

At its meeting on 4 December the Dioceses Commission unanimously agreed with a proposal received from the Archbishop of Canterbury to fill the vacant see of Maidstone. The see, which had been vacant since 2009, had been identified by the Archbishop as one that should be filled by a bishop who takes a conservative evangelical view on headship.

This flows from the public commitment given by the Archbishops and the House of Bishops, in the run up to the final approval by the General Synod of the legislation to allow women to be admitted to the episcopate in July 2014 (see paragraph 30 of House of Bishops Declaration and the Archbishops' note of June 2013- GS Misc 1079).

In agreeing with the proposal to fill the see the Commission was conscious of the needs of the national church for a member of the College of Bishops to be able to act as an advocate for those who hold a conservative position on headship.

It made its decision on the understanding that the bishop would foster vocations from those taking this position; that he would undertake episcopal ministry (with the agreement of the relevant diocesan bishop) in dioceses in both Provinces where PCCs have passed the requisite resolution under the House of Bishops' declaration; and that he would be available to act (again by invitation) as an assistant bishop in a number of dioceses.

While available to take his place in the Foundation of Canterbury Cathedral, the Commission understood that - given his potentially wide geographical remit - the bishop would not otherwise be expected to participate in the life of the Diocese of Canterbury.

The necessary steps to make the appointment will now begin.

ENDS

#### Notes for Editors

- Part of the normal statutory process for filling suffragan sees is for the Dioceses Commission to consider, on behalf of the national church, whether to agree to a proposal from a diocesan bishop to fill such a see.
- Suffragan sees are normally filled within a short time frame but the See of Maidstone was left vacant following a diocesan decision to appoint an additional archdeacon.
- This conservative evangelical view on headship is summarised on pp 149-151 of **Women Bishops in the Church of England? The Report of the House of Bishops' Working Party on Women In the Episcopate 2004 [GS 1557]**. See: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1258758/gs1557.pdf>
- The House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests of 19 May 2014 [GS Misc 1076], which includes the five guiding principles can be read in full at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2011184/gs%20misc%201076%20-%20women%20in%20the%20episcopate%20house%20of%20bishops%20declaration.pdf>

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