

CHAPTER I

THE GENERAL SYNOD

Part I

HOUSE OF BISHOPS; HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES; ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES

1. The General Synod of the Church of Ireland shall consist of three distinct orders, namely, the bishops, the clergy, and the laity.
2. The General Synod shall consist of two Houses, namely, the House of Bishops and the House of Representatives; but both Houses shall sit together in full synod for deliberation and transaction of business, except in such cases as shall be hereinafter provided for.
3. The House of Bishops shall consist of all the archbishops and bishops of the Church of Ireland for the time being.
4. (1) (a) The House of Representatives shall consist of representatives of the clergy and representatives of the laity in the proportion of two lay members for each clerical member, to be elected as hereinafter provided.

(b) Subject to section 4(2), the number of representatives to be returned to the General Synod by each diocese or united diocese shall be in the proportion of one representative to every cure within that diocese or united diocese as the case may be.

(c) In addition, to ensure that the voices of the smaller dioceses can be heard, further places will be awarded, one to the diocese with the largest number of cures, two to the next largest and so on. Where two or more dioceses have the same number of cures, they shall all receive the same number of additional places, which shall be calculated as one less than the additional places awarded to the next smallest diocese; provided that the total number of representative positions for each diocese or united diocese[s] is divisible by three or, where this is not the case, shall be rounded up to the next number divisible by three.

(d) Subject to section 4(2), on the occasion of the amalgamation of any two or more dioceses, representation at the time of amalgamation shall be fixed until the review as therein prescribed.
- (2) (a) The number of representatives, clerical and lay, specified for the triennia from 2024 to 2032, to be returned to represent General Synod and the several dioceses and united dioceses shall be as set out in the following Table, providing for a phased introduction in the triennial periods commencing in 2024 and 2027 respectively.

AMENDED 2021

Number of Representatives based on a House of Representatives at General Synod equal to the number of cures plus the 1 to 12 sliding scale of additional places

	2024-2026		2027-2032	
	Clerical	Lay	Clerical	Lay
Armagh	17	34	16	32
Clogher	14	28	13	26
Derry & Raphoe	19	38	18	36
Down & Dromore	28	56	26	52
Connor	29	58	26	52
Kilmore, Elphin & Ardagh	12	24	11	22
Tuam, Killala & Achonry	7	14	7	14
Dublin & Glendalough	21	42	19	38
Meath & Kildare	10	20	9	18
Cashel Ferns & Ossory	17	34	13	26
Cork Cloyne & Ross	13	26	11	22
Limerick & Killaloe	12	24	9	18
TOTAL REPRESENTATION	597		534	

(b) A review of General Synod representation shall commence in the first year of the triennium beginning in 2030, with any consequent changes agreed by General Synod to take effect in 2033, and a review shall take place every third triennium thereafter.

(c) Any such review shall take the following into consideration:

- the life and ministry of the Church of Ireland at that time;
- the establishment of new forms of ministry other than cures;
- provincial boundaries and balance so that neither province thereafter has two-thirds or more, of the overall representation;
- diocesan balance, so that no diocese thereafter has less than half or more than twice the average number of representatives.

AMENDED 2021

AMENDED 2021

AMENDED 2021

- (3) The diocesan synod[s] of the several dioceses composing each united diocese[s] may from time to time make such mutual arrangements as to them shall seem fit for apportioning among such dioceses respectively the number of representatives allotted to the several united dioceses in accordance with section 4. In default of agreement being reached the apportionment shall be made by the bishop, whose decision shall be final.
 - (4) Each diocesan synod may make such arrangements as to it shall seem fit for dividing the diocese into districts for the purpose of the election of representatives, and for apportioning the number of representatives among such districts. It shall be lawful for each diocesan synod from time to time to repeal or vary any such arrangement.
 - (5) The number of representatives which shall be so apportioned to each several diocese or district shall be elected by the clerical and lay synod members respectively of that diocese or district.
5. (1) In the year 2005, and triennially thereafter, each diocesan synod shall meet and elect its due number of clerical and lay representatives, together with such number of supplemental clerical and lay representatives as it shall determine either by resolution or by diocesan regulation, the clerical synod members voting for clerical representatives only, and the lay synod members for lay representatives only. At each such election the representatives and supplementals shall be elected for a period of three years commencing on the day preceding the next ordinary session of the General Synod next following. Should additional supplementals be required, they may be elected at any meeting of the diocesan synod.
 - (2) Should two or more persons receive an equal number of votes and the result of the election, or the order of names on the supplemental list, be thereby in doubt, the matter shall be determined by lot.
 - (3) Whenever the seat of any member shall become vacant before the expiration of the period for which such member shall have been elected, such vacancy shall be filled for the unexpired period by the person whose name stands highest in order on the relevant list of supplemental representatives.
 - (4) No diocesan synod shall make provision whereby nomination procedures applied to outgoing members of the General Synod differ from those applied to persons who are not outgoing members of the General Synod.
6. Every beneficed or licensed member of the clergy of the Church of Ireland who is not a deacon serving in an internship or in receipt of a retiring annuity under the provisions of Chapter XIV and who on 1st January preceding election had not attained the age of seventy-four years shall be qualified to be elected as a clerical representative or supplemental clerical representative for a diocese whether or not such person resides in that diocese.
7. Every lay person who, on 1st January preceding election, had attained the age of seventeen years and had not attained the age of seventy-four years, being a member of the Church of Ireland and a communicant of the said Church and not being a deacon serving an internship, shall be qualified to be elected as a lay representative or supplemental lay representative for any diocese; provided that clergy residing in the diocese who are neither beneficed nor licensed shall be deemed to be lay persons for the purpose of this section and provided that a lay person who has become a deacon serving in an internship since election as a lay representative or supplemental lay representative for any diocese shall be deemed to have resigned from General Synod as a lay representative or supplemental lay representative for any diocese.
8. All representatives and supplemental representatives shall be notified forthwith of their election by the secretaries of the synod of the diocese for which they shall have been elected, who shall also furnish each lay representative and supplemental lay representative with a copy of the form prescribed by section 9 of this Chapter.
9. All lay representatives and supplemental lay representatives so elected shall within one month of the date of the notification aforesaid sign and transmit to the secretaries of the synod of the diocese for which they shall have been elected a declaration in the following form:

I, A.B., of _____, do hereby solemnly declare that, on 1st January last preceding, I had attained the age of seventeen years and had not attained the age of seventy-four years, and I further solemnly declare that I am a member of the Church of _____ Ireland and a communicant of the said Church.

Signature.....

Date of Birth.....

Email Address.....

Dated this _____ day of _____ in the Year of Our Lord

And such declaration shall be *prima facie* evidence of such qualifications;

And, should any representative fail to do so within the time prescribed, the place of such representative shall become vacant and shall thereupon be filled by the person whose name stands highest on the relevant list of supplemental lay representatives: Provided that the secretaries of the diocesan synod shall have power to extend by not more than twenty-one days the time for signing the above declaration if they are satisfied that unavoidable circumstances have delayed the signing of the said declaration.

10. (1) The secretaries of each diocesan synod shall, after the election of representatives by such synod, return to the secretaries of the General Synod:
 - (a) within one week, the names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of all such representatives and supplemental representatives;
 - (b) within two months, the forms of declaration signed in accordance with the provisions of section 9 of this Chapter.
- (2) Whenever it shall occur that the same person shall have been elected as representative for two or more dioceses or districts, the secretaries of the General Synod shall transmit notice thereof to the bishop of each diocese for which such person shall have been returned, as also to such representative, who shall choose for which diocese or district to serve, and signify such choice in writing to the bishop of each diocese for which such person may have been elected, within one week after receiving notice of having been so elected; and, in case such person shall omit to do so, the said bishops or bishop, as the case may be, shall decide for which diocese or district such person shall serve, and make known such decision to that person and to the secretaries of the General Synod; and thereupon the seat of such representative for any other diocese or district for which that person shall have been elected shall be filled from the relevant list of supplemental representatives.
11. Any representative may, in writing addressed to the secretaries of the synod of the diocese for which such representative has been elected, resign from the General Synod, and, on the receipt of such resignation, the seat of such representative shall become vacant and shall be filled from the relevant list of supplemental representatives.
12. In the event of any change taking place in the representation of a diocese, the secretaries of the diocesan synod shall forthwith notify the same to the secretaries of the General Synod.
13. The failure of any diocese to return representatives, or the return by any diocese of an incomplete number of representatives, shall not prevent the General Synod from proceeding to the transaction of business.

AMENDED 2023

AMENDED 2013

Part II

MEETINGS: PROCEDURE

- 14.** (1) There shall be an ordinary meeting of the General Synod in every year, at such time and place as shall from time to time be prescribed in that behalf by the General Synod.
- (2) For the avoidance of doubt, the reference to ‘place’ in subsection (1) shall include a meeting held by electronic communications technology, provided that such electronically held meeting complies with the requirements and procedures prescribed in subsections (3) to (9).
- (3) The General Synod may conduct its meetings wholly or partly by the use of electronic communications technology provided that all attendees have a reasonable opportunity to participate in the meeting in accordance with the provisions of this section.
- (4) The Standing Committee may provide for participation in meetings of the General Synod by providing or facilitating for that purpose, the use of electronic communications technology, including a mechanism for casting votes by a member during the meeting.
- (5) The mechanism referred to in subsection (4) shall not require the member to be physically present at the meeting.
- (6) The use of electronic communications technology pursuant to subsection (4) may be made subject only to such requirements or restrictions put in place by the Standing Committee as are necessary to ensure the identification of attendees and the security of the electronic communications technology.
- (7) The Standing Committee shall inform the members of General Synod before the meeting concerned, of any requirements or restrictions which it has put in place pursuant to subsection (6).
- (8) If the Standing Committee determines that electronic communications technology is to be used for all or part of a meeting of the General Synod, it shall ensure as far as practicable that –
- a. in the case of any failure or disruption of such technology, that failure or disruption is remedied as soon as practicable; and
 - b. such technology enables the members of General Synod to hear what is said by the President or other member of the House of Bishops having the Chair, as well as anyone else addressing the meeting; and
 - c. speak and submit questions and comments during the meeting to the President or other member of the House of Bishops having the Chair.
- (9) Any temporary failure or disruption of electronic communications technology shall not invalidate the meeting or any proceedings relating to the meeting.
- 15.** The Archbishop of Armagh or, in the case of that Archbishop’s death, absence or incapacity, the Archbishop of Dublin or, in case both archbishops shall be unable to act, then the bishop next in order of precedence may at such archbishop’s or bishop’s own discretion, and shall, on the application in writing of not less than one third of the members of any one order of the General Synod, convene a special meeting of the General Synod, to be held within two months of the date of receipt of such application and at such place as such archbishop or bishop may determine. The business to be transacted shall be specified in the notice convening the synod and no other business shall be transacted at such special meeting.
- 16.** Notice of all meetings of the General Synod shall be given to every member thereof at such time and in such manner as the General Synod shall determine.
- 17.** When both Houses meet in full synod, the meeting shall be presided over by the Archbishop of Armagh or, in that Archbishop’s absence, by the Archbishop of Dublin or, in the absence of both archbishops, by the bishop next in order of precedence.

18. The President may exercise discretion in inviting any member of the House of Bishops to take the Chair for such period during a session as the President may determine; and the person so taking the Chair shall have, and may exercise, all the powers and functions conferred by Standing Orders on the President.
19. The presence of at least two bishops, thirty clerical and sixty lay representatives, shall be necessary to constitute a meeting in full synod.

The presence of at least five bishops shall be necessary to constitute a House of Bishops; and the presence of at least thirty clerical and sixty lay representatives shall be necessary to constitute a House of Representatives:

Provided always that any business which shall have been transacted by the Synod or the House of Representatives in the absence of a quorum and before attention shall have been directed to the absence of a quorum shall be valid and be deemed to have been lawfully transacted, notwithstanding the absence of the quorum hereby named, unless the Synod or House of Representatives, as the case may be, shall in the same session otherwise determine.

20. If at any time the bishops express their wish to consider separately any matter in debate, the further discussion of that matter shall be postponed until the bishops shall have had an opportunity of so doing.
21. The bishops shall vote separately from the representatives, and no question shall be deemed to have been carried unless there be in its favour a majority of the bishops present, if they desire to vote, and a majority of the clerical and lay representatives present and voting conjointly or by orders: Provided always that, if a question affirmed by a majority of the clerical and lay representatives present and voting, conjointly or by orders, but in favour of which there shall not be a majority of the bishops, shall be re-affirmed at the next ordinary session of the General Synod by not less than two-thirds of the clerical and lay representatives present and voting conjointly or by orders, it shall be deemed to be carried, unless it be negatived by not less than two-thirds of the then members of the House of Bishops, the said two-thirds being present and voting and giving their reasons in writing.
22. The bishops shall not vote until after the declaration of the votes of the clerical and lay representatives. If they desire to vote, the bishops may withdraw from the General Synod for that purpose, and may reserve the declaration of their vote until the following day.
23. The members of the House of Representatives shall vote together unless ten members then present of either order shall require the votes to be taken by orders; whereupon the votes shall be taken accordingly. No question shall be deemed to be carried in the House of Representatives unless, in case of both orders voting together, there is a majority in favour of the same of the representatives voting thereon, or in case of the votes being taken by orders there is a majority in favour of the same of the representatives of each order voting thereon.
24. The General Synod may make such standing orders for the regulation of its procedure as it shall think fit, provided that the same be not inconsistent with anything herein enacted, and may from time to time rescind or vary the same. Such standing orders shall not lapse or cease to be in force by reason of the adjournment of the Synod or of its dissolution at the end of the period of three years for which the representatives in it shall have been elected.
25. Every proposed statute shall be introduced as a bill, leave to introduce having been given by a resolution passed in full Synod. When a bill shall have been passed in accordance with Standing Orders, it shall become a Statute of the General Synod, and shall thenceforth be a law of the Church of Ireland and binding on all the members thereof.
26. (1) No modification or alteration shall at any time hereafter be made in the articles, doctrines, rites, rubrics or formularies of the Church, unless by a bill duly passed, as hereinbefore provided. No bill for such purpose shall be introduced except on a resolution passed in full synod at an ordinary meeting thereof, stating the nature of the proposed modification or alteration; and no such bill or resolution shall be deemed to have passed the House of Representatives except it have the consent of not less than two-thirds of each order of the said House present and voting on such bill or resolution: Provided that no bill for such purpose shall be introduced until the ordinary meeting of the General Synod next after the passing of such resolution. Copies of any such resolution shall be transmitted forthwith by the secretaries of the General Synod to the secretaries of each diocesan synod.

- (2) In the case of any bill for the modification or alteration of any of the articles, doctrines, rites, rubrics or formularies of the Church, which has been introduced upon a resolution duly passed in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (1) of this Section, the consent of not less than two-thirds of each order of the House of Representatives present and voting on such bill, required by sub-section (1) of this Section for the passing of such bill, shall be necessary only upon the motions for the approval of the bill in principle and for its final consideration and decision stages.
- (3) Any form of Service and any Lectionary and any Catechism which the Liturgical Advisory Committee of the General Synod has recommended for experimental use with a view to its permanent use being authorised by resolution and bill under the provisions of this Section may be used without the enactment of a statute from such date and for such period, not exceeding fifteen years, as may be appointed by the House of Bishops and notified by it to the Standing Committee of the General Synod, subject to the following conditions:
 - (a) It shall be certified by the House of Bishops as being in its opinion neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of Ireland.
 - (b) Any such experimental use shall be under the supervision and control of the bishop of the diocese or other ordinary.
 - (c) In the case of a cathedral which is not a parish church, such experimental use shall require the approval of the dean, the chapter, and the cathedral wardens if any.

In the case of any other church or place, such experimental use shall require the approval of the incumbent and of the churchwardens.

27. Resolutions passed in full synod, which are required for the purpose of introducing a bill founded thereon, shall not lapse by the dissolution of the synod in which they shall be passed, but shall continue, and suffice for the purpose of introducing a bill at any ordinary session of the General Synod after the passing of such resolutions, in like manner as if such dissolution had not taken place.

Part III

POWERS

28. The General Synod shall have power to make general regulations as to how and by whom all patronage shall be exercised; and generally to make all such regulations as shall be necessary for the order, good government, and efficiency of the Church of Ireland.
29. The General Synod shall have power to control, alter, repeal, or supersede any regulation made by a diocesan synod, so far as may be necessary to provide against the admission of any principle inexpedient for the common interest of the Church.
30. The existing territorial arrangements of the two provinces under the government of their respective archbishops, of the several dioceses under the government of their respective bishops, and of the several parishes and districts under the spiritual care of their respective incumbents, shall continue as at present, unless and until the same respectively be altered by the lawful authority of the Church.
31. (1) The General Synod shall have the power of uniting, dividing, or altering the boundaries of, provinces; of uniting under one bishop any two or more dioceses; of separating any dioceses which are at present so united; of sub-dividing any existing dioceses; of transferring any portion of a diocese to another diocese or union of dioceses contiguous to such transferred portion; and of creating a new diocese out of contiguous portions of existing dioceses: Provided that no alteration shall be made without the consent of the diocesan synod of any diocese to be thereby affected; nor shall such alteration be made as to any province during the incumbency of its archbishop without the consent of such archbishop.
 - (2) The power of transferring any portion of a diocese to another diocese or union of dioceses contiguous to such transferred portion may in any particular case be exercised on behalf of the General Synod by the Standing Committee, if it is requested to do so by the synod or synods of every diocese affected thereby.
32. (1) It shall be lawful for the General Synod to appoint such committees as it may deem fit, to fix the quorum for each such committee, and to appoint the date by which each such committee shall report.

- (2) Notwithstanding the dissolution of the Synod which appointed it, unless the Synod determines otherwise, each such committee shall continue to exist and to exercise all powers vested in it until the expiration of the first session of the next following General Synod: Provided that any such continuing committee may be dissolved by the Synod at any time during such first session.

Part IV

AUTHENTICATION OF PROCEEDINGS AND DOCUMENTS

- 33.** (1) At the meeting of the Standing Committee next following the conclusion of the business of the General Synod, the proceedings shall be authenticated by the signature of the Archbishop of Armagh or other president.
- (2) The secretaries of the General Synod shall cause the resolutions of the synod to be duly recorded and shall cause the same, together with such parts of the proceedings as shall be ordered to be published, to be printed for the general use of the Church.
- 34.** (1) The General Synod shall have an official seal.
- (2) The seal of the General Synod shall not be used to authenticate any statute, resolution, rule or other act of the General Synod, or any copy thereof, except in the presence and by the authority of at least two members of the Record Committee, appointed as hereinafter provided.
- 35.** (1) Each General Synod shall at its first session appoint from its own number a Record Committee, and vacancies occurring therein shall be filled by resolution of the General Synod, and the powers and functions of such committee shall continue notwithstanding the termination of the sessions of the General Synod: Provided that if any member of such committee shall cease to be a member of the General Synod such person shall be deemed to have thereupon ceased to be a member of the said committee.
- (2) The common seal, books, muniments and records of the General Convention and of the General Synod shall be entrusted to the Record Committee for safe keeping.
- (3) Each of the statutes of the General Synod shall be printed in duplicate under the direction of the Record Committee and when so printed shall be compared and certified as correct by at least two members of the Record Committee and shall be signed by the Archbishop of Armagh, or, in that Archbishop's absence, by the Archbishop of Dublin, and shall be sealed with the seal of the General Synod, and shall be filed in books, one of which shall be deposited in the General Synod office and one of which shall be deposited in the Representative Church Body Library.
- 36.** (1) Written or printed copies of the statutes of the General Convention and of the General Synod, or of any such statutes, may be authenticated by the seal of the General Synod, and by a certificate that they are true copies, or a true copy as the case may be, signed by at least two members of the Record Committee, and all copies of statutes purporting to be so authenticated shall be *prima facie* evidence thereof, without further proof, and as such shall be received in evidence in all the tribunals of the Church.
- (2) Written or printed copies of resolutions, rules, or other acts of the General Convention or General Synod (not being statutes), and of rules and orders under section 52 of Chapter VIII, or of any of such resolutions, rules, or other acts or orders, may be authenticated by the seal of the General Synod, and copies purporting to be so authenticated shall be *prima facie* evidence thereof, without further proof, and as such shall be received in evidence in all the tribunals of the Church.