SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

General Synod 2026

Guide to General Synod

Contents

Preface _____ 1

What is General Synod _____ 2

Who are the Members _____ 2

The General Synod Meeting _____ 4

How to get matters on the Synod Agenda _____ 6

Getting to Synod _____ 7

The Rest of the Year _____ 8

Boards and Committees _____ 9

General Synod & Scottish Episcopal Institute Officers _____ 11

Preface

Welcome to this brief introduction guide to the General Synod – the central governing body of the Scottish Episcopal Church. Here, you will find an outline of the General Synod's structure and inner workings.

This booklet is not meant to be an official Synod rulebook. You can find that information in the *Code of Canons*, *the Digest of Resolutions* and the Synod's *Rules of Order*.

The aim of this guide is to lay out some of the thinking behind the organisation and to describe, as simply as possible, how it works.

The General Synod met for the first time on Saturday, 4 December 1982, in St Ninian's Cathedral, Perth. It replaced a longstanding structure which split church government between two bodies – the Provincial Synod and the Representative Church Council.

Under the old structure, the Provincial Synod dealt with doctrine and discipline while the Representative Church Council concentrated on finance, administration and general Church policy.

In the early 1980s, the Church decided that it needed a much simpler and smaller body to oversee all areas of Church governance. The General Synod was born and brought with it a complete overhaul of Church decision-making and structure.

From its first meeting to the present day, its aim has remained the same – to unite the Church in the life and mission entrusted to us by God.

The 2026 meeting of General Synod will take place over three consecutive days from Thursday 11 June to Saturday 13 June.

What is the General Synod?

The General Synod acts as the Parliament of the Scottish Episcopal Church. It is the Church's legislative and deliberative body.

The General Synod meets at least once a year to vote on two broad types of motion: firstly, on formal changes to Canon Law or internal church policy; secondly on wider issues of national and international concern.

Under the first category, the General Synod could authorise a new baptism service, change the rite for the burial of the dead or change clergy disciplinary procedure.

Subjects covered by the second, broader type of motion have in the past ranged from child poverty to nuclear power stations and the loss of rural post offices. In these cases, the General Synod has the power to speak out and call for action on behalf of the whole Church.

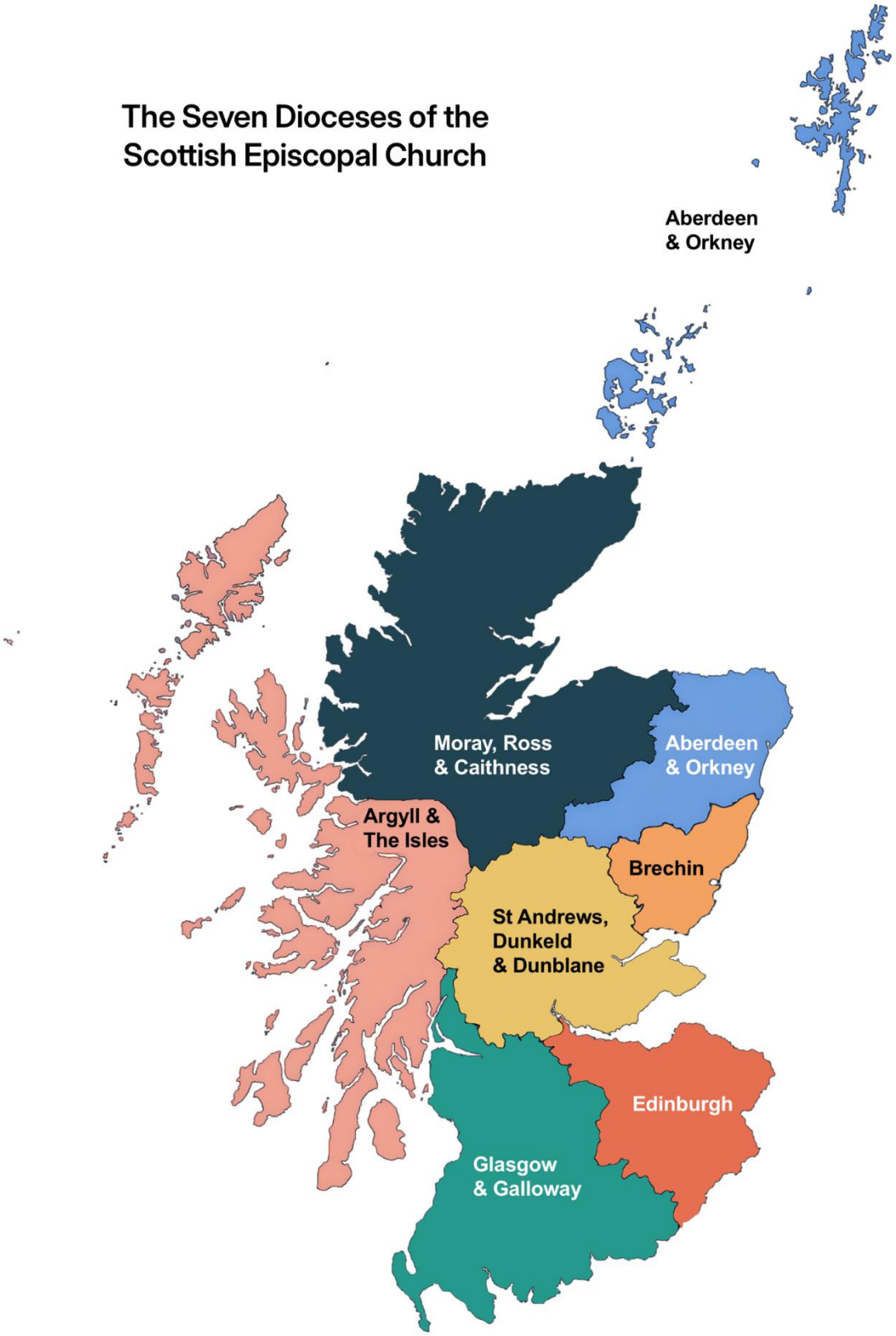
The annual meeting also receives reports from its various boards and committees and elects new conveners and members. The Annual Report (or "Blue Book"), which includes the Synod's accounts, also includes written reports from the Conveners of the Boards and Committees. These reports are normally "taken as read" and are not specifically debated but there is opportunity for questions to be asked of the respective Conveners.

Who are the members?

The General Synod has 124 elected members – 62 of them clergy and 62 lay people. Each diocese elects a set number of members, according to its size. The numbers from each diocese are shown on the illustration on the next page.

In addition, the Church's seven Bishops, the Conveners of the Provincial Standing Committee and Boards and the Church's representatives on the Anglican Consultative Council are automatically Synod members.

The Seven Dioceses of the Scottish Episcopal Church



The General Synod Meeting

The Primus, or another member appointed by the Standing Committee, chairs the annual meeting. It comprises three houses: Bishops, Clergy and Laity.

The General Synod reaches decisions through a number of procedures. Most matters can be settled on a simple majority of Synod, voting as one house.

There is a separate, set procedure for matters that affect Canon Law and the authorisation of liturgy.

- First, the motion must be passed by a simple majority of each of the three houses of the Synod;
- Second, it is referred to each diocese for consultation and comment;
- Third, it returns to Synod the following year when it needs to be passed by a two-thirds majority, with each house voting separately.

Approval of new liturgies is subject to a similar procedure to the canons.

In theory, the Synod can break physically into its separate houses, although this is very unusual. When it does divide, the houses of Clergy and Laity are chaired by elected prolocutors.

Voting

Voting in the 2026 Synod will use an electronic voting system. On arrival Synod members will be provided with a voting handset. It will not be possible to vote using your mobile phone, tablet or laptop. Voting on the handset involves use of the numeric keypad and the send button. The device will provide visual feedback to confirm that your vote has been recorded by the system.

There will be a short training session at the start of the meeting on how to use the new voting device and advice will be available during the Synod should members encounter any technical issues.

Procedure

Clergy, Laity and Bishops all join together throughout the sessions. The Chair sits alongside the Legal Assessor and the Secretary General. The Assessor advises the Chair on points of procedure.

Members who want to speak during a debate should make their way to a lectern and await an invitation from the Chair to speak. All remarks should be addressed to the Chair, with the usual preface: "*Primus (or Chair), Members of Synod*".

Speakers should identify themselves and their diocese. Movers of motions are generally allowed to speak for 10 minutes, while other speakers are limited to five minutes.
No one other than the proposer of a motion is allowed to speak twice in the same debate. The proposer may respond to points made during the debate. The one exception to this is when a point of order is raised.

How to get matters on the Synod Agenda

The formal agenda for the Synod is prepared by the Standing Committee. Any member of Synod can propose a motion by notifying the Standing Committee by a set date before the Synod meeting. The deadline for these notifications was given in the letter sent out in March to convene the Synod. The Standing Committee then decides whether to include the proposed motion.

Members can also use Rule 10 of the Synod's Rules of Order to propose a motion. Proposers need to give the Secretary General written notice of such a motion, normally before the start of the Synod meeting. The written notice should be signed by the motion's mover and seconder and by 12 other members of Synod who are present at the meeting. Motions are presented in the form "That this Synod…" It is important that the motion sets out clearly what the proposer intends. Assistance in this is normally available. The mover is then allowed two minutes to address Synod on why it should consider the motion. If two thirds of those present vote in favour of hearing the motion, it can proceed to be debated.

Motions involving financial expenditure cannot be heard unless they are printed in the Synod agenda, alongside the observations of the Board or Committee within whose budget the expenditure would fall.

Proposers are encouraged to build support for their motions before bringing them to the General Synod. They can do this by bringing them to their diocesan synod or by discussing them with the Convener of the relevant Board or Committee.

Another way of getting the General Synod to consider a matter is to put a question to a board convener during the proceedings. This is a good way of raising an issue without the formality and precision of a specific motion. Where possible, questions should be written and submitted to the Secretary General by Thursday 4 June 2026.

If Synod members want to take advantage of the above procedures they are encouraged to give as much advance notice to the General Synod Office as possible, to ensure a smooth-running Synod meeting.

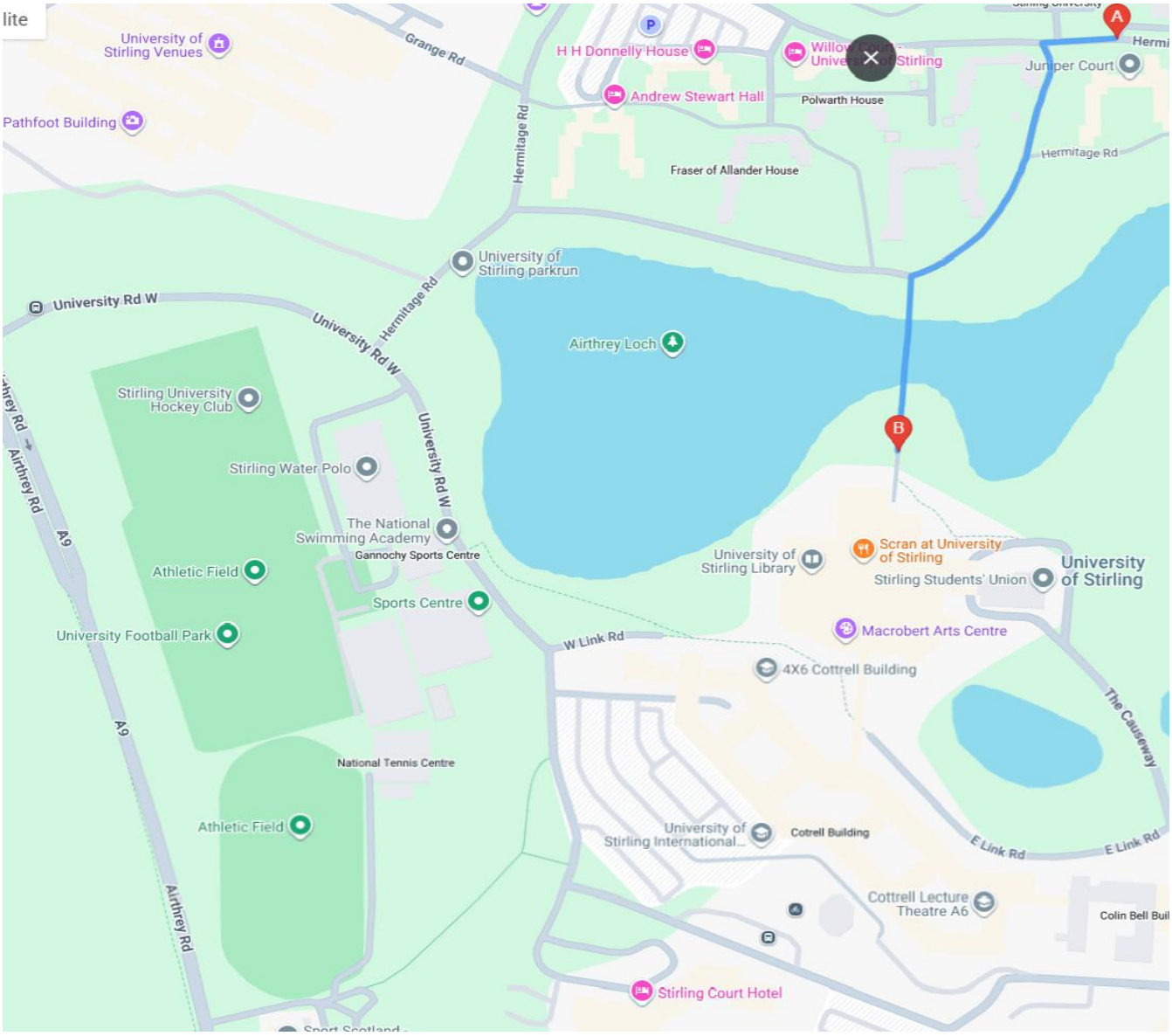
Anyone with further queries about General Synod procedure can always contact one of the General Synod Office staff. All the contact details are inside the back cover of this guide. *The Rules of Order of the General Synod* in the General Synod Papers contain more detailed guidance.

Getting to Synod and Location of Accommodation

General Synod 2026 is being held at the Stirling Court Hotel, University of Stirling, Airthrey Road, Stirling FK9 4LA.

We encourage use of public transport - a shuttle bus runs regularly from Stirling railway station to the university campus stopping outside the hotel, see: Getting Here. There is a small car park at the hotel, plus additional parking elsewhere on campus, see MAP. If travelling by car, please inform the hotel reception (or a member of GSO staff) of your car registration number so that parking charges are not applied.

Juniper Halls of residence are marked as 'A' on the map below and the hotel is marked at the bottom of the map. The full map is at: JUNIPER HALLS



The Rest of the Year

During the rest of the year, the General Synod's work is carried out by its Boards, Committees, and by its officers who work in the General Synod Office.

The Standing Committee represents the General Synod in the day-to-day running of the Church. It draws up the agenda and sets the timetable for General Synod meetings. It is also responsible for the oversight of the General Synod Office.

Its members include a Lay Convener, elected by Synod, the Conveners of the Boards of the Church, the Primus, another Bishop, one further lay member elected by Synod's House of Laity and two clerical members elected by Synod's House of Clergy.

The following bodies report directly to the Standing Committee: **Committee for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults** (known as the Safeguarding Committee), the **Provincial Environment Group** and the **Ethical Investment Advisory Group**.

There are currently four Boards: Administration, Faith & Order, Mission, and the Scottish Episcopal Institute Council.

The Boards' key role is to interpret and carry out the broad policy guidelines laid out by the General Synod. Each oversees a specific area of the Church's work.

Board Conveners are elected by the General Synod while members are appointed by dioceses to represent them.

The Boards are served by committees that form working groups, focused on specific areas. Members are chosen for their expertise in these specific areas – from investment to overseas partnerships and youth work. They also keep in touch with any parallel committees operating in the Dioceses.

Every Board and committee receives administrative and other support from the officers and staff of the General Synod Office.

The Church's seven Bishops also meet regularly as the College of Bishops. This body is not a formal part of the General Synod structure.

Boards and Committees

The Administration Board

The Administration Board is responsible for general administrative matters affecting the Church.

Its **Investment Committee** oversees the SEC Unit Trust Pool.

The Board's **Retirement Housing Committee** oversees clergy retirement housing and related issues. (Pension matters are the responsibility of the **Pension Fund Trustees**.)

The **Buildings Committee** promotes good practice in relation to the care and maintenance of Church buildings, including Health and Safety related issues. It also handles appeals under Canon 35.

The **Personnel Committee** provides general guidance and advice relating to clergy personnel matters and seeks to promote clergy wellbeing.

The **Building Grants Group** administers the Building Grants Fund, the Rectory Green Fund and the Building Loans Fund on behalf of the Administration Board.

The Faith & Order Board

The Faith & Order Board considers questions of Church government and organisation, as well as relations with the Anglican Communion and other Churches and faiths.

Its **Committee on Canons** monitors the Code of Canons and drafts any alterations as required.

The **Doctrine Committee** looks at the interpretation and expression of Church doctrine.

The **Inter-Church Relations Committee** promotes the ecumenical business of the Church at provincial level.

The **Interfaith Relations Committee** oversees relations with other faith communities and with people of other faiths at provincial level.

The **Liturgy Committee** encourages good liturgical practice throughout the Church and drafts such alterations to liturgies as required.

The Mission Board

The Mission Board has responsibility for the strategic oversight of the Church's mission in Scotland and abroad.

Its **Church in Society Committee** helps the Church in its engagement with the wider world.

The **Global Partnerships Committee** supports work overseas and promotes awareness of that work within Scotland.

The **Local Mission Development Committee** supports those catalysing, developing and nurturing local mission.

The **Youth Committee** promotes work with young people in the Province including the running of the annual Glenalmond Camp, known as 'Yeek'.

The Institute Council

The fourth Board, known as the Institute Council, is the advisory board for the Scottish Episcopal Institute and has strategic oversight of the delivery of formation and training for authorised ministry in the Church. It appoints a Management Committee with academic responsibility for programmes and curricula.

General Synod & Scottish Episcopal Institute Officers

40 Torphichen Street, Edinburgh EH3 8JB
Tel: 0131 225 6357
Email: office@scotland.anglican.org
Website: www.scotland.anglican.org

Secretary General: Dr Dee Bird
Email: secgen@scotland.anglican.org

Chief Operating Officer: Dr Patricia Krus
Email: COO@scotland.anglican.org

Chief Finance Officer: James Lloyd
Email: CFO@scotland.anglican.org

Director of Communications: Donald Walker
Email: DWalker@scotland.anglican.org

Church Relations Officer: Miriam Weibye
Email: churchrelations@scotland.anglican.org

Head of Safeguarding (Provincial Safeguarding Officer): Christine Riddoch
Email: Safeguarding@scotland.anglican.org

Net Zero Delivery Director: Paul Williams
Email: NZDD@scotland.anglican.org

Pensions & Retirement Housing Administrator: Neil Wright
Email: NeilW@scotland.anglican.org

Youth Ministry Lead: Claire Benton-Evans
Email: ClaireBE@scotland.anglican.org

Acting Principal of the Scottish Episcopal Institute:
Rev Dr Anna-Claar Thomasson-Rosingh
Email: Principal@scotland.anglican.org

Director of Studies of the Scottish Episcopal Institute:
Dr Victoria Turner
Email: Victoria.Turner@scotland.anglican.org

Director of Contextual Formation at the Scottish Episcopal Institute:
Rev Dr Anna-Claar Thomasson-Rosingh
Email: anna-claar@scotland.anglican.org

IME 2 Officer of the Scottish Episcopal Institute: Rev Liz Crumlish
Email: IME2@scotland.anglican.org

Provincial Director of Ordinands: Rev Dr Elizabeth Thomson
Email: pdo@scotland.anglican.org