



THE DIOCESE OF  
**SHEFFIELD**

# Diocesan Synod Members' Guide

**2024-2027**



**RENEWED**



**RELEASED**



**REJUVENATED**

*The Diocese of Sheffield is called to grow a sustainable network of Christ-like, lively and diverse Christian communities in every place, which are effective in making disciples and in seeking to transform our society and God's world.*

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## Preface from the Bishop

'Synod' may sound like a dull, bureaucratic word. But its origins are illuminating and inspiring. It comes from two Greek words: '*syn*' meaning 'together' and '*hodos*' meaning 'the way'. Those who belong to a Synod are 'On the Way together' – and that's an exciting vision. When we meet, it is to consider together, under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, how we can move forward together as we seek to serve and follow our Lord Jesus to the glory of God the Father. I admit that sometimes, when we are buried in the minutiae of accounts or grasping some thorny and uncomfortable truths, it can be hard to keep that perspective. But at other times, as we make bold strategic decisions, shaping the lives of the Christian communities across our Diocese, often in collaboration with other churches, and impacting on the wider world — decisions involving our evangelistic outreach, our mission partnerships our schools, our training courses, our buildings and budgets, the deployment of our human and financial resources — we will be often very aware of being 'On the Way together'. We'll be aware of the great privilege of taking counsel with one another about how best to prosper the Gospel of God's coming Kingdom — the privilege of being 'generous with Jesus', of responding to grace with gratitude.

So in that Spirit, may I thank you for taking on this responsibility under God, and may I say 'Welcome to Synod'!

+Pete

## Introduction

This booklet has been produced as a quick reference guide to the work and processes of Diocesan Synod. It is hoped that it will help clarify how the Synod operates, the responsibilities of members and how issues and debates will be conducted.

The document will be updated and amended as necessary. Synod members are therefore asked to submit any comments or suggestions to Elizabeth Lunt in the Diocesan Office.

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## Synods in the Church of England

A Synod is a formal meeting by which the Church is governed. There are three tiers:

### **The General Synod**

The General Synod consists of bishops, clergy and laity who meet two or three times a year to make decisions on the doctrine and practice of the Church of England and to make ecclesiastical law. As well as matters of worship and discipline, it also addresses wider concerns, national and international. Elected members serve for five years.

### **Diocesan Synods**

The Diocesan Synod considers matters sent to it from General Synod and from deaneries, formulates diocesan policy, advises the Bishop as appropriate, and votes on the funding of stipends and administration. Elected members serve for three years.

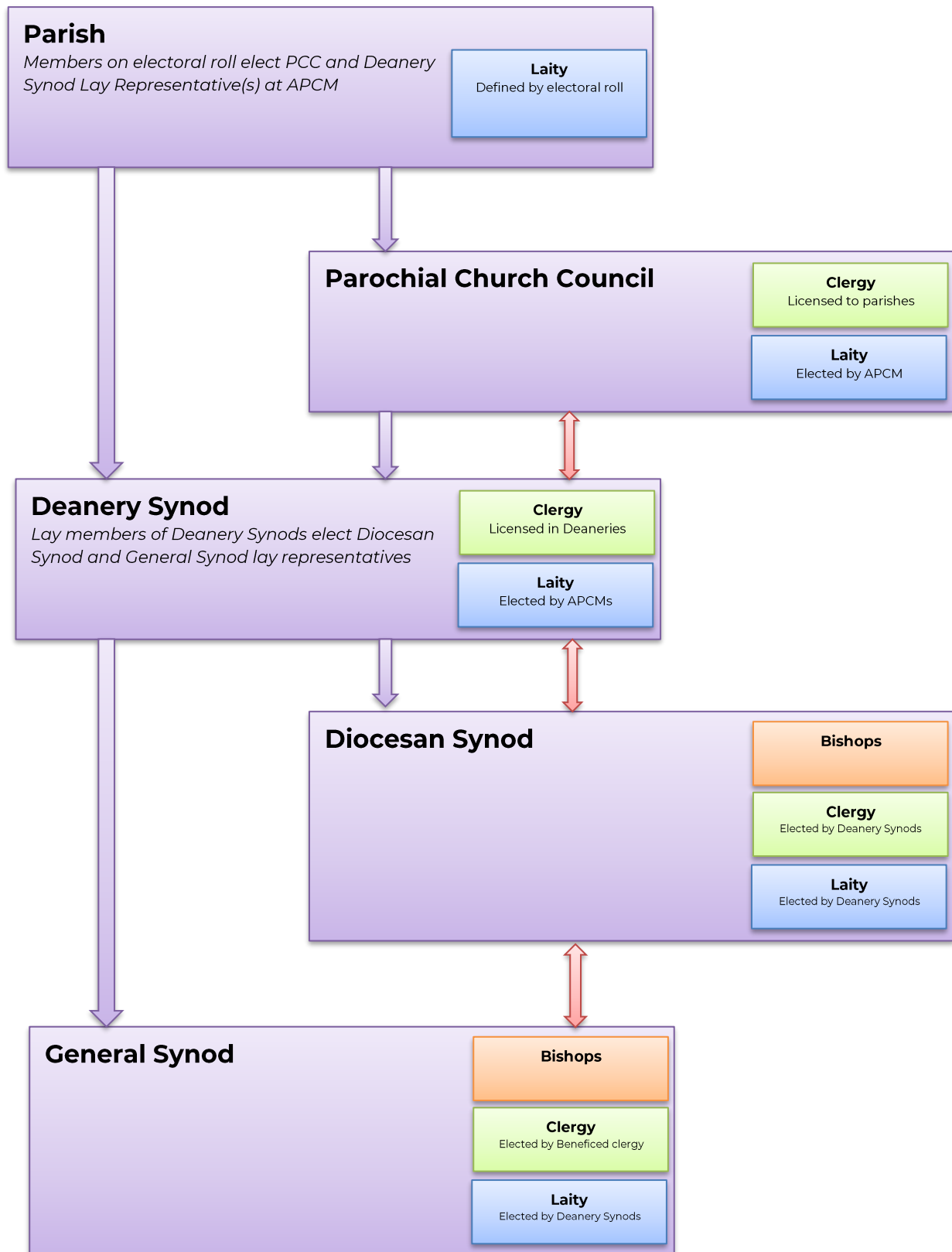
### **Deanery Synods**

Each Deanery has its own Synod which reflects on issues of concern to the local church and community. Matters can be sent to them from PCCs or Diocesan or General Synods. Resolutions passed by a Deanery Synod can be sent for discussion at higher levels. Elected members serve for three years and are the voters in elections for Diocesan and General Synods.

### **Other facts about Synods**

- i) Members on Synods automatically have a seat on the tier below them. A simplified diagram showing how Synods relate to each other is shown on the next page.
- ii) All Synod meetings are open and public (unless meeting in closed session for a specific item), but only members are entitled to speak or vote.

## Synods and how they relate to each other



## Role and Purpose of Diocesan Synod

Diocesan Synod is the primary governing body of the Diocese. It has a membership of up to 150 representatives, split into three houses: Bishops, Clergy and Laity.

The functions of the Diocesan Synod are set out in the Synodical Government Measure:

- i) To consider matters concerning the Church of England and to make provision for such matters in relation to their diocese, and to consider and express their opinion on any other matters of religious or public interest;
- ii) To advise the bishop on any matters on which he may consult the Synod;
- iii) To consider and express their opinion on any matters referred to them by the General Synod and, in particular, to approve or disapprove provisions referred to them by General Synod;
- iv) To consider proposals for the annual budget and to approve or disapprove them;
- v) To consider the Annual Report and Accounts of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

It is important to note that these roles are strategic; more detailed decisions fall under the responsibility of the Bishop's Council and other diocesan committees.

Members of the Diocesan Synod are also members of the Sheffield Diocesan Board of Finance, the legal charity and company that manages the affairs of the Diocese.

## Who's Who

- i) President: the Bishop of Sheffield, the Rt Revd Dr Pete Wilcox
- ii) Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Canon Ian Walker
- iii) Vice Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Mr Neill Birchenall
- iv) Chair of the House of Laity, Dr Jackie Butcher  
*Elected by and from the House of Laity*
- v) Chair of the House of Clergy, The Reverend Canon Matthew Rhodes  
*Elected by and from the House of Clergy*
- vi) Secretary: the Diocesan Secretary and Chief Executive, Mrs Katie Bell

## How to prepare for meetings

### Read the papers in advance

Items are presented at Synod meetings on the assumption that members will have read the background material beforehand.

### Consult colleagues

Elected members provide views and raise concerns from their deaneries and parishes. Ask colleagues on Deanery Synod if they have any issues they would like you to raise in meetings – this should be done well in advance so you have time to submit questions which allow for answers to be prepared.

### Pray

Although Synod is a formal business meeting, its ultimate task is assisting in the sharing of the Gospel and furthering the Kingdom of God. All meetings should therefore be founded on prayer.

## A guide for members

- Be punctual, graciously attending three meetings each year
- Send apologies promptly when you are unable to attend
- Suggest great agenda items to the Agenda Drafting Committee in good time
- Put forward questions, tabled in good time
- Help the Diocese move forward together
- Make a difference
- Be strategic and focused
- Actively participate in discussions - the more people participate, the greater the legitimacy of the Synod and the more life it cascades out into the life of the Diocese
- Offer solutions not just problems, options and choices in the way ahead
- Always consider issues prayerfully, behave impeccably
- Listen to others attentively
- Speak kindly, clearly and succinctly
- Vote and make decisions for the good of the Diocese as a whole
- Offer feedback so we can learn and improve
- Bring sensitivity and tact
- Have a sense of humour
- Remember to sign in and return your badge as you leave

## After Synod meetings

Members are warmly encouraged to actively and positively report back to their PCCs and Deanery Synods, strengthening communication within the Diocese.

## Synodical Boards and Committees

The Diocesan Synod is supported in its work by a number of other committees and boards. Members of Diocesan Synod often act as the electorate for these committees:

### **Bishop's Council**

The Standing Committee of the Diocesan Synod, it plans the business of the Synod, advises it, and transacts its business when not in session. As Bishop's Council, it advises the Bishop, appoints members to various committees, and formulates, discusses and co-ordinates policies relating to the life and work of the Diocese.

### **Board of Education**

Oversees church schools within the Diocese.

### **Board of Faith & Justice**

Exists to encourage and facilitate parishes, chaplaincies and mission initiatives in the implementation of the diocesan 'Salt & Light' strategy, that part of our vision that calls our network of Christ-like, lively and diverse Christian communities to participate in seeking to transform our society and God's world.

### **Diocesan Advisory Committee**

Works with and advises churches on how to make the best use of their buildings so that they are a positive and valued part of their mission and outreach.

### **Finance and Property Committee**

Manages assets including investments, property and glebe, and steers the Christian stewardship work in the Diocese.

### **Grants Committee**

Receives applications from parishes for grant support towards building work, mission and growth initiatives, and longer term projects.

### **Mission and Pastoral Committee**

Reviews arrangements for pastoral supervision and care in the diocese, considering proposals which may include reorganisation, and carrying out responsibilities in relation to the future of churches no longer required for public worship.

### **Vacancy in See Committee**

In existence at all times, but only meets when there is a vacancy in the See, i.e. when the post of Bishop of Sheffield has become vacant.

Further information and membership of the Boards and Committees can be found on the [diocesan website](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions

**i) *How are Synod Agendas drawn up?***

The Agenda is the responsibility of the Bishop's Council to approve and agree, although the drafting and preparation is delegated to the Synod Agenda Committee. All potential new items of business should be submitted to the Diocesan Secretary, for consideration by the Agenda Committee, at least six weeks before the Synod meeting.

Regular Agenda items include the presidential address, a report on the preceding General Synod Group of Sessions, Bishop's Council report and an update on safeguarding in the Diocese. Importance is also given to items from General Synod or a Deanery Synod.

**ii) *Who chairs the meetings?***

The meetings are chaired alternately by the Chair of the House of Clergy and the Chair of the House of Laity.

**iii) *How can I bring a proposition or motion to Synod?***

Ways that members of Synod can have an item of business included on the Agenda include:

- a) Raise the issue at your Deanery Synod; if colleagues agree, then a Deanery Motion can be submitted for discussion at a meeting of the full Diocesan Synod. Ultimately, the Diocesan Synod has the ability to pass such a motion to General Synod for discussion at a national level. Please contact the Diocesan Secretary as soon as possible for advice on preparing and wording the motion to ensure it does not contradict Standing Orders, overrule existing legislation, or other technical issues. Deanery Synods should authorise their Standing Committee to agree the final wording of any motion to ensure minor amendments can be properly approved before the matter is taken to Diocesan Synod.
- b) Suggest a motion to the Diocesan Secretary and Bishop's Council will consider whether to bring the motion in its name.
- c) Submit a question in advance (see FAQ 4). Although questions are not formal propositions, they can bring important matters to the attention of Synod.

**iv) *What is the normal format for a debate to follow?***

There are normally five steps:

- a) The motion is put by a member of Synod;
- b) The Synod will discuss and debate the motion;
- c) Any amendments to the motion (duly notified in advance) are proposed and voted on;



- d) The final motion, with any successful amendments, is formally proposed;
- e) The Synod votes.

v) **How can I submit a question in advance?**

Any member can request to speak on any item of business, but they can only speak once per item. Members are requested to let the Secretary know in advance if they wish to speak in a particular debate, but this is not a formal requirement.

Any member may ask a question of any officer or office holder of Synod, provided that it is relevant to their duties and does not request an opinion. A written answer will be provided at the Synod meeting. The deadline for asking questions is included in the Preliminary Notice Paper. Once a question has been submitted and the answer given, the questioner is entitled to ask a supplementary question on the same subject.

vi) **How are Synod members elected?**

Members of the House of Clergy and House of Laity are elected for a term of three years by the Deanery Synods. Numbers are determined by total clergy numbers and electoral rolls numbers in each Deanery.

vii) **What is the procedure for filling a casual vacancy on Diocesan Synod?**

As soon as a vacancy occurs on Diocesan Synod, the diocesan office should be informed. Casual vacancies can be filled by holding an election at a meeting of the relevant House of the Deanery Synod. The conduct of the election will be for the Area Dean and Lay Chair to decide.

viii) **What is the procedure for voting at Synod meetings?**

Depending on the issue, voting will usually be by a show of hands. However, if voting is required by Houses, voting cards will be distributed before the meeting.

ix) **What is the quorum for a meeting?**

At least one third of each of the Houses of Clergy, Laity and Bishops must be present. However, the quorum is only really relevant when there is a need to take a vote.

## Useful documents

- i) Diocese of Sheffield Standing Orders and Rules of Diocesan Synod
- ii) Church Representation Rules (available [online](#))
- iii) Charity Commission Guidance: [The Essential Trustee](#)
- iv) The Diocese of Sheffield Conflict of Interest Policy (contact the Diocesan Secretary)

If in doubt, you need assistance or would like to offer any feedback, please don't hesitate to contact the Diocesan Secretary and Chief Executive, Katie Bell.