



A quiet Synod that got a lot done

Parental leave for clergy, a mandate for reconciliation and, for the first time in living memory, Sudanese Anglicans taking their seats as full members. Synod 2026 was short on drama and long on substance.

If Synod 2026 is remembered for anything, it may be for how smoothly it went.

Synod opened with a Eucharist at St Peter's Cathedral on Friday evening, 16 October. Members gathered for business on Saturday 17 October. Even though time was set aside to carry on into Sunday it wasn't needed. By 4:30pm on Saturday they had finished everything, including the budget, legislation, a series of significant resolutions and a morning of workshops on the Diocese's future direction.

“While it was quiet, some very important things happened,” said Assistant Bishop Sophie Relf-Christopher.



Members work through the vision and priorities that came from this year's diocese-wide consultation priorities in workshops.

Full participants, not observers

One of the most important changes was not on the order paper.

For the first time, members of the Diocese's Sudanese communities were not listed as observers at Synod. They took part as full members and are named as Synod members in the Reports and Accounts Book.

"I am really pleased that we no longer have any of our brothers and sisters in Christ from the various Sudanese communities listed as observers but instead have them as full participants in the life of this Synod," he said. "This is truly groundbreaking stuff."

Secretary of Synod Joe Thorp marked the moment as he introduced the customary motion to welcome observers to Synod.



Clergy process at the Synod Eucharist, St Peter's Cathedral, on Friday evening

There are now registered congregations of Dinka Sudanese at St Catherine's, Elizabeth Downs, and from 1 November there will be one at St John's, Salisbury. Bari Sudanese take part as full members of the parish at St Luke's, Modbury, and sit on its Parish Council.

Another milestone is close. On 28 November Archbishop Bradley Billings will ordain, or recognise the ordination of, five ministers from the Sudanese communities.

“This is indeed momentous and closes the loop on the resolution of this Synod in 2022 calling for the full participation of the South Sudanese in the life of this Synod,” Mr Thorp said.

He thanked Bishop Sophie, Archdeacon Jo Smith, the Rev'd Dr Joan Riley and, more recently, the Rev'd Jude Benton, along with “all who have worked and prayed for this day”.

“To our Sudanese brothers and sisters, welcome!”

Care for families

Synod ensured that paid Parental Leave for clergy and employees would be provided by repealing the Clergy Parental Leave Ordinance, thereby making it clear that the Parental Leave Policy adopted by Diocesan Council in July 2026 would apply to clergy and employees of the Synod. The Policy is [available on the website](#).

A mandate for reconciliation

Synod gave a clear mandate for the Diocese to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and endorsed the group that will lead the work.

Our approach toward Aboriginal ministry has been the subject of discussion at recent Synods. Bishop Sophie spoke to the question this year, outlined the work that has been happening, and the direction was settled with broad support.

Standing with survivors

Synod members also committed the Diocese to the Thursdays in Black campaign, which stands in solidarity with survivors and against sexual and gender-based violence. The campaign asks people to wear black on Thursdays as a visible sign that they want a world without rape and violence.

A clean sheet on national legislation

The changes to the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia in relation to the approval of changes to Diocesan and Provincial constitutions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation at General Synod, and Defence Force Chaplaincy representation at General Synod were assented to by our Synod. Those changes to the Constitution of the ACA require assent by three-quarters of all Diocesan Synods, including all of the Metropolitan Synods before they come into law.

Bishop Sophie chaired consideration of the adoption by the Diocese of Adelaide of the General Synod canons dealing with Episcopal Standards. All three passed without controversy.

Synod also adopted the Financial Accounts for 2026, passed the 2027 budget and the rate of assessment for 2027 at 14%. There was a useful discussion about finances triggered by some graphs by Revd Mike Russell. The Secretary of Synod provided further explanation. Later in the Synod it was agreed that the Finance Presentation together with the Secretary of Synod's presentation be shared with members of Synod.

Looking ahead together

The archbishop's presidential address set out the vision and priorities that came from this year's diocese-wide consultation. You can read his reflections in [One more step along the road ahead](#).

Members then worked through those priorities in workshops. Bishop Sophie said engagement in these sessions was high. The responses are now being typed up and will help shape the next steps.

The day closed with what diocesan leaders said was a clear sense of unity.

“A Synod that finishes its business in a single day doesn't happen by accident,” said Bishop Sophie. “I want to thank Joe Thorp for the efficient way he guided us through the business, and the staff of the Diocesan and Bishop's Offices and for the many hours they put into preparing for Synod and making sure everything ran smoothly on the day.”

“The Synod clearly had confidence in Archbishop Brad's chairing, and of the path we're walking together toward the new vision.”

Updates to diocesan legislation will be posted on the Diocese's website in the coming days.

Date Created

October 19, 2026