



on to the priesthood in the Church of England. The first group of
dral.

Following a celebration at Lambeth Palace attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury, services will be held at cathedrals and churches throughout the country.

Meanwhile, the number of women entering training for ministry continues to grow.

Bristol Cathedral, the venue for the 1994 ordinations, will host a celebratory Eucharist on Sunday, at which the Bishop of Bristol, Vivienne Faull, will preach.

Manchester Cathedral will also host a celebratory service, with a one-day conference entitled 'Knowing our place?', while the Diocese of Southwark hosts a series of events entitled 'Visible Signs', leading up to a service in Southwark Cathedral. An informal gathering will also take place at Dorchester Abbey in Oxfordshire to mark the day.

On Friday, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby welcomed more than 80 priests to Lambeth Palace for a service to mark the milestone. Those participating ranged from bishops to women training for the priesthood, with The Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Chaplain, giving the sermon.

Speaking at the service, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby said: "Many of those here today have been pioneers as they work out what it means to be an ordained woman in the Church of England – not just for themselves and their communities, but for the whole of the Body of Christ.

"Today let us bear witness to those who paved the way in 1994, as well as upholding those whose way into ministry has been opened up since."

Women now make up nearly a third of the 20,000 active clergy in the Church of England according to the latest figures which also show a 38% increase in the number of women starting training for ordained ministry in the past two years.

Dr Mandy Ford, Director of the Church of England's Ministry Division, said: "As we celebrate this anniversary, it is wonderful to see how increasing numbers of women are hearing God's call to ministry and bringing their varied gifts and life experiences to serve God in the Church.

"We are encouraging more women to follow in their footsteps and consider the call to ordained ministry."



At Bristol Cathedral on 12 March 1994, Barry Rogerson, the Bishop of Bristol, ordained 32 women to the priesthood, who become the first in the Church of England.

Commenting on the anniversary, he said: “Over the last twenty five years I have observed and received the ministry of women in parishes, but also in chaplaincies; hospitals and hospices, schools, universities and prisons and know what an innovative and positive contribution women have made to the priesthood.

“Perhaps today we might give a thought for all those women worldwide whose vocations to the priesthood have still been neither recognised nor tested.”

With the candidates presented in alphabetical order, Angela Berners-Wilson became the first woman to be ordained to the priesthood, after final legislation had been passed by General Synod on 11 November 1992. She said: “It was an amazing thing to be – by a few seconds – the first woman to be ordained to the priesthood in the Church of England.

“I’ve been reflecting with great gratitude on those other women who were priested alongside me, and the many hundreds of others since.

“For 25 years it has been the greatest privilege to finally be able to live out my calling, after a 15-year probationary period first as a Deaconess then as a Deacon.

“Today is a day to celebrate all the women priests who have been enabled to grow into the fullness of who God has called them to be as bearers of Christ’s good news for the world.”

Notes for editors

Final legislation for women to become priests was approved by General Synod on 11 November 1992, before a pastoral statement in 1993 by the House of Bishops (known as the ‘Manchester Statement’) paved the way for approval in both Parliamentary Houses. The measure received Royal Assent on 5 November 1993.

2019 also marks 50 years since women were first licensed as Lay Readers, and five years since legislation was passed to enable women to be appointed bishops.

Key Stats

- There are 5,950 women in ordained ministry in the Church of England. (2017)
- 30% of clergy are women. (2017)
- 319 women began training for ordination in 2018, a 38% increase over two years.
- 54% of those starting training for ordination are women. (2018)
- Nearly a quarter of clergy in senior posts (bishops, deans and archdeacons) in 2017 were women, which is almost double what it was five years previously.

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