

Synodical Government

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.

Synodical Government in the Church of England came into being in 1970. Before that there were two national ecclesiastical bodies:

The Convocations of Canterbury and York – being entirely clerical bodies dealing primarily with matters affecting doctrine and worship. These Convocations are among the oldest legislative bodies in England, predating Parliament itself. Each Convocation consists of an Upper House of Bishops and a Lower House of Clergy and they still meet occasionally.

The Church Assembly – this came into existence as a result of the Enabling Act 1919. Before this act the law affecting the CofE could only be altered by Act of Parliament. The Assembly comprised the two Convocations plus a House of Laity elected by the laity of the Dioceses. It dealt with administrative and financial matters but also possessed legislative power, delegated to it by Parliament, to promote Church Measures. The Church Assembly was replaced by the **General Synod** in 1970.

General Synod

The Church of England is sometimes described as "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 Synod

Every Diocese has its own Diocesan Synod which meets 3 or 4 times a year and consists of the bishops and members of the laity and clergy elected by Deanery Synods. Membership is equally split 50% Laity and 50% Clergy. The Diocesan Synod considers matters referred 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.

Its remit is defined by the Synodical Government Measure 1969 and it has the following main functions:

- To consider matters concerning the Church of England and to make provision for such matters in the diocese (but not to decide doctrine)
- To advise the Bishop on matters on which he consults the Synod.
- To consider matters referred by the General Synod.
- To consider proposals for the annual budget of the diocese and to approve or disapprove them.
- To consider the annual accounts of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

Each Deanery is represented by Clergy and Laity the number of which is based on the number of clergy serving in the Deanery and the number of Laity on Parish electoral Rolls.

Deanery Synod

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 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 referred to them from the diocese and the General Synod and resolutions passed can be sent up for discussion at the higher levels. In some dioceses, the 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.

The role of the Deanery Synod is to:

- Consider matters concerning the Church of England and to make provision for such matters in relation to the Deanery and to consider and express opinions on any other matters of religious or public interest but not to declare the doctrine of the Church on any question.
- Bring together the views of the parishes of the Deanery on common problems and to discuss and formulate common policies on these problems, to foster a sense of community and interdependence among those parishes and generally to promote in the Deanery the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.
- Make known and so far as appropriate put into effect any provision made by the Diocesan Synod.
- Consider the business of the Diocesan Synod, particularly any matters referred to that Synod by the General Synod, and to sound out parochial opinion whenever it is required or consider it appropriate to do so.
- Raise such matters as the Deanery Synod considers appropriate with the Diocesan Synod.
- To consider pastoral plans for the Deanery including the number and deployment of stipendiary clergy

If the Diocesan Synod delegates to Deanery Synods functions in relation to the parishes of its Deaneries, in particular the determination of parochial shares in quotas allocated to the Deaneries, the Deanery Synod must exercise those functions.

Other facts about Synods

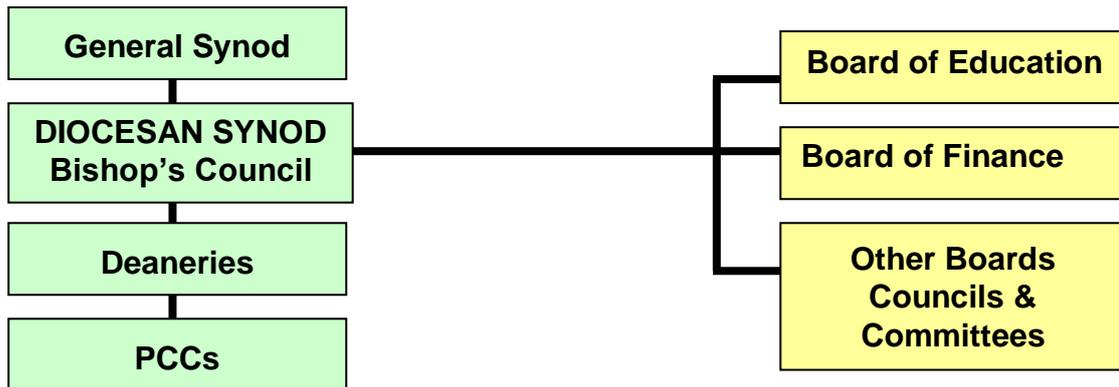
Members of synods automatically have a seat on the tiers below them.

Members of:	Have a seat on:			
	General Synod	Diocesan Synod	Deanery Synod	PCC
General Synod	YES	YES	YES	YES
Diocesan Synod	NO	YES	YES	YES
Deanery Synod	NO	NO	YES	YES
PCC	NO	NO	NO	YES

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.

HOW IT WORKS

The four levels of Synodical governance are interdependent and the various Boards Councils and Committees of the Diocese answerable to the Diocesan Synod.



The Bishop's Council meets several times a year and receives policy recommendations from DBF, DBE etc.; recommends policies to the Diocesan Synod and deals with matters referred to it by the General Synod. The Diocesan Board of Education has statutory and diocesan responsibility for the Church of England schools within the Diocese. The DBF manages the financial affairs of the Diocese; makes recommendations to Synod via Bishop's Council and implements policies agreed by Synod. But in some dioceses (including Gloucester) the Bishop's Council *is* the Diocesan Board of Finance.

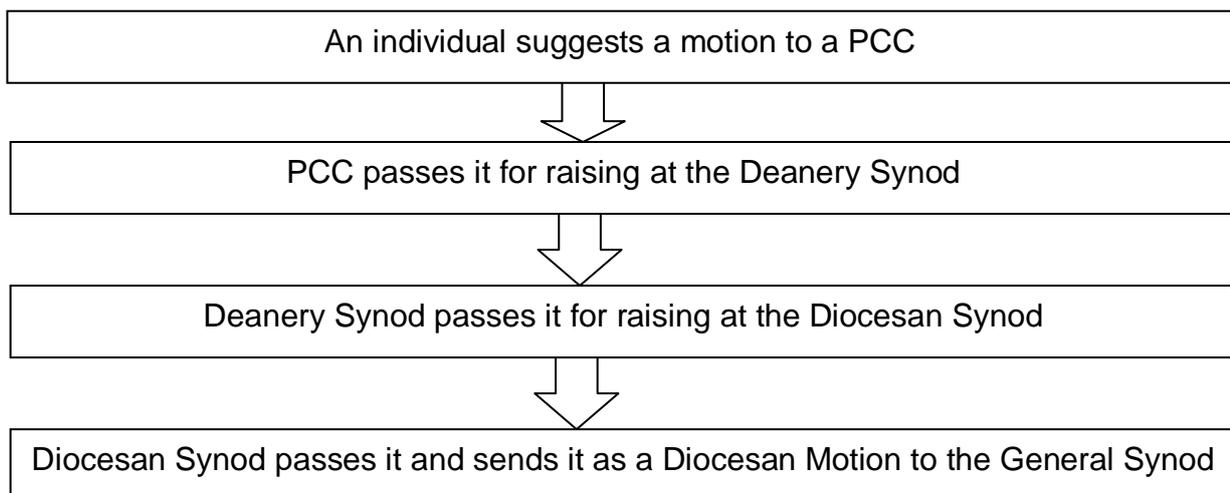
HOW TO HAVE A SAY AT SYNOD

Your views can be heard at every level of Synodical Government by the following means:-

By Proposing a Motion:

The Synodical system allows anyone to have their say on any matter providing they have the support of the synodical level which first considers the matter raised. So ...

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.

By Talking to Your Representatives:

Every parish is represented on its Deanery Synod and every Deanery is represented on the Diocesan Synod. You are therefore entirely at liberty to approach one of these representatives and ask them to raise before Synod the issue that concerns you.

Your PCC Secretary will be able to tell you who are your parish representatives on the Deanery Synod and the Diocesan Secretary will be able to tell you who are the Deanery representatives on the Diocesan Synod. Gloucester Diocese has 7 elected representatives on the General Synod (4 Clergy and 3 Laity) in addition to the Bishop of Gloucester and they may raise your issue either as:

a. **Private Members' Motion:** 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 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.

By 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.

YOUR ROLE ON SYNOD

If you are an elected member of a Synod you will be expected to:-

- a. Keep yourself informed of local, Diocesan and National church and social issues about which your Synod may be asked or may wish to express an opinion.
- b. Talk to those whom you represent so that you can accurately represent their thoughts and opinions in Synod debates.
- c. Be prepared to speak on issues before Synod.
- d. Attend meetings and report regularly the business of each meeting to your electorate at all levels

ADVICE

Becoming a Deanery or Diocesan Synod Member can be daunting especially if you have been a member of your local church for many years but have never really understood what the Synods do or what is expected of you and perhaps now do not wish to ask other church members about your new role.

