

First-ever General Synod Elections Ad Campaign

The first Ad campaign to encourage people to stand for election to the General Synod has been launched in a drive to attract a broad range of voices to the Church of England's national decision-making body.

A 90-second film, a short explanatory animation, and a dedicated webpage www.churchofengland.org/synodelections have been created ahead of elections later this year. The advertising and information campaign – the first in the 50-year history of the General Synod – forms part of the Church of England's vision of becoming a younger and more diverse Church.

William Nye, Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council and of the General Synod of the Church of England, said: "We are praying that the leadership of the Church of England, including bodies like General Synod, may become more representative of the people of England – and that means younger and more diverse.

"This campaign has a very clear message which we hope will reach everyone in the wider Church: if you want to be part of making decisions affecting the whole Church of England and debating matters of national and international importance, this is your chance. Will you stand?"

The campaign includes General Synod members such as Dr Rosemarie Mallett, the Archdeacon of Croydon, who led a key debate in the General Synod on serious youth violence in 2019.

She explained: "Reports back from Synod and images of meetings were so unrepresentative of people of colour – and I hoped that I could be elected and make my views heard on issues of social justice and inclusion."

Dr Mallett described her experience of Synod as being "quite overwhelming and alienating" at first but added: "The best way to overcome this was to just jump in and get involved and to participate as much as possible.

"It is best to try to engage on a range of topics that fit not only within your own area of focus but also the growth and development of the whole church."

Annika Mathews decided to stand for Synod after initially attending as an observer.

"I found it really interesting meeting people from across the breadth of the Church of England and listening to the things being talked about and finding out more about how the Church functions at a national level and within its governance," she explained.

"There were a variety of things spoken about during my time on Synod – climate change, food poverty, the Anglican Communion, and knife crime – to name a few."

Dr Jamie Harrison, Chair of the House of Laity in General Synod added: "Being on General Synod can feel both daunting and inspiring.

"It is a place to meet others who share a common desire to serve God's Kingdom. At times it is frustrating.

"Yet it is also a place of hope and vision into which you may be being called – especially if you are a bit hesitant."

The planned elections to the General Synod were originally due to take place in the autumn 2020 but will now take place in the autumn 2021 after the term of the current General Synod was extended for one year under a provision in the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Notes

#StandForSynod Ad has been in the Church Times as well as shared across the Church of England national social media channels, by dioceses, and other key church networks.

Standing for General Synod, the legislative body of the Church of England, is an opportunity to represent the concerns of your community and your diocese at a national level. Members of Synod have a say in national legislation that affects all parts of the Church of England. Together with the Westminster Parliament, it is the only body which can make national law for England. In addition to legislation, members can also raise issues and contribute to debates on a wide range of social and policy matters of national and international significance.

The nominations will open on 30 July 2021 and the closing date is 8 September 2021.

Key debates in recent years have included:

- In July 2014, the vote to approve legislation to allow women to become bishops for the first time in the Church of England's history.
- In 2017, the vote calling for curbs on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals.
- In February 2017, the vote not to 'take note' of the Bishops' report on marriage and same-sex relationships.
- In July 2017, the vote supporting a ban on conversion therapy.
- In 2018, the unanimous vote calling for people with Down's Syndrome to be welcomed, celebrated, and treated with dignity and respect.
- In 2019, the General Synod of the Church of England gave its overwhelming backing to a drive for a church to be set up on every significant social housing estate in the country.
- In February 2020, General Synod voted to set an ambitious target for the Church of England to reach Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030. By April 2020, an Energy Footprint Tool was launched and rolled out to measure the baseline of current emissions of some 40,000 buildings.

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