

## What is General Synod? Why stand?

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General Synod is like the church's Parliament but more so. As well as being the only body in England apart from Parliament which can make law (Church law) it is also the main forum for debates and discussions about all the matters which affect the Church of England. Set up in 1970 it's made up of 476 members, divided into the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. All Diocesan Bishops are automatically members, with 8 Suffragans who are elected. Clergy and Laity are elected by Diocese in accordance with the number of clergy in the diocese and laity in accordance with the number of worshippers in that Diocese.

Synod sits for a five year term, (a "quinquennium") and the next term starts in November 2015.

As well as defining church law on questions of liturgy and church order (for example, the new "common tenure" for clergy), it also debates matters affecting church life. There have been recent debates on, for example, the Bible, faith and religion, pensions for civil partners, and Forces chaplaincy.

Crucially, it also has responsibility for the final form of legislation regarding women bishops, and for the financial health of the church.

The system of election – the Single Transferable Vote – means that the Synod is quite closely representative of the church as a whole, with a spread of members from traditionalist to innovative, from liberal to conservative. So debates are often lively, albeit respectful!

### *Why stand for it?*

We need to ensure General Synod continues to be fully reflective of the Church. Good, committed people from across the spectrum will help make sure that Synod's work both reflects and encourages Christian life in England. The Church of England has a particular place in the life of the country and we need to be sure we fulfil our role properly – which means, people like you being involved!

There are some very important decisions coming up – regarding women bishops and the finances of the church. There are ongoing questions about human sexuality, and the full inclusion of people from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. Questions of love, justice and the church remain urgent. You could be part of those discussions and help make sure that they reflect and try to live out the Gospel imperatives.

You could also, if elected and with enough support, bring a Private Members' Motion on anything important to you in church life.

### *What's the commitment?*

Synod meets at least twice a year, three times if necessary. In February there is usually a Monday –Friday meeting in London; in July a Friday – Tuesday meeting in York, and if required, in November there is a 2 day meeting in London. Between these, you may be asked to serve on a committee or working party. Dioceses will meet your expenses for residence and travel.