
Synod Council Report

1. Introduction

1.1 Synod Council continues to deal with strategic issues on your behalf. We have met twice since last reporting to Synod Together.

1.2 Council remains committed to ensuring that the Synod Strategy (summarised in the words: Renew, Reimagine and Reorder) sets our agenda and the priorities of the Synod.

2. Synod Committees, Synod Trust and Synod/United Areas and Personnel Changes

2.1 Synod Council regularly receives reports from Synod Committees (Finance, Property, Youth and Children's Work), Synod Trust and the Synod/United Areas. Council is grateful for the invaluable contribution of all these groups for the work they undertake on behalf of Synod, and is especially grateful for the leadership provided by Committee Convenors and Synod/United Area leaders whilst we are without a Synod Moderator.

3. En Bloc Business at Synod Together

3.1 For some years General Assembly and Assembly Executive (or its predecessor Mission Council) have used the practice of placing some business in 'en bloc'. It enables business to be passed without discussion.

The standing orders of General Assembly make it clear that: *"Placing business in the en bloc category does not imply anything about the importance of any item of business, merely that those planning the meeting think that it may be possible to agree the business without discussion."*

The Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary decide together which items of business shall be taken en bloc. If six or more voting members of General Assembly or Assembly Executive notify the Clerk to the meeting that they wish to have the item removed from en bloc, it will be added to the agenda of the meeting for discussion.

3.2 Synod Council have agreed to adopt this process, on occasions, for meetings of Synod Together. Synod Officers, if they consider it appropriate, may place business or reports in en bloc. Council agreed that if four or more voting members inform the Synod Clerk (by the Wednesday of the week leading up to Synod Together) of their request to remove an item from en bloc business, it will be removed and placed on the agenda for discussion

3.3 It is recognised that, if en bloc is to be used effectively, there is a need to publish the papers for Synod Together no less than 10 days before the meeting.

4. Vacancy for Moderator of Southern Synod

4.1 The post of Moderator of Southern Synod was advertised in November 2025, with the closure of applications being mid January 2026. Sadly, no applications were received.

4.2 The Convenor of Synod Council has subsequently met with the General Secretary to seek clarity about how the continuing vacancy might successfully be filled. The General Secretary is to consult with individuals nominated for the post but who, initially, indicated they would not be willing to let their name go forward for consideration. If this process proves unfruitful, the post will be readvertised.

4.3 In the meantime Synod Council has had discussions about how Moderatorial work can be undertaken during the continuing vacancy.

5. Vacancy for Synod Clerk

5.1 Rev'd Martin Hayward, Synod Clerk since September 2023, gave notice at the end of Synod Together in October 2025 of his intention to retire at the end of March 2026. There will be opportunity at Synod Together to express our deep gratitude to Marting for his faithful service in Southern Synod over many years, firstly as a District Mission and Evangelism Enabler, then Synod Mission Officer and latterly as Synod Clerk. We wish him well for his retirement.

5.2 Synod Trust, following discussion, appointed a group to oversee the appointment of a new Synod Clerk. Interviews are to take place the week after Synod Together meets. Members of Synod Together are asked to pray for this process and vital appointment.

6. Synod Structure Review

6.1 Synod Council initiated a review of Synod structures and committees. It soon became clear that this work would be extensive and require longer than initially anticipated. Thanks are due to Sue Eardley, Keith Morrison and the Synod Clerk for work already undertaken. However, with changes in personnel the timetable has had to be delayed and it is now unlikely to be able to bring any potential outcomes to the Autumn 2026 Synod Together meeting.

Rev'd Russell Furley-Smith
Convenor, Synod Council
March 2026