

GENERAL SYNOD**Women in the Episcopate***A note from the Archbishops*

1. A year ago it was with some trepidation that the Synod was preparing to meet for the first time since the end of the unsuccessful legislative process the previous November. Now the situation looks very different. The facilitated conversations last July, the work of the Steering Committee last autumn, the imaginative decision for the revision process of the legislation to be committed to the whole Synod, and the large majorities in the November and February Group of Sessions, have created a new sense of hope and expectation.
2. Since February all 43 dioceses that were able to consider the draft legislation have given their approval. In diocesan houses of clergy 90% of those who cast a vote supported the legislation and in the houses of laity 92% did so.
3. In May, the House of Bishops made *The House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (GS Misc 1076)*, in the form welcomed by the Synod in February. The Declaration notes the significance of opening all orders of ministry equally to women and men and the opportunities this presents for building up the Body of Christ and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom.
4. The House amended its standing orders to provide that the *Declaration* cannot be amended unless a draft of the proposed amendment has first been approved by two-thirds majorities achieved in each House of the Synod. It also agreed the guidance note (GS Misc 1077) promised under paragraph 22 of the Declaration.
5. In May we also consulted the House about two issues on which particular responsibilities fall to us by virtue of the offices that we hold. These concern the outworking of paragraph 30 of the Declaration in relation to consecration arrangements and the presence in the College of at least one bishop who takes the Conservative Evangelical view on headship.
6. On the first, we recognise that, once the episcopate is open equally to all irrespective of gender, there will be some bishops who will be unable in conscience to participate in the laying on of hands at some services. There will also be new bishops who, because of the theological convictions held by them and those to whom they will minister, will have concerns about who presides and shares in the laying on of hands at their consecration.
7. Arrangements for consecration services are and will remain the personal responsibility and decision of the Archbishop of the Province, as is made clear in the Royal Mandate. After careful thought and prayer we do not believe that an attempt to offer detailed prescriptions as to how consecration services should be conducted in every

circumstance would help to establish the relational framework offered by the five guiding principles.

8. The proper place for the working out of details is in conversation between those concerned, and especially between any new bishop and the Archbishop of the Province. This is in the spirit of the analogous discussions between a parish that has passed a resolution and their diocesan bishop.
9. As Archbishops we will exercise that responsibility in ways that exemplify the five guiding principles, enabling bishops to serve across the spectrum of our teaching and tradition. Any special arrangements to which we may agree in particular cases will arise out of a spirit of gracious generosity, and will involve only such departures from the norm as are necessary to fulfil the spirit and purpose of the Declaration and to maintain the peace and unity of the Church. No consecration duly performed by either Archbishop as principal consecrator would be invalid.
10. On the second issue touched on in paragraph 30, it is evident that to date the normal processes for appointing diocesan and suffragan bishops have not delivered the aspiration to appoint a bishop who holds the Conservative Evangelical view on headship. It is also unclear whether the processes are capable of doing so within a reasonable timescale.ⁱ
11. We are therefore now consulting others with a view to ensuring that the aspiration is met within a matter of months. We recognise that, as stated in paragraph 30, such an appointment “is important for sustaining the necessary climate of trust”.
12. In the light of the decisions already taken and these clarifications now offered we believe that the circumstances now exist for the Synod to approach the final stages of the legislative process in July in a spirit of generosity and hope. As each member weighs his or her own responsibility in relation to the final approval debate we need each to consider how we can contribute to the well-being and unity of the Church, and the fruitfulness of our response to God’s call.
13. “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

✠ Justin Cantuar:

✠ Sentamu Eboracensis

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ⁱ GS 1650 - *Talent And Calling*; Recommendation 8 of the Report (in 4.4.1) reads:

“We recommend that bishops should be asked to indicate which (if any) of those currently on the List from their dioceses are from a conservative evangelical background. Bishops should be asked positively to look for clergy from this constituency who might either be qualified for inclusion on the Preferment List or might be developed in such a way that they might be qualified later on.”

The Report’s recommendations were debated and endorsed at the July 2007 Group of Sessions. The voting was AYES: 297; NOES: 1. Those responsible were invited to give effect to the recommendations and the Archbishops’ Council was asked to report to Synod during 2008 on progress with implementation. GS1680, which reported back to Synod in February 2008, did not address this particular recommendation.