Amersham Deanery Synod
Report on November 2026 General Synod group of sessions

The new General Synod met in London on 17–18 November 2026 for its first meeting in the 2026–2031 quinquennium. A service of Holy Communion in Westminster Abbey preceded the formal inauguration of Synod by the King. His Majesty's speech stressed his 'deep and abiding Christian faith', which provided 'the sustenance which nurtures and the compass which guides my every act as Sovereign'. The King also emphasised the role of the Church in protecting 'the very space for faith itself – of every belief – within our whole society and national discourse'. As usual with a new Synod, business in this group of sessions was light: there was no legislation and little other substantive business apart from a Diocesan Synod Motion (DSM) from Blackburn seeking a national strategy for church buildings.

The new Synod

More than half of those elected (some 52%) were new to Synod. This figure compared with a 60% new intake in 2021 and a 46% new intake in 2015. Women accounted for 45% of those elected, a small increase on 2021. The elections were fought, as in 2021, with conservative/traditionalist and liberal campaign groups on the issue of Living in Love and Faith (LLF) promoting their own lists of candidates. One analysis of the election results from a conservative perspective has suggested that while there is once again a small liberal majority in the House of Clergy, the House of Laity remains split almost 50/50 between the two groupings, with a small cohort of 'unknowns' holding the balance. Liberals therefore still do not have the two-thirds majority in the Houses of Clergy and Laity necessary to introduce new authorised liturgies such as bespoke (standalone) services of blessing for same-sex couples under Canon B2.

Presidential address

The Archbishop of Canterbury encouragingly devoted much of her presidential address to parishes and clergy. She described clergy, churches and parishes as 'the treasures of the Church of England' rather than 'a burden to manage', acknowledged the strain of clergy workloads and isolation and of congregations struggling to repair roofs and organs (not least since the loss of VAT relief), and said that the Church's funding model was 'not quite right' and that more needed to be done to direct money and resources to parishes.

Safeguarding

The Bishop of Tewkesbury, as Lead Safeguarding Bishop, gave an update on the work of the National Safeguarding Team. On the move to an independent safeguarding body agreed in February, Synod heard that the Executive Chair of the Safeguarding Structures Programme, Dame Christine Ryan, had stepped down in October; an interim chair has been appointed and the Archbishops' Council hopes to recruit an independent chair for the new body early next year.

Church buildings

Synod debated a Blackburn DSM calling on the Church to develop a national strategy for the preservation, maintenance and development of church buildings, recognising that parishes in deprived areas find repair costs especially hard to meet and that the grants system can set neighbouring parishes in competition with one another. The background papers noted that the Church of England has some 16,000 church buildings (12,500 of them listed), with a

conservation deficit of around £1 billion and over 900 churches on the Heritage at Risk register. The end of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme, which refunded VAT on repairs and maintenance, means that works on listed churches now cost 20% more, and its £92 million replacement, the Places of Worship Renewal Fund, has been heavily oversubscribed. The debate was adjourned because of lack of time given the large number of amendments tabled. This was doubly frustrating given that there was almost unanimous support in the chamber for the Blackburn DSM. The adjourned debate will need to be completed at a future group of sessions.

Clergy wellbeing
Synod took note of a report from the Bishop of Hereford on progress since the Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing was adopted in 2020. Progress has been patchy: only around two-thirds of dioceses have formally adopted the Covenant, and the 'Big Conversation' about clergy wellbeing which it envisaged at parish and deanery level has largely not taken place. In response there were several moving speeches from clergy highlighting their own wellbeing challenges, including poor health, burnout and inadequate pastoral support.

Church finances
Synod closed with a presentation and questions on 'Funding our Church's Mission'. In 2024 the Church's total income was just under £2 billion, 40% of it from giving. The presentation highlighted funding challenges, with 44% of PCCs in deficit and 38 out of 42 dioceses forecasting a deficit in 2026. The crisis in vocations to ordained ministry was also covered, with the number of ordinands in training in 2025/26 almost a third down on the equivalent number in 2018/19, way below the level needed to replace the current rate of retirement, although numbers did rise in 2025 for the first time in five years. A review of national funding for diocesan ministry will report in July 2027 and inform spending plans for 2029–31.

Living in Love and Faith
LLF was not on the agenda of this group of sessions, and the House of Bishops is aiming to bring recommendations back to Synod in July 2028, following the work of a new Relationships, Sexuality and Gender Working Group. LLF did however feature prominently in Questions. The Bishop of Sodor and Man, who chairs the new Working Group, said in response to questions that she would report to Synod in February 2027 on how use of the Prayers of Love and Faith will be monitored (no data is currently being collected), and confirmed that the House of Bishops has no current plans to review the commendation of the Prayers in existing services under Canon B5.

Future meetings
Synod may need to meet online in December to debate the Safeguarding in the Church Code of Practice, but only if 25 members ask for a debate; otherwise, the Code will be deemed approved. Synod's next in-person meeting will be in February 2027, when a number of legislative items are expected, including a new Clergy Conduct Code of Practice.

This is my valedictory Synod report as Helen Savage has been allocated by the Diocese as the new *rapporteur* for Amersham and will keep the Deanery informed going forward.

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18 November 2026 jeremy@stmaryschesham.org