

## PCC Resolutions on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests

On 17 November 2014 the General Synod enacted a Canon to enable women to become bishops. All three orders of ministry in the Church of England– bishop, priest and deacon – are now open equally to all, without reference to gender.

As a result of decisions taken by the Synod and the House of Bishops provision has also been made for those who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests. This provision, in the *House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests*, replaces the arrangements put in place more than twenty years ago when women were first ordained as priests.

Parochial Church Councils are no longer able to pass Resolutions A or B under the now repealed Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993 or petition under the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993 and are no longer required to consider passing or rescinding resolutions when they hold a meeting under section 11 of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 during a vacancy. Resolutions and petitions already in place will be treated until 17 November 2016 as if they were resolutions passed under the House of Bishops' Declaration.

The text of the House of Bishops' Declaration can be found on the Church of England Website<sup>1</sup>. It includes at paragraph 5 a statement of guiding principles, which were debated and welcomed by the General Synod. Their outworking is explored in paragraphs 6-15.

Arrangements for parishes are set out in paragraphs 16-29. Paragraphs 18-22 describe the process which should be followed where a PCC is to consider a resolution under the Declaration.

The House has issued a guidance note (referred to in paragraph 22 of the Declaration) to facilitate the conversations that will be necessary between a bishop and a PCC that has passed a resolution under Declaration. It can also be found online<sup>2</sup>.

Paragraphs 30-42 of the Declaration deal with various other matters, including the availability of a grievance procedure and the possibility of mediation. Arrangements for the resolution of disputes are set out in more detail in Regulations made by the House of Bishops under Canon C 29. The Independent Reviewer appointed under the Regulations is Sir Philip Mawer. Further information about his role, together with contact details, is available on the Church of England website<sup>3</sup>.

William Fittall  
Secretary General

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2011184/gs%20misc%201076%20-%20women%20in%20the%20episcopate%20house%20of%20bishops%20declaration.pdf> [GS Misc 1076]

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2011197/gs%20misc%201077%20-%20women%20in%20the%20episcopate%20guidance%20note%20from%20the%20house%20of%20bishops.pdf> [GS Misc 1077]

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/about-general-synod/house-of-bishops/declaration-on-the-ministry-of-bishops-and-priests.aspx>