

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

**The Church of England Website:** [www.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.cofe.anglican.org)

**The General Synod Office:** Church House, Great Smith St, London SW1P 3NZ  
[synod@c-of-e.org.uk](mailto:synod@c-of-e.org.uk)

**Church House Bookshop:** 31 Great Smith St, London SW1P 3NZ

# An Introduction to General Synod

8

(and how your parish and deanery relates to it)

## SYNODS

### What is a synod?

A synod is a formal meeting of Christians by which the Church is governed. These have taken place from the Council of Jerusalem (described in Acts 15) onwards and such General Councils have regulated doctrine and discipline. More locally, synods meet in the various provinces of the Church to govern its affairs.

### The General Synod

The Church of England is "episcopally led and synodically governed". The General Synod consists of bishops, clergy and laity who meet twice a year (occasionally three times) to make decisions on the doctrine and practice of the Church of England. It votes the funding for the work of the church centrally. As well as matters of worship and discipline, it also addresses wider concerns, national and international, and seeks to articulate a Christian approach to the issues of the day. Elected members serve for 5 years.

### Diocesan Synods

Each of the dioceses has its own Diocesan Synod which consists of the bishops and elected laity and clergy. The Diocesan Synod considers matters sent to it from General Synod and from deaneries, formulates diocesan policy on a wide range of issues, advises the bishop as appropriate and votes the funding of stipends and administration to be raised from the parishes. Members serve for 3 years.

### Deanery Synods

Each deanery has its own Deanery Synod which consists of lay members, elected at Annual Parochial Church meetings, and the clergy of the deanery, who meet under the joint chairmanship of the Area (Rural) Dean and the Lay Chair. Members are elected for 3 years and address issues of concern to the church and community at the local level. Matters are sent to them from the diocese and the General Synod and resolutions passed can be sent up for discussion at the higher levels. Many deaneries are charged with apportioning the Parish Share. Members are also the electors for the diocese and vote in the elections for Diocesan Synod and General Synod.

### Other facts about synods

Members of synods automatically have a seat on the tiers below them.

All synod meetings are open and public (unless, very rarely, members decide to meet in closed session for a specific item). Dates, times and places of meeting are publicised and members of the church and public should be encouraged to come and listen to the proceedings.

## WHERE TO GET FURTHER INFORMATION

If you want to find out more about General Synod, try using .....

### Websites

- The Church of England Website at [www.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.cofe.anglican.org) has a section on the General Synod which contains information on
  - the dates of future sessions
  - agendas and papers
  - reports of proceedings

It will soon be expanded to include additional helpful material.

- A few Diocesan Websites contain useful information about the General Synod and related matters. It may be worth looking at a number to access work which has already been tackled in different places. They can be reached via the Church of England Website.
- There are also sites set up by individuals or groups which present their views on Synod's work or lobby in relation to particular causes.

### The Press

- [The Church of England Newspaper](#) and [The Church Times](#) regularly feature items which are to be discussed at the General Synod and report on the proceedings and the decisions made.

### Publications

Numerous books have been written about the General Synod and its areas of work. Many of them are available from the Church House Bookshop (31 Great Smith St, London SW1P 3BN. Tel: 020 7898 1300) or can be bought on line at [www.chbookshop.co.uk](http://www.chbookshop.co.uk). For example:

- [Synodical Government in the Church of England](#) – (“The Bridge Report”)
- [How the Church of England Works](#), by Paul Welsby
- [The Church of England Year Book](#)

There are also several magazines published by various Christian interest groups.

## GENERAL SYNOD MEMBERSHIP – WHAT IS INVOLVED

### What does the Synod do?

The Synod approves legislation affecting the whole of the national Church; it formulates new forms of worship; it debates matters of national and international importance; and it approves the annual budget for the work of the Church at national level.

### What are the duties of Synod members?

Synod members participate in debates; they vote on issues before the Synod; they report on the work of the Synod at local level; and they have an opportunity to serve on the Synod's Commissions and Committees.

### How does the Synod conduct its business?

The Synod's procedures are formally governed by detailed rules, the purpose of which is to ensure the Synod's business is conducted efficiently and even-handedly.

### What is the time commitment?

Elected members serve for a five-year period (known as a quinquennium). The Synod is required to meet twice a year and usually meets in February (Monday to Friday) in London and in July (Friday to Tuesday) in York (residentially). It occasionally meets in November for a short three-day group of sessions.

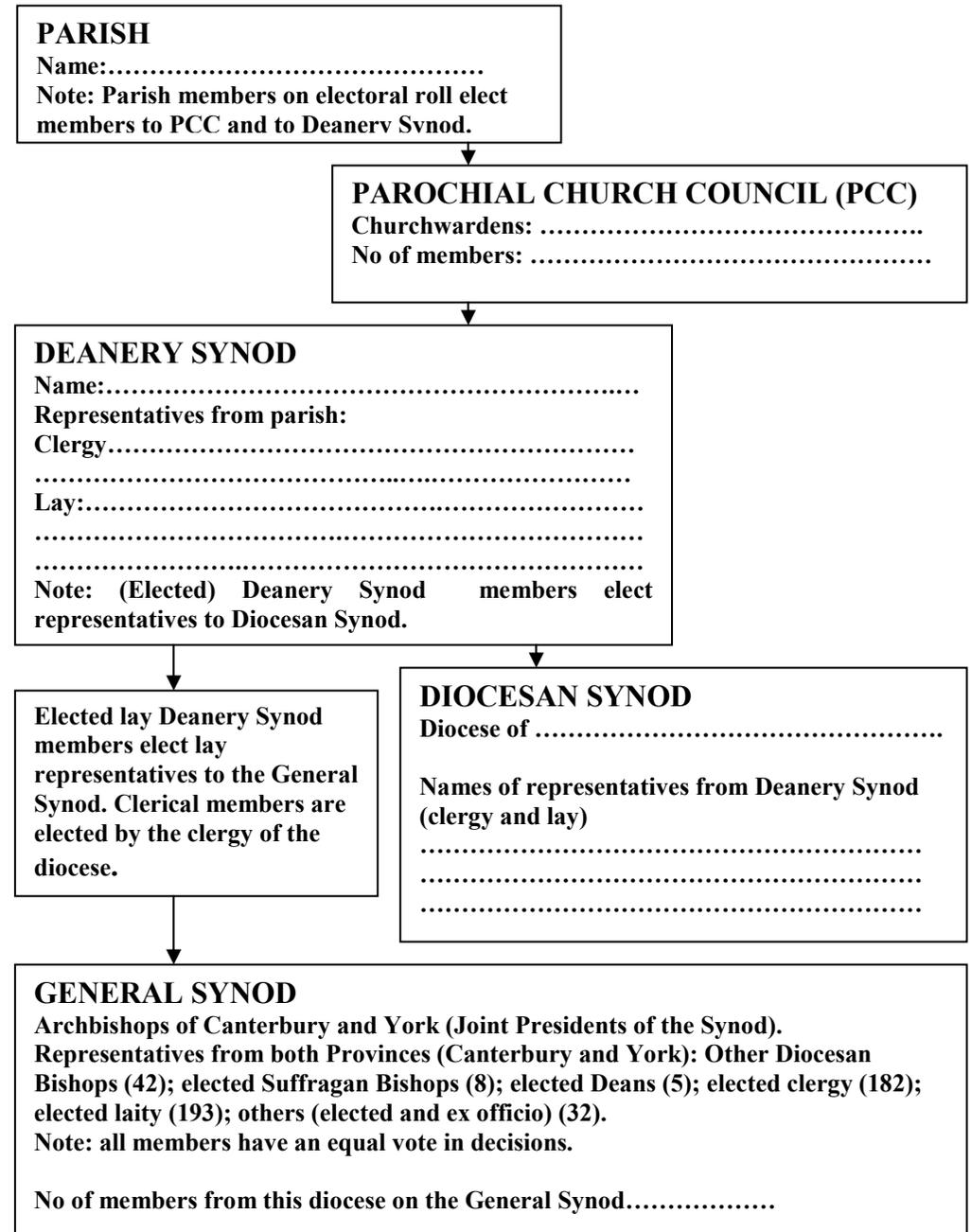
### What resources are available to Synod members?

At the beginning of each session an induction session is held for new (and returning) members. New members receive an information pack giving details of what they can expect. Synod members receive free mailings of Synod papers and other material relevant to their work. Other bodies often wish to send mailings (with permission) about their work to Synod members, as representatives of the Church at national level.

### Who covers the expenses of Synod members?

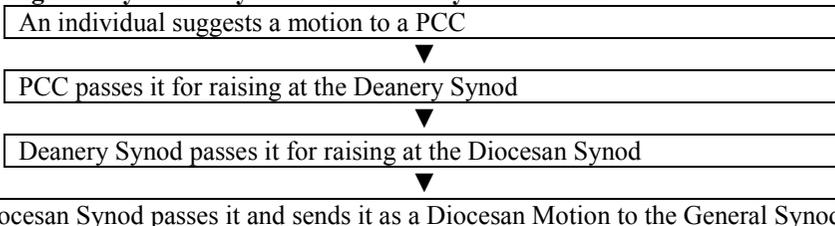
Synod members volunteer their time at Synod. Travelling and accommodation expenses are customarily paid by their dioceses and loss of earnings may also be paid. Synod members who assist the work of the Synod through its Committees and Commissions have expenses in connection with these paid by the General Synod itself.

## HOW A PARISH RELATES TO THE GENERAL SYNOD



## HOW TO HAVE A SAY IN THE GENERAL SYNOD

### 1. Through the Synodical system – Diocesan Synod Motions



**Note** that the Motion can enter the system at any stage but must be passed at all further stages before reaching the GS.

A **Diocesan Motion** must come before the General Synod. Such Motions are dealt with in order of date received and may therefore take a long time to be debated. They are, however, carried over to a new General Synod.

### 2. Through the representatives on the General Synod

- a) **Private Members' Motions:** A suggestion for a motion can be made to any member of the General Synod. If the member supports the idea, that member can send it as a Private Member's Motion to the General Synod, where it is added to a list of such Motions to gather support. **Only if there are 100 or more signatures in support of the motion** will it be accepted for debate. The number of signatures gathered determines the priority of these Motions. Private Members' Motions do **not** carry over to a new General Synod.
- b) **Questions:** A suggestion for a question to be asked at Questions can be made to any GS representative. **If the member agrees**, it can then be put on the list of questions for oral or written answer.

### 3. Writing in:

You can write to your own representative(s), who may then be able to raise your point in a debate; or you can write in to a committee working on a draft for e.g. liturgy, legislation, etc. There are deadlines for this which, if not published elsewhere, will be known to your representatives.

Contributions are welcomed, but state any expertise you may have on the subject; be concise; and be constructive, giving suggestions, e.g. for other wording or another approach, with reasons.

**4. Through voting at elections:** Find out about the candidates, listen to them at hustings and/or contact them to find out where they stand on issues which matter to you. Then vote (if you are an elected Deanery Synod member) or contact a Deanery Synod member to give your views.

## THE PROCESS OF ELECTION TO GENERAL SYNOD (LAITY)

### Who is eligible to stand for General Synod ?

Anyone who is on an *electoral roll* and a communicant. You do not need to be on any other Synods, nor a PCC.

**When can I stand for election?** The General Synod sits for a quinquennium (five years). You may stand for election at the *beginning of a new quinquennium*, when all places are vacant, or you can wait for a *by-election*, when someone stands down mid-term, and there is a vacancy.

**How do I get elected?** You need to be proposed and seconded by two Electors (elected members of a Deanery Synod)

It is a good idea to find people who are well known amongst the others on the Deanery Synod, as others will follow their lead in supporting you.

**You should write an election address** This is not compulsory but is advisable. It must be on one or both sides of an A4 sheet of paper and would normally include a head-and-shoulders photo, a little about you and your various experiences within the church, and why you want to stand for election. Include all your contact details, so that you can be contacted by the electorate. The A4 page is produced at your expense and a copy sent to the diocese, which will then pay for copying it and sending to the electorate.

**Hustings** In some diocese there are *hustings*. They differ immensely, but often include a question and answer session with the electorate on issues that will be discussed during the Synod's quinquennium. They are often timed, and you are asked to give a brief summary of why you wish to stand and what you can bring to the Synod.

**Canvassing** Some people choose to *canvass* widely in order to secure votes. This is not wholly necessary, and much depends on your time and whether you are well known in your diocese already. If your election address is clear, this should be sufficient, as this is what many base their choices on. However, be prepared to answer questions on it.

**Costs** There is a cost and time implication to attend hustings, but many dioceses are supportive and cover basic travel costs.

