

## **Women in Ministry – Statistics**

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Twenty five years on from the first ordinations of women to the priesthood, the hope of a Church where men and women can equally serve God is still a vision that we are working towards.

It's important to remember that it is not just an issue for the Church of England. In 2014, Christian Aid published a Gender Justice strategy, which began with this statement:

*'Gender inequality is primarily an issue of unequal power relations – of inequitable relationships between men and women. It violates human rights, constrains choice and agency, and negatively impacts upon people's ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from development. Unless we can help create just and equitable relationships between women and men, we'll be unable to achieve equitable, sustainable, resilient and thriving societies.'*

Exactly the same point was made by the Revd Terrie Robinson, after ten years at the Women's desk of the Anglican Communion . In her final report she writes:

*'Unjust power relations between women and men, girls and boys, have far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, communities and nations, and present a barrier to the incoming of God's reign 'on earth as it is in heaven'. Their effect within our church structures continues to detract from our capacity to serve as the Body of Christ in God's world. Jesus' teaching and ministry offered a radical reformulation of traditional male and female norms and values, and can inform and inspire us as we explore Jesus-shaped leadership models and relationships that enable healing, reconciliation and abundant life.'*

In order to continue challenging the Church of England to show its commitment to Gender Justice, we need to audit how well (or otherwise) it is doing, and to develop markers and examples of good practice. One of the ways WATCH tries to do this is by interrogating the statistics produced annually by the Church's Research and Statistics department to look at the place of women in ministry. This is easier to do for some groups of clergy than others, as the statistics are based on pay roll. It is even more difficult to do for lay women and immediately raises questions of how seriously the Church takes the gifts, time and ministry of the laity.

### **Stipendiary parish clergy**

One of the key markers of how supportive a diocese is for women, is the proportion of incumbent status clergy in each diocese who are women. In the report we published in February 2019 (the most recent tables being for December 2017) some trends are beginning to show. The positive trend is that in 2012, out of 44 dioceses, only 7 had 30% or more stipendiary incumbents who were women. By 2017 the number was 15. At the other end of the scale, in 2012, seven dioceses, including Europe, had only 13% or fewer women stipendiary incumbents, while in 2017 the figure had dropped to four. This group did, however, include London, the diocese with the highest number of stipendiary clergy. However, the highest proportion of women stipendiary clergy in dioceses has

not really changed, the best being Ely at 41%. Hereford is one of the only dioceses where the proportion of women has fallen consistently over this time, from 38% to 33%.

WATCH continues to try to find out the numbers of House for Duty clergy, who are not included in these statistics as a separate group, particularly the number of women who have taken on such a role before pension age.

### **Senior Diocesan Clergy**

Another significant marker is the number of senior clergy in a diocese who are female. This becomes particularly significant when we recognise that senior staff, such as archdeacons, are members of the senior decision making groups in a diocese. By the end of 2018, the only dioceses which had no women suffragan bishops or archdeacons were Carlisle (but now Emma Ineson is Bishop of Penrith), Durham (Margaret Clark has now been appointed Bishop of Jarrow), Ely (Dagmar Winter has now been nominated as Bishop of Huntingdon), Hereford, Peterborough, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Sheffield, Winchester (Deborah Sellin has been appointed Bishop of Southampton) and Sodor and Man. Another twenty dioceses only had one woman amongst their bishops and archdeacons.

However, several dioceses do ensure that women are included in the teams and committees that make key decisions. The cathedral Dean is an ex officio member of a bishop's senior staff. Some dioceses include leaders of diocesan departments, some of whom who may be women. Some include the Dean of Women's Ministry. However, who is included in strategic decision making is not consistent from one diocese to another, nor is there consistency in ensuring that enough women are included so that a single woman does not become a "token" woman. It is worth remembering that one of the characteristics of a good decision-making group is that it includes as wide a representation of different groups and experiences as possible. Auditing the membership of diocesan committees and senior groups could be a constructive task for all of us within our own dioceses. WATCH encourages you to do this.

### **Area Deans** *(see table 2 in the WATCH report)*

The responsibility of Area (Rural) Deans is increasing to include local strategic leadership as well as pastoral leadership in many dioceses. They are appointed locally, normally by the bishop. Being an Area Dean is also often seen as experience which is useful for more senior appointments.

This year, we included the proportion of Area Deans in any diocese who are women, although this figure is not included in the national statistics. It was a surprise to discover that this figure ranged from 4% (Norwich) to 60% (Leicester). Nor is there any correlation between the proportion of women incumbents, and the proportion of women who are Area Deans. Only nine dioceses have 40% or more Area Deans who are women. This is another question which could be asked in our own dioceses. Often bishops ask for suggestions when a new Area Dean is appointed, so suggesting a woman could help to increase the numbers of women in these roles.

Publishing these tables is beginning to lead to people contacting us and raising questions about them. Clearly, having this sort of information helps those continuing to campaign overtly or quietly for equity in appointments across the church.

### **Cathedral Chapters** (*table 3 in February Report*)

According to the tables issued by Church House, at the end of 2017 there were 13 cathedrals which had no ordained women as full-time members of Chapter, whether Deans or Residentiary Canons. Seven Deans were women (now 6). When we published these figures, one cathedral got in touch to say that they definitely had one ordained woman but who did not appear in the tables. It turned out that this was because of the way her post was funded, which was not through the central Church. It continues to be worth asking questions in your diocese and of your cathedrals: how many women, ordained or lay, are involved in decision making? How often are women seen leading services and preaching, including the major services? Often, those with the power to make changes have not noticed the lack of women, but when they do, may begin to think how they could open up worship and leadership to women as well as men.

### **Training Institutions**

A significant statistic that has been brought to our attention recently is the gender balance (or lack of it) of principals of theological colleges and courses. Until recently, Dr Emma Inseson was the Principal of Trinity College in Bristol and Diocesan Directors of Ordinands spoke of some women choosing to go there for this reason. In spring this year, Emma became Bishop of Penrith, and now there is no women principal of any theological residential college or regional course. There are women academic staff members, but, once again, this seems to show a lack of 'joined up thinking' from a Church that says it wants to encourage young women to train for ordination, but none of the Church's training institutions have a woman leading it.

### **The Church Army**

We were also asked why we did not include the Church Army when talking about the importance of the laity. There was a simple answer: the figures prepared by Church House do not include Church Army officers as a separate group, though some may be included in overall numbers. Church Army members are an order of authorised lay evangelists and have included women since 1914, although women were not licensed until 1921. In that year, there were 1,295 'Mission Women'. The tables published by Church House only include ordained clergy and Licensed Lay Readers. Church Army evangelists have included women and men for over a century and played a significant role in the Church. The lack of their numbers being shown clearly in the official statistics is an example of the ministry of women and the laity being hidden in the overall picture.

**Laity**, both men and women continue to play a huge part in the ministry, mission and organisation of parishes and dioceses. About a third of diocesan secretaries are women and over half of diocesan safeguarding officers. A third of the lay chairs of diocesan synods are women, although half of the chairs of the House of Clergy are women. This year, we noted that the three most senior Church Commissioners are all women: Ms Loretta Minghella is the First Estates Commissioner, the Rt Hon Caroline Spelman is the Second Estates Commissioner and Dr Eve Poole is the Third Estates Commissioner.

Finally, what about bishops? We often hear it said when a woman is appointed as a bishop that 'a man has no chance of being appointed a bishop now'. These are the numbers since the end of 2014 when women could first be appointed as bishops:

Diocesan Bishops: Five women have been appointed as diocesan bishops and eight men.

Suffragan Bishops: Nineteen women have been appointed as suffragan bishops (two have now been translated to diocesan sees) and seventeen men.

#### References

*Ministry Report and Diocesan Tables Aug 2018*

*Church of England Research and Statistics, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ.*

*Watch: A report on the Developments in women's Ministry in*

*2018*<https://womenandthechurch.org/resources/a-report-on-the-developments-in-womens-ministry-in-2018/>

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/346992/acc17-women-in-church-society-report.pdf>

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-03/gender-justice-for-all-strategy-jul-2014.pdf>