

5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON WOMEN AND THE EPISCOPATE – A USER GUIDE

Since the ordination of women began in 1994, there have been a number of diocesan bishops who have not ordained women. Currently in the Church of England the Bishop of Chichester does not ordain women as priests, and Bishop Richard Chartres, who has just retired after twenty years' service as Bishop of London, also did not ordain women as priests. Both those bishops have supported the vocation and ministry of women within their dioceses.

It has been established for over two decades, both within the Church of England and within the Anglican Communion that both positions, those who support the ordination and consecration of women, and those who in conscience cannot support that, are fully Anglican.

For many years the Church of England wrestled with how to accommodate this commitment to supporting both positions while also permitting the consecration of women as bishops. The Church's first formal attempt to do this failed when the General Synod rejected the relevant legislation in November 2012.

At the second time of asking, the Church of England did pass legislation to permit the consecration of women as bishops in July 2014, after a process of reflection and dialogue to learn the lessons of its previous failure. The package that was agreed, and passed into law, in 2014, was founded on a declaration by the House of Bishops, approved by the General Synod. The declaration comprised five guiding principles, and above all a commitment to "mutual flourishing" for all traditions within the Church. That declaration forms a key part of the package which permitted the 2014 legislation, and enabled the consecration of the first women bishops (now ten, by February 2017) within the Church of England.

The declaration specifically provides that:

- A diocesan bishop may be either a bishop who does, or who does not, ordain women;
- A diocese may express a view, prior to a diocesan see being filled, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who does or does not ordain women;
- In every case where the diocesan bishop does not ordain women, there should be at least one bishop in the diocese who does ordain women;
- Senior leadership roles within dioceses should continue to be filled by people from across the range of traditions.

Those provisions are part of the "mutual flourishing" that is central to the declaration and to the package. The declaration also recognises that "there will need to be sensitivity to the feelings of vulnerability that some will have that their position within the Church of England will gradually be eroded and that others will have because not everyone will receive their ministry." It appreciates that the practical working out of these arrangements may not be easy, for the Church as a whole or for individuals.

The nomination of Bishop Philip North was made by the Crown Nominations Commission, a group comprising six representatives from the diocese itself, six from the national Church, and the two Archbishops. The process of selecting Bishop Philip was made entirely in line with the provisions of the House of Bishops declaration. His nomination for the see of Sheffield is therefore also in line with the provisions that made it possible for women to be consecrated as bishops.

The argument against Bishop Philip's nomination is based on a rejection of the five guiding principles in the House of Bishops' declaration. Some critics of the nomination have made clear that they do not believe in the five guiding principles. Instead, they would like to reopen the settlement made by

the Church of England in July 2014 which enabled both supporters of women's consecration, and those who opposed it, to flourish alongside each other within the Church.

Extracts from the House of Bishops Declaration

Now that the Church of England has admitted women to the episcopate there should within each diocese be at least one serving bishop, whether the diocesan or a suffragan, who ordains women to the priesthood. This has a bearing on the considerations that the Crown Nominations Commission and diocesan bishops will need to take into account when considering diocesan and suffragan appointments.

In addition, dioceses are entitled to express a view, in the statement of needs prepared during a vacancy in see, as to whether the diocesan bishop should be someone who will or will not ordain women. In dioceses where the diocesan bishop does not ordain women he should ensure that a bishop who is fully committed to the ordained ministry of women is given a role across the whole diocese for providing support for female clergy and their ministry.

All bishops have a shared responsibility for the welfare of the whole Church of England. It will be important that senior leadership roles within dioceses continue to be filled by people from across the range of traditions.

Five guiding principles

- Now that legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;
- Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;
- Since it continues to share the historic episcopate with other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and those provinces of the Anglican Communion which continue to ordain only men as priests or bishops, the Church of England acknowledges that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God;
- Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and
- Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.