

Synod update for Diocesan Secretaries

Introduction

General Synod met at Church House from 9 to 13 February. This briefing provides an update on the items discussed at Synod and the decisions made.

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: [GS 2177 Temporary Standing Orders](#): These are the Standing Orders that allow hybrid meetings of Synod. Synod revived these so they are in operation indefinitely. They have been added to the full Standing Orders which can be found [here](#).

Item 2: Welcomes and Introductions: The Archbishop of Canterbury welcomed 19 new members, five young adults, seven bishops acting during a vacancy and the Anglican Communion guest, the Most Revd Marinez Rosa Dos Santos Bassotto, Primate of Brazil and Bishop of Amazonia.

Item 3: [GS 2425 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

Items 4 and 9: [Questions](#): There were 258 questions submitted for this group of sessions, and questions 1 to 159 to the Church Commissioner, Pensions Board, Ethical Investment Advisory Group, Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops were reached.

Item 5: [Presidential Address](#): The Archbishop of Canterbury gave a Presidential Address

Item 503: [GS 2404 Amending Canon No 44](#): This is the formal enactment of Amending Canon No 44 which relates to the Armed Forces Chaplaincy.

Items 500-502: [GS 2311B Clergy Conduct Measure](#) and [GS 2311W Report by the Legislative Committee](#): Synod agreed an amendment to the Clergy Conduct Measure following engagement with the Ecclesiastical Committee. Synod agreed an amendment, reversing the presumption of private hearings so that tribunals and courts will normally sit in public. The Measure as amended was finally approved by Synod after a counted vote by Houses as required under the Standing Orders. The results were as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
Bishops	21	0	0
Clergy	142	0	3
Laity	149	0	0

This will now be considered by the Legislative Committee.

Item 508: [GS 2440 Church Representation Rules \(Amendment\) Resolution 2026](#): and [GS 2440X Explanatory Note](#): This provides a minor amendment to Rule M29 Business by correspondence so that one-third of the PCC must confirm approval when business is circulated by correspondence.

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

	For	Against	Abstention
Bishops	17	0	0
Clergy	94	6	3
Laity	104	1	5

This will now be laid before both Houses of Parliament as required by the Statutory Instruments Act 1946. Staff will update dioceses when this comes into force.

Item 7: [GS 2419 Reimagining Care](#): This item updates Synod on the work of the Archbishops' Commission for Reimagining Care led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The motion was as follows:

'That this Synod

- a) *endorse the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Reimagining Care and its vision for changing how adult social care is perceived, organised, delivered and experienced;*
- b) *commend the excellent and context-specific work of parishes to ensure that all people, made in the image of God, are supported to flourish, and encourage churches to learn from one another by sharing examples of good practice;*
- c) *note the need to draw on the views, voices and experiences of disabled people and older people in policy matters which particularly affect them and*
- d) *call on HM Government to draw on the Archbishops' Commission's report and its focus on the notion of covenant as it delivers on its manifesto commitment to create a National Care Service.'*

It was carried following a counted vote of the whole Synod with 245 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention. Staff will follow up with the Government on this motion.

Item 47: [GS 2441A](#) and [GS 2441B Lowest Income Communities Funding](#): This is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Lincoln which asked the Archbishops' Council and Church Commissioners to review the formula and processes used to distribute LiNC funding. There was one amendment which was carried and the final motion which was carried on a show of hands was as follows:

'That this Synod recognising that areas of deprivation exist across all dioceses, call upon the Church Commissioners and Archbishops' Council to review the formula and processes used to distribute Lowest Income Communities Funding (LiNC), as part of the wider review of the Church's funding framework for ministry, and report back to this Synod any alternative approaches to the distribution of LiNC that align with the outcomes of this wider review.'

Item 11: [GS 2420 Mental Health and the Church](#): This proposed modest steps to deepen the understanding of mental health within the church and to foster a culture of sensitive and effective adjustments to enhance access and inclusion. There were three amendments which were all carried and the final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod, affirming the work of the national mental health working group, and recognising the high prevalence of mental health conditions in the population, especially post-COVID, and the close relationship between spiritual and mental wellbeing, believes that responding to people's mental health needs in an informed, prayerful, and compassionate way is integral to our mission, and therefore:

- a) *call on diocesan ministry training leads to include specific content in their IME and CME courses on how to support those facing mental health challenges,*
- b) *request the National Society to develop further training materials on responding to mental health challenges for use in Church Schools and children's groups with a focus not only on those directly affected, but also for those children and young people who live with, or are carers for, others with mental health challenges,*
- c) *request the Liturgical Commission to ensure that the church's liturgical materials are drafted with attention to the needs of, and impact upon, people facing mental health challenges and supported by guidance notes relating to their use in the particular circumstances of those facing mental health challenges,*
- d) *recognising the 2025 report from St Luke's for Clergy Wellbeing on counselling provision for clergy, call upon all dioceses to ensure that their offering of mental health support for clergy provides accessibility, independence and clarity so that the best practice celebrated in the report can be reflected across all parts of the Church of England.'*

Dioceses have been asked to engage with paragraphs (a) and (d) of this motion.

Item 12: [GS 2428 Appointment of External Auditors](#): This was formal business as Synod is required to approve the appointment of the external auditors for the Archbishops' Council. Synod approved the appointment of Buzzacott LLP for a five year period.

Items 13 and 14: [GS 2429 Church Safeguarding Structures Next Steps on Implementation](#): There was a presentation from Dame Christine Ryan, Executive Chair of the Safeguarding Structures Programme. There was then a debate on a motion, there were two amendments which were all lost and the final motion was as follows:

'That this Synod welcome the update, endorse the direction of travel set out in GS 2429 and look forward to considering proposals where necessary.'

The motion was carried following a counted vote of the whole Synod with 345 in favour, 1 against and 3 recorded abstentions.

Item 600: [GS 2408A Festival of God the Creator and Commemoration of the Twenty-one Martyrs of Libya](#) and [GS 2408Y Explanatory Note](#). This was the Revision Stage for Liturgical Business which was presented at the July 2025 group of sessions. It will extend the calendar to include the Festival of God the Creator and Commemoration of the Twenty-One Martyrs of Libya. It was carried by Synod and now stands committed to the House of Bishops.

Item 506: [GS 2430 Code of Practice on Mission Initiatives](#) and [GS 2430X Explanatory Note](#): This revised the statutory Code of Practice for mission initiatives. There were three amendments which were carried by Synod and the Code of Practice was approved on a show of hands.

Items 15, and 25 to 46: [GS 2424 67th Report of the Standing Orders Committee](#): This contained a number of amendments to Standing Orders to clarify and tidy up SO 11, SO 21, SO 33, SO 40, SO 58, SO 59, SO 105, SO 106, SO 122, SO 127, SO 137 and SO 140. As mentioned above, revised Standing Orders have been published on the [website](#) and all amendments can be found in **bold** in the text.

Item 16 [GS 2431 2026 Seat Allocation](#): This sets out the allocation of seats for the next quinquennium in advance of the elections in the summer. It was approved by Synod on a show of hands. All dioceses have been contacted post-Synod to confirm the allocation of seats in the House of Clergy and House of Laity for 2026-2031.

Item 17 [GS 2432 Future Dates February 2027](#): This set out revised dates for the February 2027 group of sessions following the debate on future dates in July 2025. It was agreed on a show of hands and Synod will be meeting within the envelope of **Monday 22 February to Friday 26 February 2027**.

Item 18 [GS 2417 Poverty and the Church 40 Years After Faith in the City](#). This was the resumed debate following the adjournment in July 2025. It marked the 40th anniversary of the Faith in the City report and encourages continued action to seek to end poverty at a time of great need and political opportunity. There were two amendments, one of which was carried and the final motion which was carried on a show of hands was as follows:

‘That this Synod:

- a) recognise and celebrate the enduring impact of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas’ ‘Faith in the City’ report on Christian social action forty years after its publication, including through the work of Church Urban Fund;*
- b) affirm the value and necessity of listening to people within our congregations and in our wider communities who are experiencing poverty, learning from these insights, and embedding these views and experiences in the forming of the body of Christ;*
- c) give thanks for the work undertaken by Christian communities across the country to witness to the love of God, serve and strengthen their communities, and build partnerships towards a movement of love, justice and mercy, together;*
- d) affirm the importance of listening to people with lived experience of poverty, and recognise that poverty in England disproportionately affects some Black and minority ethnic communities, encouraging the Church to take account of these realities in its pastoral practice, mission, and public witness;*
- e) recommit to ending poverty in all its forms and manifestations, whilst asking questions of ourselves, our political, society and business leaders about the unjust structures and decisions which cause and exacerbate poverty, in line with the third and fourth marks of mission;*
- f) recognise that in many areas of high deprivation poverty is experienced within multi-faith communities, and encourage the Church, where appropriate, to work ecumenically and in partnership with other faith groups in responding to poverty and supporting the wellbeing of local communities, while also encouraging the use of person-centred language when speaking about poverty – such as ‘people living in poverty’ or ‘people experiencing poverty’ – and discouraging the use of objectifying terms such as ‘the poor’ so that poverty is understood as a condition affecting people within our shared communities rather than as a defining identity.’*

Item 19 [GS 2433A](#) and [GS 2433B Diocesan Synod Motion: Sustainable Church Flowers](#): This DSM requested that churches use local, seasonal and fully biodegradable/compostable flowers and foliage without floral foam. The motion was carried on a show of hands and was as follows:

‘That this synod,

- a) embrace the principles of the Sustainable Church Flowers movement which encourages a living into the Fifth Mark of Mission by promoting the use of local, seasonal and fully biodegradable/compostable flowers and foliage;*
- b) encourage cathedrals, churches and churchyards - wherever possible - to source flowers and foliage locally and seasonally for use in worship and church life; and*
- c) call on cathedrals, churches and churchyards to eliminate the use of floral foam (oasis) and all similar non-biodegradable and non-reusable products and techniques, while*

rediscovering traditional and environmentally-friendly methods of presentation and display.'

Item 20 [GS 2426 Living in Love and Faith](#): There was a presentation on Tuesday afternoon, followed by the debate on Thursday afternoon on the work of Living in Love and Faith. There were eight amendments which were all lost and the final motion was as follows:

That this Synod:

- a) recognise and lament the distress and pain many have suffered during the LLF process, especially LGBTQI+ people;*
- b) affirm that the LLF Programme and all work initiated by the February 2023 LLF Motion and subsequent LLF Motions will conclude by July 2026;*
- c) thank the LLF Working Groups for their committed and costly work, which will now draw to a close with the conclusion of this synodical process;*
- d) commend the House of Bishops in establishing the Relationships, Sexuality and Gender Working Group and Relationships, Sexuality and Gender Pastoral Consultative Group for continuing work.'*

There was a counted vote by Houses and the results were as follows:

	For	Against	Abstention
Bishops	34	0	2
Clergy	109	62	10
Laity	109	70	9

Item 23: [Address by Anglican Communion Guests](#): Synod heard from the Most Revd Marinez Rosa Dos Santos Bassotto, Primate of Brazil and Bishop of Amazonia.

Item 504 [GS 2434 Parochial Fees Orders](#), [GS 2434X Explanatory Note](#) and [GS 2434P Policy Note](#). This is the Order to set wedding, funeral and other parochial fees for up to the next five years. There were 48 amendments to this, six of which were carried. These amendments removed the uplift of £1,000 to the fees for the burial of a body in a churchyard and the uplift of £1,000 to the fees for the burial of cremated remains in a churchyard.

It was carried following a counted vote of the whole Synod with 262 in favour, 3 against and 5 abstentions. The Draft Parochial Fees Order 2026 has been referred to the Archbishops Council.

Item 21 and 22: [GS 2435 Working Class Vocation and Ministry Next Steps](#): This was an update on work undertaken since the debate on the Private Members' Motion from the Revd Alex Frost in February 2025. A presentation was given by the Rt Revd Lynne Cullens, and there was a debate on the motion as follows:

'That this Synod:

- a) note the unanimous support given by this Synod in February 2025 to the Private Member's Motion brought by the Revd Alex Frost calling for a national strategy for working-class vocations and ministry, and recognise that Synod has already agreed to "Commit itself to taking the necessary steps to raise up a new generation of lay and*

ordained leaders from estates and working-class backgrounds at all levels in the church” when agreeing to GS 2345 (point 5 in the motion).

- b) welcome the consultation work that heard from working-class ministers, both lay and ordained, across the Church of England, acknowledging their voice and that the Church can and must do better to receive their ministry, both now and in the future.*
- c) call on the House of Bishops to address structural and cultural barriers to the flourishing of working-class ministers and their ministry at all levels, acknowledging the intersections with other underrepresented groups.*
- d) encourage the national church, dioceses and training institutions to fully adopt the use of the recognised socio-economic background (SEB) data questions as an aid to monitoring progress on class representation.*
- e) endorse ongoing engagement with working-class ministers and other stakeholders for continuing the strategy development and the creation of a new advisory group to oversee this, reporting to the Ministry Development Board (MDB).*

This was carried on a show of hands.

Item 505: [GS 2436 National Ministry Register Regulations](#) and [GS 2436X Explanatory Note](#):

These Regulations provide for the creation of a public register of nationally recognised lay ministers. There were two amendments which were not carried and they were carried on a show of hands.

Deemed and Contingency Business

There were four items of deemed business that were approved without debate:

- [GS 2422 Safeguarding Code of Practice Safer Recruitment](#): This Safeguarding Code of Practice (Safer Recruitment and People Management) was circulated under the Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure 2021.
- [GS 2437 Trust Deed and Rules of the Church of England Funded Pension Scheme 2026](#) and [GS 2437X Explanatory Note](#); [GS 2348 Regulations under the Church of England Pensions Measure 2018](#) and [GS 2348X Explanatory Note](#): These give effect to the Synod motion of February 2024 and would restore the pension level to two-thirds of pensionable stipend for future service, and would uplift benefits for active and deferred members to reflect a two-thirds accrual rate since 2011.
- [GS 2439 Payments to the Churches Conservation Trust Order 2026](#); and [GS 2439X Explanatory Note](#): This is the regular Order to enable payment to be made by the Church Commissioners to the Churches Conservation Trust.

Elections to General Synod 2026

Dioceses have been sent their seat allocation for the next quinquennium, if this has not been received, please contact jenny.jacobs@churchofengland.org for further information.

There will be an information day on Friday 27 March from 11am to 3pm. This will be an in-person meeting, if any diocese cannot attend, a separate online meeting will be offered, the date for this meeting is still to be confirmed but it is expected to be late April. The information day is open to all relevant staff, please complete the following form to confirm your attendance:

[General Synod Elections 2026 information meeting – Fill in form](#)