



How does the PCC relate to Synods?

What is a synod?

The Church of England is episcopally led and synodically governed.

A synod is a formal meeting of Christians by which the Church is governed. Synods have taken place from the Council of Jerusalem (described in Acts 15) onwards and such General Councils have regulated doctrine and discipline. Synods meet in the various provinces of the Anglican Church throughout the world, to govern its affairs.

In England, there are three levels of Synod: General Synod, Diocesan Synod and Deanery Synod. Every PCC is represented on the Synod of its Deanery.

The PCC

The Parochial Church Council is the local building block on which the Church of England is based. There is a PCC for every square inch of the country. It is the elected governing body of the parish, is usually chaired by the Incumbent, and is responsible for promoting the mission of the Church in the parish. The PCC is also responsible for the financial affairs of the church and the care and maintenance of the church fabric and its contents.

All PCCs are Charities. Those with incomes under £100,000 are exempted from registration with the Charity Commission. Since 2008 under the Charity Commission's Excepted Church Charity Programme, a PCC with an income of over £100,000 is required to register as a charity. All PCC members, whether of exempted or of excepted Charities, are Charity Trustees.

In addition to working locally, PCCs can present motions concerning issues of wider interest to their Deanery Synods and to the Diocesan Synod. Further information on how to do this is given in the Standing Orders for the Diocesan Synod and the Rules for Deanery Synods (copies can be obtained from the Committee Secretary of Diocesan Synod, at Diocesan Church House).

Deanery Synods

Each of the twenty-nine deaneries in the Diocese of Diocese has a Deanery Synod. Each Synod consists of clerical and lay members.

The House of clergy of the Deanery Synod includes:

- incumbents (that is vicars, rectors, priests in charge) and assistant clergy,
- clergy in sector appointments (mainly hospitals and prisons) plus some representation of retired clergy),
- clerical members of the General Synod or the Diocesan synod resident in the Deanery
- representative(s) of the retired priests holding permission to officiate who are resident in, or habitually worship in, the deanery.

The detail governing House of Clergy membership is presented in [Church Representation Rules](#), rule 24(2). They form the House of Clergy which is chaired by the Area Dean who is appointed by the Bishop after widespread consultation.

The other part of the Synod is the House of Laity which has a Chair elected by the House for each three year term. The vast majority of members are elected from the parishes in the deanery - numbers are dependent on the size of the deanery. Others include General Synod and Diocesan Synod members whose names are on the electoral roll of a parish in the deanery, co-opted members and stipendiary lay workers (like Church Army Officers).

The detail governing House of Laity membership is presented in [Church Representation Rules](#), rule 24(6). The House of Laity elects a Lay Chairman triennially.

The Area Dean and Lay Chairman jointly chair the deanery synod, as set out in the *Diocesan Rules for Deanery Synods*.

The Deanery Synod meets to share issues of concern to the Deanery, debate items emerging from parishes or referred by the Diocesan or General Synods and to develop the Deanery Mission Plan in the spirit of the *Living Faith* strategy.

The Diocesan Electoral Registration Officer, Petronella Spivey responsible for the election by Deanery Synod members of, representatives to the Diocesan Synod.

Diocesan Synod

The [Diocesan Synod](#) normally meets three times each year. It consists of the Bishop of Oxford, the Bishop of Dorchester, the Bishop of Buckingham and the Bishop of Reading who form the House of Bishops. The two other Houses are the House of

Clergy and the House of Laity which is drawn principally from Deaneries along with the elected members of General Synod, certain ex officio members (for example Archdeacons, the Dean of Christ Church Cathedral and Chair of the Board of Finance), plus people with a specific contribution to make nominated by the Bishop. Members can also be co-opted.

The Synod debates key matters raised by the Boards, Councils and Committees of the Diocese; from Bishop John (who sometimes gives a presidential address), and from deaneries and members. Any member may ask a question on an issue of concern. The General Synod also refers matters to Diocesan Synods from time to time.

The Executive of the Synod is [Bishop's Council](#) which meets four or five times a year. It consists of ex officio members, Bishop's nominated members and elected members. This group is also the Board of Directors of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

After each Diocesan Synod meeting, a **Brief Report** is circulated to Diocesan Synod members and is made available on the Diocesan website. In addition, Deanery representatives may be invited to reports to the Deanery Synod after each Diocesan Synod meeting.

The Synod is chaired by the President who is the Bishop of Oxford or one of the two Vice Presidents namely the chair of the House of Clergy and the Chair of the House of Laity. The Secretary of the Synod is Rosemary Pearce [Rosemary Pearce](#) the Diocesan Secretary, and the Synod Secretary is Caroline Todd, who is also responsible for elections to the Boards, Councils and Committees of the Diocesan Synod.

General Synod

The [General Synod](#) is the national assembly of the [Church of England](#). It came into being in 1970 under the Synodical Government Measure 1969, replacing an earlier body known as the Church Assembly. The Synod normally meets twice a year – February in London and July in York and, when the business demands it, in November (also in London).

Its membership comprises three Houses:

- The House of Bishops comprising all the Diocesan Bishops, a small number of Suffragan/Area Bishops who are elected and a few others;
- The House of Clergy has its origins in medieval times. It consists principally of clergy elected from Dioceses in relation to the number of clergy plus others appointed by the Forces, Religious Orders, and Universities, etc. The Diocesan Registrar [Canon John Rees](#) is responsible for these elections.

- The House of Laity which comprises mainly representatives from Dioceses elected according to the total electoral roll. There are other members from the Forces, ex officio, etc.
- The General Synod considers issues and approves legislation affecting the whole of the Church of England. It has powers in these areas:
 - Legislation by Measure
To pass Measures which, if approved by resolution of each House of Parliament, receive Royal Assent and thereby become part of the law of England
 - Legislation by Canon
To legislate by Canon, subject to Royal Licence and Assent
 - Relations with other Churches
To regulate the Church of England's relations with other churches and to make provisions for matters relating to worship and doctrine. It can make provision by Act of Synod, regulation or other instrument in cases where legislation by or under a Measure or Canon is not necessary
 - Liturgy and Doctrinal Assent
To approve, amend, continue or discontinue liturgies and make provision for any matter (except the publication of banns of marriage) to which rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer relate and to ensure that the forms of service contained in the Book of Common Prayer continue to be available for use in the Church of England. The Synod also decides the form in which ministers and officers of the Church of England are required to assent to the doctrine of the Church of England (the Declaration of Assent).
 - Deliberation
To consider any other matters of religious or public interest
 - Finance
To approve (or reject) the central church budget each year.

Each General Synod representative on the Diocesan Synod is linked to a Deanery, and is available to report on the General Synod meetings by invitation.

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