

Women, the Church and mutual flourishing 2012 - now

Nov 20 2012. The legislation (passed in a huge majority of dioceses) to enable women to be appointed as bishops, is defeated at its final reading in GS by the House of Laity. This was a huge shock to most members of the C of E and wider society; many ordained women felt rejected, de-skilled and undermined in their ministry and even questioned their own identity. Parliament asked questions of a state church which could not include women in leadership. The Archbishop and staff were given to understand that if the C of E could not find a way to include women among the bishops, Parliament would look at ways of taking action.

July 2013 General Synod started to prepare legislation again. (after various meetings and conversations from Feb)

The 5 Guiding Principles were drawn up by a group appointed by the house of Bishops and agreed by GS as a basis to prepare legislation - they set out the aims and boundaries of any legislation but at that stage had no other weight given to them.

Debates in July set the boundaries of future legislation:

- The view that the ordination of women in C of E was still subject to reception was clearly refuted
- Gen Synod remained committed to including those who did not accept this (both lay and ordained) within the C of E,
- A “ third province” or any separate form of structure for those opposed was voted down
- The concept that orders and legal role could be separated was voted down
- Any attempt to include provisions for those opposed in primary legislation was voted down.
- Members of Synod made it clear that they hoped future legislation would be based on relationships, trust and respect rather than legal provisions and barriers

July 14 2014 legislation to enable women to be appointed bishops passed by significant majorities, together with a Declaration by House of Bishops setting out how non- accepting (of women’s priesthood). parishes could be included and supported. Nothing in the declaration for women , lay or ordained, when they found themselves discriminated against or undermined. The declaration is generally about a parish, not individuals.

1993 Act of Synod repealed

An Independent Reviewer appointed by Archbishops to review any complaints about the application of the Declaration

BUT FiF and Reform issued documents setting out their views on 5 GPs in ways which led to very similar practice to Act of Synod and continuing separation from the rest of the church

2014 - today

5 Diocesan bishops are now women (out of a possible 42) and a woman now nominated as Bishop of Dover, who is de facto a diocesan bishop.

24 diocese have/will have women in their team of bishops

A PEV appointed with complementarian/ headship theology (Bishop of Maidstone); (in addition to FiF PEVs) BUT suppressed conflict remains, surfacing eg appointment of Philip North to Sheffield

- 5GPs are being used to enforce particular views of what is acceptable to say and do. All ordinands have to swear acceptance of them.
- No sense that the HoB’s declaration might need to be reviewed after five years
- “Mutual Flourishing” often feels a though it is women/those who want gender equality who have to be “gracious” but what it might look like has not been explored. It seems to be used more in the context of individuals who want a particular way of being/doing church, than the flourishing of a community
- The Independent Reviewer is one man (sic). Should there be a woman included in reviews?
- To date there is no robust theology underpinning the 5GPs (they were not created for theological reasons but practical ones)
- WATCH is challenging the lack of transparency in those who are opposed to women in leadership, particularly conservative Evangelical churches
- There is still a tendency in C of E leadership (and others) to see women as a sub group in the CofE
- Eg a “balanced” group will include a rep of FiF; a rep of Reform, a woman. Possibly no laity

Resources for considering Mutual Flourishing in the C of E

The basis for Mutual Flourishing and 5 Guiding Principles

1. **The 2014 Measure** (to enable women to be appointed as bishops)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukcm/2014/2/body>

NB the simplicity of the legislation itself

2. **The Declaration of the House of Bishops GS Misc 1076**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GSMisc1076WomenintheEpiscopate.pdf>

GS Misc 1076

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201415/jtselect/jtecc/45/4515.htm>

The text of the house of Bishop's Declaration

House of Bishops' Declaration on Ministry of bishops and priest d Priests - Guidance note from the House.pdf GS 1077

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GSMiscHouseofBishopseclarationntheMinistry20BishopsandPriests20GuidancenotefromHouse>

Resolution of Dispute GS Misc 1087

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GSMisc1087-disputeresolutionprocedureregulationsundercanonc.29.pdf>

The view of the Faith and Order Commission – discussion of the 5 GPs and the Declaration

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/5GuidingPrinciples.pdf>

The view of Forward in faith

https://www.sswsh.com/uploads/Communion_and_Full_Communion.pdf

<https://www.forwardinfaith.com/WBProvisions.php?id=213>

The view of Reform

https://www.bishopofmaidstone.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/bishop-full_screen.pdf

Bishop of Maidstone's Advent newsletter 2018

<https://www.bishopofmaidstone.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Newsletter-Advent-2018-final-version.pdf>

This includes the simple results of a survey of Reform clergy's views on various matters

Sheffield Action on Ministry Equality SAME produced several well thought out and argued blog posts in 2017

<https://shefminequal.wordpress.com/opinion/>