

Synod briefing for Diocesan Secretaries

Introduction

General Synod will be meeting from 8th to 10th February. This will be the second meeting of the new quinquennium, and the second in person meeting since the pandemic began in 2020. This briefing will outline the business for the group of sessions. Following feedback from members in November 2021, we have put in place significant mitigations to reduce the risk of covid and they are shared below. We are also looking at how we can enable those for whom it would be impossible to attend in person to participate using some hybrid elements. The details around this are still being refined.

There will be a number of appointments and elections taking place after the group of sessions, including some roles that do not need to be filled by Synod members. We would welcome nominations from your wider networks, particularly from those that are normally unrepresented on our bodies.

Along with their papers, we will be providing Synod members with a link to web-page with the Church Commissioner factsheets that was shared with Bishops and Diocesan Secretaries late last year. By way of reminder, these simple fact sheets have been produced in response to requests from people across the Church looking for easy-to-digest guides about the Commissioners' work, addressing the most common questions that are asked about the work, finances, and impact of the Church Commissioners, including the stewardship of the Church of England's endowment fund. They are on the Church of England website [here](#).

Covid Mitigation

We will be encouraging all members to take a lateral flow test before attending the group of sessions, and members are invited to use the testing centre in the Harvey Goodwin suite during the group of sessions. Members will be required to wear face coverings unless exempt throughout the meeting, apart from when eating or speaking in the Chamber.

We will encourage members to use all the space available, including the gallery to allow more distancing between members. There will be a one-way system in place to move around the building.

There will also be increased cleaning during the group of sessions and hand sanitisers will be available throughout.

Synod Business

The General Synod papers were sent out to members on Friday 21st January. The details below provide an update on each item. There are two DSMs scheduled for debate and a third DSM is contingency business.

As the Temporary Standing Orders under section 1 of the General Synod (Remote Meetings) (Temporary Standing Orders) Measure 2020 lapsed in November 2021, the first item of business will be to revive the Temporary Standing Orders which will enable those participating from home to speak and vote. This is covered in paper [GS 2177](#).

[GS 2240 Agenda](#): the usual Agenda stating the business for the Group of Sessions and summary of Private Members' Motions, including the number of signatures as of 8th December 2021, and Diocesan Synod Motions.

[GS 2241 Business Committee Report](#): the report from the Business Committee on how the agenda was set, and other useful information on what the Business Committee is working on.

[GS 2242 Pattern of Meetings 2024 - 2026](#): this paper provides Synod with the proposed envelope of dates for groups of sessions in 2024, 2025 and 2026. There is an envelope of 8 days for the February meetings. This may be amended to reduce the envelope or be left as presented, enabling the Business Committee to set the dates when the requests for business are known.

[GS 2243 Racial Justice: Introduction to the Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission, and Update to Synod on Racial Justice Work](#): this will be a presentation and take note debate. The presentation will be led by Lord Boateng, Chair of the Racial Justice Commission.

[GS 2244 Safeguarding](#): this gives an update on work related to safeguarding, including an update on the establishment of the Independent Safeguarding Board.

[GS 2245 Faculty Jurisdiction \(Amendment\) Rules 2022 and Notes](#): this is the only piece of legislative business on this agenda. The amendments give effect to recommendations made by the Net-Zero Carbon Faculty Working Group for changes to the faculty system as part of the Church's commitment to working towards net zero carbon emissions, in line with the General Synod's resolution on climate change in February 2020.

[GS 2246A](#) and **[GS 2246B Challenging Slavery and Human Trafficking](#): this is a Diocesan Synod Motion from Durham. This motion addresses Modern Slavery and in particular the issue of minors who have been trafficked.**

[GS 2247 Report of the Review of Clergy Remuneration](#): the report summarises the findings from the review carried out by the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (RACSC) between January 2020 and June 2021 following a request from the House of Clergy to the Archbishops' Council in July 2018 to review the adequacy of the clergy remuneration package.

[GS 2248 God's People Set Free: Living as Missionary Disciples of Jesus Christ in the whole of life to bring transformation to the Church and world](#): this report reviews the implementation of the recommendations of the 2017 Setting God's People Free (SPGF) report as the programme of work to support this draws to a close. It highlights that the work will continue through the Vision and Strategy. This debate will be followed by group work on the role of Missionary Disciples as set out in **[GS Misc 1307](#)**.

[GS Misc 1308 Being the Change: Diversity, Disagreement and Difference](#): There will group work for members to engage with two resources that have the potential to transform the culture of the Church's engagement with challenging questions in the context of difference and diversity. These are the Difference Course and the Pastoral Principles Course

[GS 2249 Report by the Governance Review Group](#): members will be invited to engage with the recommendations from the Governance Review Group with a view to Synod considering further proposals emerging from the report's recommendations in future.

[GS 2250 Appointment of the Chair of the Appointments Committee](#): this is a formal item which requests the approval of the appointment of the Venerable Pete Spiers as Chair of the Appointments Committee. The approval by Synod of this appointment is required by the Standing Orders.

[GS 2251 Appointment of the Chair of the Dioceses Commission](#): this is a formal item which requests the approval of the appointment of Dame Caroline Spelman as Chair of the Dioceses Commission.

[GS 2252A](#) and **[GS 2252B Persecuted Church in the World](#): this is the second Diocesan Synod Motion and is presented from Lichfield. This paper builds on Freedom of Religion and Belief debate in April 2021 and highlights the persecution of people of faith in many parts of the world.**

[GS 2253 See of Canterbury: Membership of the Crown Nominations Commission](#): there will be a take note debate on the proposal to amend the membership of the Canterbury CNC. This will feed into the consultation process which is currently ongoing.

[GS 2254A](#) and [GS 2254B Review of Qualifications for PCC Membership and Entry on the Church Electoral Roll](#): this is contingency business. This Diocesan Synod Motion is from Canterbury and calls for a review of the qualifications for membership of parochial church councils and the electoral roll in light of the existence of bishops' mission initiatives.

As well as the papers that are linked to items to be discussed on the main Agenda, there are a number of GS Misc papers being circulated to members for information:

[GS 1309 Update from the House of Bishops](#) and [GS Misc 1310 Activities by the Archbishops' Council](#): these papers are the usual update on discussions being held since the last group of sessions in the Archbishops' Council and the House of Bishops.

[GS Misc 1311 Clergy Stipends Authority Report](#): this is the annual report by the Clergy Stipends Authority.

[GS Misc 1312 Mission and Pastoral Measure review](#): this gives an update on the consultation process on the review of MPM over the autumn

[GS Misc 1313 Dioceses Commission Annual Report](#): this is the annual report on work undertaken by the Dioceses Commission.

[GS Misc 1314 Energy Footprint Initial Summary](#): this paper gives an estimate of the carbon footprint of the Church of England buildings in 2020 (estimated at 475,000 tonnes CO₂e) in advance of more detailed information being provided.

Appointments

There will be a number of appointments being made by the Appointments Committee post-Synod. Some of these are open to non-Synod members, and we would welcome any expressions of interest from suitable candidates:

Audit Committee: One member to be appointed. The Committee would welcome expressions of interest from those with experience of governance, risk management and the control environment, as well as an understanding of annual financial statements.

Ministry Council: Three members to be appointed. One appointment will be of a theologian not on the staff of a theological college or course. Expressions of interest from those with significant experience in selection, professional development or leadership development would be welcomed for the other two appointments.

Dioceses Commission: Four members to be appointed. Expressions of interest from those with experience in diocesan administration or knowledge of episcopal oversight would be welcomed.