synod in February 2024 to the Private Member’s Motion brought by the Revd Dr Ian Paul, calling for improvements in the level of clergy pensions;*
- b) Thank the Pensions Board and the Archbishops’ Council for the proposals being brought before this Synod in GS 2402 Annex C, and endorse these proposals wholeheartedly as a significant and immediate step towards correcting an historic injustice;*
- c) Note with gratitude the significantly improved funding position of the Church of England Funded Pension Scheme (CEFPS) which means that these changes can be made without requiring funding from elsewhere in the Church ecosystem;*
- d) Call on the Pensions Board to go further than the current proposals - specifically to provide some form of restitution for those already in receipt of a pension with post 2011 service as described in Paragraph 18 on Page 30 of GS 2402 Annex C;*
- e) Call on the Archbishops’ Council to commission a comprehensive, independent review of what is needed to ensure that clergy and their dependents are supported in retirement with dignity and fairness – specifically in relation to both pension provision and housing. The review should be chaired by an independent lay person with a working group representing all relevant interests, and engaging fully with clergy, clergy spouses, retired clergy and other stakeholders (including the Clergy Pension Action Group and the Retired Clergy Association). The review should initially report back to Synod within 12 months.”.’*

This was carried on a counted vote of the whole Synod with 328 in favour, 0 against and 3 recorded abstentions.

The Business Committee will consider bringing a further debate on this issue in 2026.

Item 13 GS 2407A and GS 2407B Governance Review of the House of Bishops: This was a Private Members Motion from Dr Ros Clarke (Lichfield) which sought to set up an independent review of the governance and culture of the House of Bishops. The 'next business' procedural motion was moved and carried which means that this motion or anything similar cannot be considered again in this quinquennium.

Item 15 and 600 GS 2408 Festival of God the Creator and Commemoration of the Twenty-One Martyrs of Libya: This liturgical business was considered for its First Consideration stage and expands the calendar to include festivals for God the Creator and commemoration for the Twenty-One Martyrs of Libya. This is the first time that Synod has engaged with Liturgical Business in this quinquennium.

Members can submit proposals for revision to [revisioncommittee@churchofengland.org](mailto:revisioncommittee@churchofengland.org) until not later than 5.30 p.m. on Monday 1 September 2025.

Item 16: Address by Ecumenical Representative: The Rt Revd Jan Otto Myrseth, Bishop of Tunsberg gave an address to Synod.

Item 27: GS Misc 1411 Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee of the Archbishops' Council: Synod took note of the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee which had been called for debate.

Item 17 and 18 GS 2409 Church Growth and Revitalisation: This was a presentation with questions relating to the summary report of research on church growth and vitality, including an assessment of the impact of national funding to dioceses in support of that growth and vitality.

Item 19 and 20 GS 2393 Thy Kingdom Come – Renewing the Call to Prayer and Evangelism: This item outlined 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 renewed the call for prayer in evangelism and mission within the Church of England and beyond. This was deferred from February 2025.

Item 26 GS 2416 Annual Report of the Archbishops' Council: This was a take note debate on the annual report of the work of the Archbishops' Council which had been called for debate. It was carried on a show of hands. A further motion had been submitted on this item but the procedural motion 'next business' was moved and carried which means that the further motion or any similar motion cannot be considered for the rest of this quinquennium.

Item 22 GS 2398 Pattern of Future Dates 2027-2029: This item set the envelope for Synod meetings in 2027, 2028 and 2029. The envelope for the meetings is as follows:

## **2027**

**February:** Monday 15 to Friday 19

**July:** Friday 9 to Tuesday 13

**November:** Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 (if required)

## 2028

**February:** Monday 14 to Tuesday 22

**July:** Friday 7 to Tuesday 11

**November:** Monday 20 to Wednesday 22 (if required)

## 2029

**February:** Monday 19 to Tuesday 27

**July:** Friday 6 to Tuesday 10

**November:** Monday 19 to Wednesday 21 (if required)

The Business Committee will set the actual meeting dates in due course. The longer envelopes for February 2028 and 2029 will give members in the next quinquennium the opportunity to decide between a weekend group of sessions or a weekday group of sessions in February.

Items 500 and 501 GS 2325B Abuse (Redress) Measure: This was the final drafting and final approval stage of the Abuse (Redress) Measure which will enable there to be a consistent approach across the Church to redress following abuse. There were a number of special amendments which were carried.

There was a vote by Houses as required under the Standing Orders and the results were as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
<b>Bishops</b>	26	0	0
<b>Clergy</b>	129	1	1
<b>Laity</b>	140	0	4

This will now be considered by the Legislative Committee.

Item 100 and 101 GS 2417 Poverty and the Church: 40 Years after Faith in the City: This item marked the 40th anniversary of the Faith in the City report there was a presentation by the Rt Revd Rob Wickham, and the motion was moved. The item was adjourned and it is expected that the Business Committee will be invited to schedule this for the February 2026 group of sessions.

Item 510 GS 2410 Abuse (Redress) Regulations: This set out the procedure for making claims for redress and how financial redress is to be calculated. There were three amendments and one was carried. The Abuse (Redress) Rules were carried on a show of hands.

Item 23 and 24 GS 2411 Archbishops' Council 2026 and Apportionment 2026: This sets out the budget for the Archbishops' Council for the next financial year. It was carried on a show of hands.

Item 509 – 513 GS 2388 Church Representation Rules, GS 2389 House of Bishops Election Rules, GS 2390 House of Clergy Election Rules, GS 2391 House of Laity 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.

The Church Representation Rules (Amendment) (No 1) Resolution was carried on a counted vote by Houses as required under the Standing Orders and the results were as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
<b>Bishops</b>	19	1	0
<b>Clergy</b>	96	1	0
<b>Laity</b>	139	2	1

This will be laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the Statutory Instruments Act 1946. Further details relating to the elections can be found below.

**Item 16: Address by Anglican Communion Guest :** The Most Revd Hosam Naoum, Primate of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, gave an address to Synod.

**Item 511 GS 2412 Church Representation Rules (Amendment) (No.2) Resolution:** This was in addition to the election specific amendments to the CRRs and related to the broader work of the Elections Review Group. There were two amendments and one was carried. was carried on a counted vote by Houses as required under the Standing Orders and the results were as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
<b>Bishops</b>	22	0	0
<b>Clergy</b>	149	1	0
<b>Laity</b>	148	0	0

This will be laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the Statutory Instruments Act 1946

**Item 23 GS 2413A and GS 2413B Vocations and Issues in Human Sexuality:** This was a PMM from the Revd Mae Christie (Southwark) which sought to remove Issues in Human Sexuality from the vocations process. There was one amendment which was carried and the final motion was as follows:

*‘That this Synod request that the House of Bishops remove any requirements relating to Issues in Human Sexuality from the Vocations (Shared Discernment) Process and replace it with an interim requirement of living consistently with the Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy (GPCC) during the period of discernment and training, and complete work on the package of the Pastoral Guidelines, Code of Practice, and Bishops’ Statement, as agreed at General Synod in July 2024.’*

The House of Bishops has agreed to replace *Issues in Human Sexuality* with a requirement for candidates to live in line with the *Guidelines for the Professional Conduct of the Clergy*. Work to update materials which reference *Issues* is now in train. All existing guidance documents for candidates, Diocesan Directors of Ordinands and Bishops’ Advisers will be reviewed and changed where necessary and new guidance will be issued.

## **Deemed Business**

The following items were deemed to be approved as no members requested to debate these:

- [GS 2414 Legal Officers \(Annual Fees\) Order 2025](#)
- [GS 2415 Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others \(Fees\) Order 2025](#)

These are the usual annual fees orders providing for the annual retainers paid to diocesan registrars and for court fees in the ecclesiastical courts.

### Elections to General Synod 2026

There is now less than 12 months until the dissolution of the current Synod. The Election Rules and related changes to the Church Representation Rules have been made, and staff are working on the draft guidance for dioceses which will be circulated in the autumn for comment before finalising in early 2026.

There are a number of points that will be covered in the guidance but in terms of planning, the following points are worth highlighting separately:

- There will be standard templates which can be used by dioceses.
- There will be one national contract which will cover all elections to Synod, and any casual vacancies throughout the quinquennium.
- There will be one national timetable as set out below. The dates are based on Synod being dissolved on 14 July, please note that this is subject to change.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Rule</i>	<i>Stage</i>
Day 1 14 Jul	7(5)	Diocesan electoral registration officer gives names and addresses of electors to secretary of each deanery synod
Day 7 21 Jul	7(6)	Secretary of each deanery synod responds to diocesan electoral registration officer
Day 14 28 Jul	7(7)	Diocesan electoral registration officer gives names and addresses to presiding officer
Day 16 30 Jul	10(1)	Presiding officer sends initial letter to each elector
Day 32 15 Aug	12(2)	Invitations to nominate issued
Day 56 8 Sept	12(5)	Close of nominations
Day 56 8 Sept	33(1)	Deadline for receipt of election addresses
Day 70 22 Sept	38(2)	Invitations to vote issued
Day 70 22 Sept	38(10)	Voting period opens
Day 91 13 Oct	38(10)	Voting by voting paper closes
Day 92 14 Oct	38(10)	Voting by using elections portal closes
Day 93 15 Oct	39(2)	Count begins
Day 98 20 Oct	39(6)	Deadline for declaration of result
Day 98 20 Oct	39(7)	Deadline for preparation of result sheet

All dioceses will have received a request for numbers of clergy and those on electoral rolls. This information will be used to undertake the seat allocation which will be presented at the February 2026 group of sessions. It is important that this information is sent in so that there is appropriate representation for the diocese. If you are unable to source the information, the annual stats return from 2024 can be used.

Any casual vacancies that now arise should only be filled if the relevant members of the Bishop's Council and Standing Committee direct that they should be filled. Please do continue to send any resignations into the office though so we can ensure that our records are accurate.

It is expected that there will be online sessions with dioceses and Civica in the autumn and early 2026, and it is proposed that a one day session with Civica take place in Church House, London after the February 2026 group of sessions. Further information about these opportunities to engage in advance of the elections will be circulated in due course.