

Deanery, Diocesan and General Synods in the Church of England

Church of England governance operates at four levels, from the Parochial Church Council (PCC) at the local level, through to the deanery synod (usually around 10 – 30 churches in an area), diocesan synod (one in each diocese) and finally the General Synod, which is the national assembly of the Church of England.

Deanery synods are elected every three years, with members appointed by each parish. The next elections are in 2026, although vacancies on a deanery synod can be filled at the parish's Annual Parochial Church Meeting, or if the APCM is more than two months away the PCC can vote to appoint someone to the vacancy. **One important thing for deanery synod members is they are the only lay people who can vote in General Synod elections**, and many General Synod elections are decided by just a few votes so deanery synod membership can make a real difference.

Diocesan synods are also elected every three years, with the next elections due in summer 2024. **The electorate are deanery synod members.** Once diocesan synods are elected they will make appointments to some key bodies within the diocese such as the Bishop's Council and the Vacancy in See Committee. The Bishop's Council helps set broad policy within the diocese across a wide range of areas. The Vacancy in See Committee leads the diocesan response when a diocesan bishop needs to be appointed, including appointing six people to serve on the national body involved with selection and interviewing.

The General Synod is elected every five years, with the next election due in late summer of 2026. Most members are elected from dioceses, with **the deanery synods across the whole diocese being the electorate.** While deanery and diocesan synods often have unfilled places, **elections to General Synod can be more competitive** so being in touch with groups such as WATCH who can help give support and advice to candidates is very useful. Clergy can stand if they are on a deanery synod, which covers all licenced or beneficed clergy and some retired clergy who are on a deanery synod. Lay people can stand if they are on an electoral roll in the diocese, they do not have to be on deanery synod or even their PCC.