



Open Synod Group Newsletter

November 2021



Church House, Dean's Yard, Westminster

Welcome to the first Newsletter of this Quinquennium

At this opening session of General Synod the first day was Induction Day for new members, previous members attending if they wished. The second day began with the Inauguration at Westminster Abbey and Prince Edward gave the Queen's address. Business then commenced and continued for Wednesday.

A record of the papers and business is here: [General Synod November 2021 | The Church of England](#)
Videos of the session are available here: [general synod 2021 - Bing video](#)

Open Synod Group hosted a meeting on Wednesday lunchtime to introduce new members to all fringe groups. Nearly 200 members attended and there are now 12 fringe groups. As we were not allowed to meet this session we wait with a warm welcome to all GS members for the February 2022 session.

A House of Laity meeting was held at the close on Wednesday to introduce members to the candidates for Chair and Vice Chair of the House of Laity. Dr Jamie Harrison was elected to the Chair unopposed and there are four candidates for postal election to the Vice Chair, Alison Coulter, Adrian Greenwood, Dr Rachel Jepson, Clive Scowen.

New and old members of General Synod have been asked for their reflections on the first meeting.

Rev Joy Mawdsley

"With something resembling surprise I found myself on General Synod, so the first session was a great chance to find my bearings. First impressions? Confusion, excitement, tiredness - and I got lost on more than one occasion! I saw familiar faces and, with 60% of Synod being newbies, many new and friendly (pew!) faces.

Of all the words I read and heard (and there were a lot of them!), what has stayed with me is the call for the church to be simpler, humbler and bolder. Perhaps words for Synod too, simple trust in Jesus, a humility and readiness to listen, and a boldness in our leadership and witness to the church and the world. Looking forward to February...."

Felicity Cooke

First impressions of a new General Synod – where to start? My overwhelming impression was of friendliness and the opportunity to connect with old friends and new. Navigating the way through the many special interest and church traditions groups was a challenge, much helped by networking in the rather breathless few weeks between the elections and Synod itself. It was good to connect in person with other inclusive groups. My contingent was tucked away in Poets' Corner for the Inaugural service, which felt very special. As to business – so much to read, take in and listen to. It may all feel more familiar in February, though old hands tell me it takes a quinquennium to get your head round it all.

Rev Matt Beer

What I learned at General Synod....

1, travelling takes ages and wifi is not always available on the train.

2, hotel just needs the bare minimum. You don't spend that much time there.

3, I can't possibly retain all the information in the pre reading. Some of it is really interesting, a big chunk is extremely detailed.

4, it's okay not to be at everything it's also super intense in the chamber. My bum is numb from the seats too.

5, question times are intense, feel sorry for the bishops.

6, it's great to be a part of something that sees real change in and out of the church. Looking forward to Feb sessions.

Dr Ros Clarke

Synod was kind, thoughtful and welcoming; it felt serious and important; there was a lot of pomp and circumstance; it was exhausting and overwhelming; it was exciting and inspiring. I feel daunted by the prospect of the next five years, but glad to have the support of people helping me feel at home there and those back in my home church praying for me at Synod. I'm looking forward to seeing how it all works out."

Rev Canon Simon Talbott

Coming back to Church House for the most recent group of sessions was a familiar exercise; it was good to be meeting again 'in person' and the provision of the coloured coded lanyards was very welcome. One thing that was immediately apparent during the introductory day was the large number of newly elected members (in Ely five out of seven). Several familiar faces around the membership are no longer here, but it is good to welcome new colleagues. I hope that new members come and join OSG, as it provides a welcome space where many different voices can be heard.

Nigel Bacon [new committee member]

What a joy it was to be invited to join the Open Synod Group as a committee member! During the last quinquennium (my first), I refrained from joining any of Synod's groups. It was, though, quickly apparent that the Open Synod Group would be my natural "home". Coming from a central position, I rejoice in the CoE's breadth. That diversity, at times a source of tension, can also be a source of great strength, enabling us to have a fuller understanding of God in all his wonder.

A chartered engineer by profession, and now retired, I am the Diocese of Lincoln's lay chair and serve as a reader in the far south of the diocese. Important topics for me include mutuality of lay-clergy discipleship, inclusiveness and good governance.

I look forward to meeting up with you at Open Synod events over the next five years.

Other new members of the committee will be introduced in the next newsletter.

Penny Allen's diary of the session is available here: <https://pennyatgeneralsynod.weebly.com>

Next session of General Synod will be in 7-11 February 2022 [number of days to be notified].