

The General Synod meets in York on 5th - 9th July for the first time since the rejection of the draft legislation on Women Bishops last November. A large period of time on the Saturday will be devoted to work on this issue with a debate on the Monday. The Friday afternoon will see the first Presidential Address by the new Archbishop of Canterbury, which will be an opportunity for him to outline the main challenges facing the Church of England over the coming period.

The meeting of Synod will also include debates on Safeguarding following the Chichester Commissaries' reports and Welfare Reform and the Church. There will also be a vote on the Yorkshire Diocesan Reorganisation Scheme.

The agenda provides for the Synod to meet in private on the morning and afternoon of Saturday 6 July for reflection and facilitated discussion on the issue of Women Bishops. Some of this time will be spent in groups and some in plenary. The group work will take the form of 24 groups of 20 people with a trained facilitator, with Synod members from each House in the groups. On Monday morning there will be a debate on a motion from the House of Bishops which proposes that draft legislation be prepared and introduced at the November group of sessions on the basis of option one in the report from the working group. Synod members will have until 10am on Sunday to table amendments to the Motion.

On Sunday afternoon at 5pm there will be a debate on a Motion on Safeguarding as a follow-up to the reports of the Commissaries appointed by the former Archbishop of Canterbury to conduct a visitation into safeguarding in the Diocese of Chichester. This will take the form of motion endorsing an apology by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York for past errors within the Church of England and agreeing plans to take further legislative and non-legislative steps to improve the Church's policies and practices on safeguarding. These include planned changes to the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) which will be consulted on over the summer and brought to the Synod in draft legislation in February 2014. In addition there are plans to carry out an audit of diocesan safeguarding resources and practices, and to do more work at national level on developing and implementing safeguarding policies and supporting dioceses with training and roll-out of these policies.

On Sunday evening there will be a debate on Welfare Reform and the Church. This will be an opportunity for Synod members to discuss how the Church is and should be responding to the changes to the welfare system being introduced by the Department of Work and Pensions and in particular how the impact on low income households is being felt at parish level.

Saturday evening will see a debate on Challenges for the Quinquennium. It is exactly half-way through the Synod's current five-year term (Quinquennium) and this will be an opportunity for the Synod to take stock of how the goals set at the beginning of this period are being met and any further areas of work required. The main themes are:

- Contributing as the national Church to the common good
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Facilitating the growth of the Church

- Re-imagining the Church's ministry

The debate will be an opportunity for Synod members to add their own views on how the Church is responding to these overall themes and to prepare the way for more focused debates on each of them in future.

Legislative business will be taken on Saturday afternoon, Monday morning and afternoon and Tuesday morning. A key item, for the Monday afternoon, will be the proposed Yorkshire Diocesan Reorganisation Scheme which aims to bring together the existing Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield and create a new Diocese of Leeds (also to be known as the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales). The Archbishop of York has authorised the Diocese Commission to lay the draft Scheme before the General Synod, even though the Diocese of Wakefield has not given its consent to the scheme.

Other items of legislative business arise from the work of the Elections Review Group, a sub-group of the Business Committee, relating to how members of the General Synod are elected. The Synod will also be debating a second report from the Elections Review Group on possible changes to the electorate of the House of Laity and the options for using online voting in future.

Contingency business takes the form of a Diocesan Synod Motion (DSM) from the Diocese of London on the Review of the Workings of the General Synod. This calls for the Business Committee to look at a number of areas including the frequency and length of groups of sessions, the ways in which debate takes place and decisions are made and whether the current synodical framework and structures are still fit for purpose. This DSM will be taken if there are any gaps in the Synod agenda.

Notes

The General Synod will meet at York University from 4.15 on Friday 5 July until lunchtime on Tuesday 9 July.

Read [the full Agenda](#).

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