

Report on February 2026 General Synod Group of Sessions in London

The following report gives an overview of the main topics discussed at Synod. The House of Laity and House of Clergy meetings took place prior to the main business to discuss whether Acting Diocesan Bishops during vacancies should be allowed to be a full member of the House of Bishops and thereby a voting member of General Synod. There would need to be an amendment to the Canon, and the House of Bishops are hoping that this will pass through General Synod, probably in July 2026.

Presidential Address. The new archbishop delivered her first Presidential Address saying, “**Sarah Mullally**, Canterbury, 001”. Applause broke out and many rose to give her a standing ovation. Her address focused on calm, consistency and compassion, acknowledging faithful, local, intelligent ministry. Please read her address in full [Synod: Archbishop of Canterbury's Presidential Address | Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

Clergy Conduct Measure. The Clergy Conduct Measure returned to Synod for further revision following objections raised by Parliament’s Ecclesiastical Committee as the court proceedings were to take place in private. Synod agreed changes so that hearings under the measure would be heard in public rather than private except when vulnerable persons are involved.

Amending Canon 44. This was approved and takes away the need for Armed Forces Chaplains having to have separate Diocesan Bishops permission to officiate as they move around.

Living in Love and Faith. There was an initial presentation on Tuesday where the timeline of the work undertaken in the last ten years was given. In December the House of Bishops had confirmed that, based on legal advice, new stand-alone or ‘bespoke’ services using prayers of Love and faith would need full formal authorisation by Canon law. They also acknowledged that general permission for clergy to be in a same-sex civil marriage would require a full legislative process. The bishop’s letter detailed how a new working group would carry out the theological and legislative work needed and report back to the new General Synod with recommendations within the first two years after election. On Thursday there was a five-hour emotionally charged debate on this with many detailing their concerns with the proposal. While the tone was far better than many previous LLF debates, it was clear that no one was particularly happy with the situation. Synod debated eight amendments, which were all lost and the unamended motion was finally approved on a vote by houses.¹

¹ Bishops: 34 For, 0 against, 2 abstentions; Clergy: 109 For, 62 against, 10 abstentions; 109 For, 70 against, 9 abstentions

Archbishops' Commission on Reimagining Care. Archbishop Sarah led a debate on the report, observing that the care system was not working largely because of a lack of mutual care and support within communities. She shared a vision to change the way forward and reference was made to Places of Welcome, Renewing Wellbeing, Anna Chaplaincy, Dementia Friendly work and interdependence needed to move forwards, The report will be sent to Parliament.

Lowest Incomes Communities Funding. A motion from Chester Diocese proposing changes to the Lowest Income Community (LInC) called for a rethink about the way this is allocated as 12 dioceses receive no funding despite pockets of deprivation. The Chair of the Finance Board moved an amendment such that LInC will form part of a wider review of the Church's funding of ministry. The amendment was moved and carried resoundingly.

Mental Health and the Church. This was moved by the chair of the house of laity and focused on the need to recognise mental health difficulties. There were some highly moving personal discussions shared during the debate with many highlighting the need for further resources, training and counselling for clergy. There were amendments to the original motion agreed to allow resources for schools to be developed and help for families.

Safeguarding Structures; next steps. A clear way forward on improving safeguarding structures was debated and overwhelmingly approved. Whilst parish and diocesan structures will remain largely unchanged, national level functions will be transferred to an independent authority. The new independent Safeguarding Authority should be established as a new charity and staff transferred by a new Measure in July 2027 at the latest with detailed costings for diocesan and cathedral staff. The need for this was explained and this was passed. A standardised mandatory complaints process will be introduced with a national external ombudsman-style body for resolution of complaints when processes within Church bodies have been exhausted.

Festival of God the Creator and the Commemoration of the 21 Martyrs. This liturgical business was brought back to Synod after the full text of the draft liturgy was reviewed and revised by the revision committee. Marking the date as the First Sunday in September was one of the revisions that were made. Synod approved the draft liturgy which will now be reviewed by the House of Bishops.

Sustainable church flowers. This arose from the resolution of a small Worcestershire village's PCC. The motion, encouraged the elimination of non-biodegradable floral foam and, wherever possible, the local sourcing of seasonal flowers and foliage, was approved with very few opponents.

Poverty in the Church. Powerful support was given to the resumed (from July 2025) debate on 40 Years after the Faith in the City report. Since then, poverty has deepened, with data from the Joseph Rowntree foundation showing that 14 million people were now living in poverty in the UK. The motion Synod approved included recognition of the work undertaken by Christian communities and a recommitment to the ending of poverty in all its forms.

Parochial Fees. The draft Parochial Fees Order, covering 2027-31, proposed increases of one-off uplift of £1000 to the PCC fees relating to the burial of a body or cremated remains in a Churchyard in addition to the inflationary increases. Many speakers spoke about the level of poverty and that the proposed rise in costs would turn people away from considering the church. The £1000 increased fees were strongly rejected by Synod.

Working Class Vocation and Ministry Next Steps. Bishop Lynne Cullens opening presentation who at the end shared her own personal story powerfully set the mood for the whole debate. I would encourage you to listen to this presentation (15 mins) – [here](#).

This debate asked Synod to welcome the consultation work that heard from working-class ministers, both lay and ordained across the Church of England acknowledging their voice and that Church can and must do better to receive their ministry, both now and in the future. It called on the House of Bishops to address the structural and cultural barriers to the flourishing of working-class ministers and their ministry at all levels acknowledging the intersections with other underrepresented groups. It further asked Synod to encourage the national church, dioceses and training institutions to fully adopt the use of recognised socio-economic background data questions as an aid to monitoring progress on class representation. This was powerful debate with many sharing their own personal experience, following this the working-class strategy motion was unanimously voted for by General Synod. There were also testimonial films from working-class ministers that were created for this work. These films are now available. [Please follow this link.](#)

If you would like to know more about any of the debates, all the papers from Synod are available here.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/governance/general-synod/groups-sessions/general-synod-february-2026>

Videos of the sessions can also be viewed here. [General Synod February 2026 - YouTube](#)

Please do contact treena.larkin@lichfield.anglican.org if there is anything else you would like to know about General Synod and please do pray for your General Synod reps. Our next meeting is in July 2026.