

GENERAL SYNOD

Women Bishops: Working Group on new legislative proposals

Please see below a statement which the Chair of the Working Group has asked to be circulated to Synod members.

William Fittall
Secretary General

31 January 2013

Synod members will have seen that, on 11 December, the House of Bishops established a working group drawn from all three Houses of Synod to advise it on the preparation of fresh legislative proposals to be brought before the Synod in July. The Archbishops announced the names of the ten members of the Group on 19 December.

We held our first meeting on 3 January and met again yesterday. At our first meeting we decided to invite 15 people to join us for intensive facilitated discussions on 5/6 February. We sought nominations for some of these places from interested groups and issued some invitations to named individuals.

We thought long and hard about the best arrangements and came to the conclusion that an event of this kind, at which we could do intensive and focused work with the help of outside facilitators, would be what was most productive at this stage of the process.

After our conversations conclude at the end of Wednesday afternoon the Working Group will be meeting the Archbishops and other members of the House of Bishops Standing Committee that evening in preparation for a special meeting of the House of Bishops on Thursday 7 February.

It will be for the House to decide what should happen thereafter in the light of the conversations that have happened. My expectation is that the House will issue a statement and give the working Group a fresh mandate for the next phase of its work. I would also hope that, shortly thereafter, there will be an opportunity to circulate a consultation document enabling all Synod members to make a contribution. Given the timescale to which we are working we shall probably need to seek responses by the end of February.

The ten of us who have been appointed to serve on the Working Group – 4 bishops, 3 clergy and 3 laity – are very conscious of the weight of expectation and responsibility placed on us. Do pray for us and for all those involved in the various discussions during the week of 4 February

+Nigel St Edmundsbury and Ipswich