



23 March 2017

Dear Sir Philip Mawer,

Nomination to the See of Sheffield and concerns raised about the operation of the House of Bishops' declaration under Regulation 27

We are writing to ask you, in your capacity as Independent Reviewer under the Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (Resolution of Disputes Procedure Regulations) 2014, to address certain concerns that have arisen in the Church following recent events relating to the See of Sheffield.

We do not set out the events in any detail here. You will doubtless be aware of the main elements:

- on 6 July 2016 the See of Sheffield became vacant following the translation of Bishop Steven Croft from Sheffield to Oxford
- on 31 January 2017 HM Government announced that, following the usual process of nomination of candidates by the Crown Nominations Commission to the Prime Minister, HM The Queen had been pleased to approve the nomination of Bishop Philip North, the Bishop of Burnley, to the See of Sheffield
- on 9 March 2017 Bishop Philip North announced that he had withdrawn his acceptance of the nomination.

This sequence of events has prompted some in the Church to question whether the House of Bishops' Declaration of May 2014, and its five Guiding Principles, and the commitment the Church made in it to "mutual flourishing", remain intact.

As Archbishops, Primates and Metropolitans, we reaffirm clearly our commitment, and the commitment of the House of Bishops, to its Declaration, to the principles contained in it, and to the overriding principle of mutual flourishing. The Declaration formed a central element of the settlement by which we were able both to welcome women joyfully into all the orders of ministry in the Church, and also to continue to provide an honoured and permanent place in the Church for those who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable, to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests.

But as Archbishop Sentamu noted in his statement commenting on Bishop Philip's withdrawal, we are conscious that in some of the discussion about the See of Sheffield, we have not always as a Church shown how we can disagree Christianly.

Although we are clear that the House of Bishops' Declaration, and the Guiding Principles embodied in it, remain in full force and effect, we recognise that the recent events have nonetheless raised a number of specific concerns in the Church about its operation. Some of those concerns relate to whether the nomination itself, and the procedure leading up to it, were in accordance with the Declaration. Others are about whether what happened once the nomination had been announced was consistent with the Declaration. Others relate to the degree of understanding of the Declaration in the Church.

Given the significance of these concerns (many of which have been expressed to us directly) from the point of view of the future outworking of the Declaration in the life of the Church, we therefore request you to exercise your power, as the Independent Reviewer under Regulation 27, to consider and report on the operation of the Declaration from the point of view of:

- (a) what has been done in the Church, including in the diocese of Sheffield, to inform and educate clergy and laity about the settlement agreed in 2014, and the effect of the Declaration within that settlement;
- (b) the process leading to the nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield;
- (c) the consistency of that nomination with the Declaration;
- (d) the reactions to that nomination in the Church and beyond; and
- (e) the response of the institutional Church to the nomination and to the reactions to it.

We hope that you will be willing to investigate these concerns and that, once you have been able to do so, you will be able to produce your report on them with the minimum of delay."



The Most Revd & Rt Hon Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury



The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr John Sentamu
Archbishop of York