

General Synod: 9-13 February 2026, London

Following convention, the new archbishop rose to deliver her first Presidential Address¹ “**Sarah Mullally, Canterbury, 001**”. Thunderous applause broke out and all but a very few rose to give her a standing ovation. This was a markedly different Presidential Address from those of her predecessor. There was humility, realism and commitment to “calm, consistent, compassionate” leadership, “not through developing new programmes and initiatives, but by being a shepherd, who works collaboratively and in partnership, enabling others to flourish”. An impressive start and it set the tone for a far calmer and constructive Synod than has often been the case.

That speech came on the Tuesday morning. Proceedings had started the preceding afternoon, with separate meetings of the House of Laity and the Convocations (ie clergy) before Synod assembled to handle some procedural matters, receive the Business Committee report and have the first of two **Questions** sessions (the second coming on the Tuesday afternoon). 258 questions had received written answers, with opportunity in the time available for oral supplementary questions on 159 of them. A third of the questions were concerned with aspects of Living in Love and Faith (LLF).

After the Presidential Address, an Amending Canon was promulgated, correcting an anomaly in the law concerning **Armed Forces chaplains**. The **Clergy Conduct Measure** returned to Synod for further revision following objections raised by Parliament’s Ecclesiastical Committee. Synod agreed changes so that hearings under the measure would normally be heard in public rather than private. With that, the revised measure was given final approval.

In December the House of Bishops (HoB) had confirmed that, following legal advice and in view of the deep divides within the Church, it would not be moving forward to legislate for **stand-alone services of blessing for same sex couples**, nor for the **ordination of candidates in a same sex marriage**. The LLF journey and the current position were covered in a presentation, followed by questions, in readiness for a formal debate later in the week. Archbishop Sarah led a debate on the report of the **Archbishops’ Commission on Reimagining Care**, observing that the care system was not working largely because of a lack of mutual care and support within communities. The role of the Church in helping fill the gap was applauded. A motion from Chester Diocese proposing changes to the Lowest Income Community (**LInC**) funding formula was amended such that LInC will form part of a wider review of the Church’s funding of ministry. In the debate there were consistent calls for such funding to be increased.

Wednesday’s Eucharist, which was followed by a debate on “**Mental Health and the Church**”, with some highly moving personal accounts. It was noted that mental health challenges were disproportionately higher amongst Global Majority Heritage (GMH) people.

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. 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.

Synod approved draft texts for the proposed **Festival of God the Creator** and the **Commemoration of the Twenty-One Martyrs of Libya**, which will now be reviewed by the HoB. It also approved amendments to the **Code of Practice for Bishops’ Mission Orders**, and the allocation of seats for the **General Synod elections** to be held later this year. Our diocese will have three clergy seats (down from the current four) and retain four lay seats.

Thursday opened with Synod agreeing a revision to the dates of its meeting in February 2027 and changes to various of its Standing Orders, before moving to consider a Diocesan Synod Motion regarding **sustainable church flowers** that arose from the resolution of a small Worcestershire village’s PCC. Synod’s good engagement with the debate belied the criticism from some that it was a poor use of Synod’s time. The motion, encouraging the elimination of non-biodegradable floral foam and, wherever possible, the local sourcing of seasonal flowers and foliage, was approved with very few opponents.

¹ [Synod: Archbishop of Canterbury's Presidential Address | Archbishop of Canterbury](#)

Powerful support was given to the resumed (from July 2025) debate on **poverty**. 40 Years after the Faith in the City report, 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.

Synod then proceeded to a five-hour debate on a motion brought forward by the Archbishop of York on **LLF**. While the tenor was far better than many previous LLF debates, it was clear that no one was particularly happy with the situation, and that the HoB's December statement had deeply upset those seeking greater inclusiveness. The motion included expression of lament, set a conclusion date of July this year for the LLF programme, offered thanks to the LLF Working Groups and commended the setting up of both a working group and a pastoral consultative group on "relationships, sexuality and gender". The archbishop acknowledged the pain caused by not being where we had "hoped or wanted to be". It had "probably been a mistake to have viewed LLF as a process" and that a new start was now necessary, drawing on the lessons of LLF. Synod debated eight amendments, though all were defeated. The unamended motion was finally approved on a vote by houses.²

So we came to the final day. The draft **Parochial Fees** Order, covering 2027-31, proposed CPI-based increases for all fees other than those for the interment of bodies and cremated remains in churchyards. Based on inadequate research of cemetery fees, a £1000 uplift was proposed for churchyard interments. This was roundly rejected by Synod and revised to a CPI-based increase. There followed a good debate on encouraging **working class vocations**. The final item before Synod was prorogued was the approval of regulations to introduce a national register (akin to the existing clergy national register) for **deaconesses, readers, licensed lay workers and BMO lay leaders**.

² Bishops: 34 for, 0 against, 2 abstentions; Clergy: 109 for, 62 against, 10 abstentions; Laity: 109 for, 70 against, 9 abstentions