

House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests

Chrism Masses: Report of the Independent Reviewer

Introduction

1. Part of the package enabling the consecration of women to the episcopate in the Church of England was the introduction of a process for the resolution of disputes relating to the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (GS Misc 1076). The Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (Resolution of Disputes Procedure) Regulations 2014 provide for the appointment of an Independent Reviewer to consider individual grievances from a parish as well as more general expressions of concern arising from the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, with the concurrence of the Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the General Synod, confirmed my appointment to this new role which took effect from 17 November 2014.
2. On 13 April 2015, Hilary Cotton, Chair of Women and the Church ('WATCH') wrote to me expressing WATCH's concern about the fact that a number of chrism masses were to be held in 2015, as in former years, at which bishops of the Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda ('the Society') – an ecclesial community dedicated to maintaining catholic teaching and practice within the Church of England – would preside. Ms Cotton asked in what possible way continuing these occasions honoured the five principles embodied in the House of Bishops' Declaration, in particular the first two of those principles and the call in the Declaration to promote mutual flourishing. A copy of Ms Cotton's letter is attached at Appendix A.

Jurisdiction

3. The primary focus of the disputes resolution procedure is the resolution of grievances arising from the operation of the Declaration in relation to individual parishes. However, paragraph 27 of the Regulations provides that:

"Any person may raise a concern, in writing, with the Independent Reviewer in relation to any aspect of the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration. Any such concern may relate to more than one act or omission under the House of Bishops' Declaration and to more than one parish or diocese."

This provision is cast in broad terms and on receiving Ms Cotton's letter, I was clear that the concern she had expressed on behalf of WATCH fell within its scope.

4. However, when writing to me, Ms Cotton had not specifically indicated that WATCH intended me to treat her letter as an expression of concern under paragraph 27. I therefore wrote to her asking her to confirm that that was their wish. She replied on 18 April confirming that that was indeed their wish. A copy of her further letter is at Appendix B.
5. In providing for the Independent Reviewer to consider such an expression of concern, the Steering Committee for the draft legislation on Women in the Episcopate suggested that the threshold for consideration of a concern "*should be reasonably high*" (paragraph 75 of GS 1924). I am satisfied that the issue raised in Ms Cotton's letter is of such a kind that it would be right for me to consider it under Regulation 27. It concerns a matter – the

provision of chrism masses by bishops of the Society – which affects the Church of England as a whole and is an ongoing issue. Moreover, in my judgement, it would not be in the interests of the Church for me to decline to consider the concern she has raised.

The Five Principles

6. In her letters of 13 and 18 April, Ms Cotton argues in effect, on behalf of WATCH, that the continued provision of chrism masses by bishops of the Society is inconsistent with the five principles in the House of Bishops' Declaration. Since these principles are central both to her argument and to its proper consideration by me, it is appropriate to reproduce them in full at the outset:

“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 the 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.”

The Grounds of WATCH's Concern

7. Ms Cotton advances the following arguments in support of the concern she expresses on behalf of WATCH:
- (a) There is no sacramental need for bishops of the Society to provide such masses as chrism masses are also held in each diocese and, presided over by the diocesan bishop, provide an opportunity for all clergy of the diocese, whatever their view on the ordination of women, to show their full involvement in the diocese's life.
 - (b) The provision of alternative chrism masses emphasises division and is “*a cause of much pain to clergy women and their supportive male colleagues*”. The continuation of such events is “*a thoughtless challenge to mutual flourishing*”.

- (c) While WATCH understands the wish of those who dissent from the ordination of women to gather together and celebrate the Eucharist, to do this in a way that perpetuates division rather than one in which all the clergy of a diocese unite in renewing their common vows is, in their opinion, wrong.
8. After setting out its five principles (reproduced in paragraph 6 above), the House of Bishops said in its Declaration that it believed their outworking needed to be accompanied by the observance of what might collectively be described as three supporting principles: simplicity, reciprocity and mutuality. In her letter of 18 April, Ms Cotton drew my attention to paragraphs 9, 10 and 14 of the House of Bishops' Declaration as being particularly relevant in her view to my consideration of the issues. These paragraphs relate to two of the three supporting principles and respectively state:

*Paragraph 9 – “**Reciprocity** means that everyone, notwithstanding differences of conviction on this issue, will accept that they can rejoice in each other's partnership in the Gospel and cooperate to the maximum possible extent in mission and ministry. There will need to be an acknowledgement that the differences of view which persist stem from an underlying divergence of theological conviction.”*

Paragraph 10 – “In particular reciprocity will mean that those of differing conviction will do all within their power to avoid giving offence to each other. 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.”

*Paragraph 14 – “**Mutuality** reflects the Church of England's wider commitment to sustaining diversity. It means that those of differing conviction will be committed to making it possible for each other to flourish. All should play a full part in the lives of the deaneries and dioceses and be prepared to engage with the diocesan bishop whoever he or she is.”*

The Response of the Bishops of the Society of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda

9. Having determined that it was appropriate for me to consider WATCH's expression of concern, I wrote to the Secretary of the Council of Bishops of the Society of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda inviting the bishops' comments. I also invited the comments of the Bishops of Ebbsfleet, Richborough and Beverley who, whilst being members of the Council, have a wider provincial role in providing episcopal oversight. In the event, I received a single response from the Bishop of Wakefield on behalf of all the bishops who had recently presided at these chrism masses.

10. In his letter of 7 May (copy at Appendix C), the Bishop of Wakefield says:

- (a) The chrism masses about which WATCH is concerned were not arranged by the Society corporately, but by the individual bishops who presided at them.
- (b) They have a long history and a clear theological purpose – the blessing of holy oils and renewal of priestly vows.
- (c) The masses are an essential part of the sacramental ministry of the bishops concerned to the clergy and people who have been placed by the House of Bishops' Declaration under their oversight and care.
- (d) WATCH has not understood that if a male bishop ordains women as priests, this impairs the communion between that bishop and those of his priests who, for theological reasons, cannot accept the ordination of women, so that the degree of communion between those priests and the bishop in question is less than full. This means that those priests who take this view do not feel able to participate (or at least to participate fully) in a chrism mass presided over by such a bishop.
- (e) Any pain the masses cause to clergy women and others is "*a cause of concern*" but the underlying pain results from "*the decision to ordain women as bishops and priests while recognising that their ministry cannot be received by all in our church*". The chrism masses in question reflect the reality of division: they are not the cause of it.
- (f) The bishops concerned all accept the decision of the Church of England both to ordain women and to make provision for those who cannot receive their ministry, and they uphold the House of Bishops' Declaration.
- (g) The masses are necessary for the flourishing of those committed to the bishops' care. Nothing about the masses is hostile to the flourishing of others (Principle 5), nor do they conflict with the first and second principles in the House of Bishops' Declaration.
- (h) Various of the masses in question have been attended by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, by other diocesan and suffragan bishops, and by women clergy. Reciprocally, several of the bishops who presided at them and some of the clergy present have also attended chrism masses presided over by other diocesan bishops.
- (i) "*The letter from WATCH refers to 'mutual flourishing', but it seems to be predicated on the belief that female bishops and priests will only flourish if the flourishing of others is limited. This is not our understanding of 'mutual flourishing'.*"

11. The Bishop of Wakefield concludes by affirming on behalf of all the bishops concerned their commitment to encourage those under their care to play as full a part as possible in the life and mission of the church, and to show respect to ordained women and all lawful office holders. Stressing the bishops' intention to serve the unity, health and faithfulness of the whole Church, he continues:

"Our energies are directed not towards limiting the freedom and flourishing of others, but to the 'care of all the churches' especially those committed to our

charge and leading them in mission. We are committed to providing them with the oversight and the pastoral and sacramental ministry promised to them in the House of Bishops' Declaration. We will do our best to promote the five guiding principles and to defend the Declaration from any who seek to undermine its provisions".

12. Having considered the Bishop of Wakefield's response, I was concerned to clarify the extent to which the masses over which he and his colleagues had presided had been undertaken under the authority and with the knowledge of the bishop of the diocese concerned. Accordingly I wrote asking under whose legal jurisdiction the masses were held and whether it was the practice of the presiding bishop to inform the relevant diocesan bishop of what was intended. A copy of my letter is at Appendix D.
13. The Bishop of Wakefield replied giving further information in response to the query in my letter. The key points in his letter and its accompanying table (copy at Appendix E) are:
 - (a) Every Eucharist celebrated in any diocese is celebrated under the authority of the diocesan bishop.
 - (b) The nature of the sixteen masses celebrated in 2015 varied. One was celebrated by a bishop in his own diocese (Chichester); three by bishops who are suffragans in the dioceses concerned; and the remaining twelve by one or other of the Bishops of Ebbsfleet, Richborough and Beverley. These last had more of the character of a regional than a diocesan event.
 - (c) In thirteen of the sixteen cases, the presiding bishop was the diocesan, a suffragan, or an assistant bishop in the diocese concerned. Accordingly he would have had a general permission to preside at the Eucharist in the churches under his care. The specific consent of the diocesan bishop to him presiding at the masses concerned would not therefore be required, but it would be usual practice for the diocesan bishop to be informed of them in advance.

WATCH's Response

14. At the same time as writing to the Bishop of Wakefield, I wrote to Ms Cotton forwarding a copy of the Bishop of Wakefield's letter of 7 May. I did so because the Bishop's letter made a number of criticisms (either implicit or explicit) of the position taken by WATCH in its letters to me of 13 and 18 April, to which it seemed to me appropriate that WATCH should be given the opportunity to reply.
15. Ms Cotton, Chair of WATCH, replied on 18 June. A copy of her letter is at Appendix F. Her letter is closely argued but her key points are:
 - (a) The Bishop of Wakefield's letter of 7 May does not in her view satisfactorily address WATCH's concern that holding alternative chrism masses contravenes the first two principles in the House of Bishops' Declaration.
 - (b) Holding alternative masses enshrines division and marginalises, or undermines the authority of, the diocesan bishop.

(c) Encouraging people to attend both a chrism mass presided over by the diocesan bishop and one presided over by a member of the Council of Bishops of the Society makes the situation worse.

(d) The notion that oil blessed by a bishop who ordains women is unacceptable implies that such a bishop's ministry is deficient, and is a step away from a theology of 'taint'¹.

16. Ms Cotton goes on to explore the history of the chrism mass, pointing out that while the Catholic practice of blessing oils is ancient (dating at least from about 750 AD), linking this with the renewal of priestly vows dates only from the second half of the 20th century. Whilst this practice has been adopted by many Anglican dioceses since it was introduced in the Roman Catholic Church in 1970, there is as yet no generally accepted Anglican theology to accompany it.

17. Finally, the Chair of WATCH says that the Bishop of Wakefield has misrepresented WATCH's understanding of what is meant by "mutual flourishing":

"Mutual flourishing is, we believe, not meant to be about each group flourishing independently, 'tolerating' the other's presence, but flourishing together even though that causes tension – which is why all clergy renewing their vows together would seem to be a case in point."

She concludes:

"Our intervention in this case seems to have caused offence, even though our intention was to challenge rather than attack ... Can we find a better way to discuss such things, with your help?"

A Further Clarification by the Bishop of Wakefield

18. Before I began my final consideration of the issues in this case, I thought it important to share a draft of the preceding sections of this report with Ms Cotton and the Bishop of Wakefield, in order to ensure that my summary of their respective arguments was fair and accurate. They both suggested a few minor amendments, which I have incorporated in this final text.

19. The Bishop of Wakefield also took the opportunity to clarify the position of bishops of the Society in relation to the concern expressed in WATCH's letter of 18 June which I have summarised at paragraph 15(d) above. Since it is from the Society's perspective an important clarification, I reproduce it here:

"Our point was not the negative point that oil consecrated by a bishop who ordains women is 'unacceptable', but the positive point that priests use oil consecrated by the bishop under whose oversight they minister, that under the House of Bishops' Declaration a pastoral and sacramental ministry of oversight is committed to us, and that our pastoral and sacramental ministry of oversight involves the consecration of oils for use in the sacramental ministry of priests who minister under our oversight."

¹ For the Bishop of Wakefield's response to this point, see paragraph 19 below.

“... We do not believe, and have never suggested, that the ministry of a bishop who ordains women to the priesthood and shares in their ordination to the episcopate is ‘deficient’ or ‘tainted’. Our theology is one of communion, not of taint. At our Chrism masses the priests who look to us are able to concelebrate the Eucharist with, and receive the Holy Oils from, a bishop with whom they are in full communion because they are able to receive the ministry of all whom that bishop ordains. That is nothing more than priests who are able to receive the sacramental ministry of women as bishops and priests enjoy at other Chrism Masses. To misrepresent this theology of communion as a theology of ‘taint’ does nothing to build mutual understanding.”

The Bishop’s letter of 27 June containing this statement is reproduced in full at Appendix G.

Analysis

Chrism Masses and the Church of England

20. Before I address the arguments advanced by WATCH in support of their concern and the response (on behalf of bishops of the Society) of the Bishop of Wakefield, it may be helpful for me to say something about the sacramental, pastoral and historical significance of chrism masses and the recent history of these masses in the Church of England. Although the account I give tallies at a number of points with that in Ms Cotton’s letter of 18 June, what follows has been prepared with the help of staff in Church House, Westminster. Responsibility for it is, of course – as with the rest of this report – entirely my own.
21. First, although an annual rite for the blessing of oils on Maundy Thursday by the bishop for use in his diocese throughout the year was in place by the early Middle Ages in the Western Church, its emergence as a significant event in the diocesan calendar in the Church of England is relatively recent. In the post World War II period, as part of a wider renewal of the Holy Week liturgies initiated by Pope Paul VI, it was combined in the Roman Catholic Church with a focus on priests reaffirming their commitment to a ministry whose centre was the Eucharist, on the day commemorating its institution at the Last Supper. This brought it a new prominence. Gradually, the new service in the Roman Catholic Church combining the blessing of oils with renewal of commitment to priestly ministry began to be adopted, adapted in various ways, in some Church of England dioceses. By the 1990s it had become a well-established custom in a number of places, and guidance based on current practice was drawn up by the Liturgical Commission for inclusion with the commended material for Holy Week in ‘Times and Seasons’ in 2006.
22. Secondly, the adoption of this practice in the Church of England has been very much an organic process, without central coordination or direction. Attendance at a chrism mass, while valued by many clergy and laity, is not in any strong sense required.
23. Thirdly, because its adoption has been an organic process, there is, as Ms Cotton suggests, no clear and formally agreed theological rationale for its use in the Church of England. Any attempts there may have been to create one have not prospered. The most that has been achieved is the inclusion in ‘Common Worship: Times and Seasons’ of some “resources for a chrism eucharist” rather than of a specific liturgy.

24. Finally, the widespread popularity of these services in recent times suggests that they have come to serve a significant purpose, and not just for traditional anglo-catholics. This significance lies not only in their original focus – the blessing of oils – but in their more recent purpose as an expression of the collegiality of all ordained ministers under the oversight of their bishop. For those who do not see themselves as being in full communion with their diocesan bishop (whether male or female), “their bishop” in this sacramental context is the bishop to whom the responsibility of exercising oversight and providing pastoral and sacramental ministry has been assigned by the relevant diocesan under the terms of the House of Bishops’ Declaration.

Consideration of the Arguments

25. In her letters of 13 and 18 May, Ms Cotton invites me to consider the chrism masses arranged by bishops of the Society of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda in relation in particular to principles 1 and 2 of the House of Bishops’ five principles (which I have reproduced in full in paragraph 6 above) and to the supporting principles of reciprocity and mutuality (specifically, the concept of “mutual flourishing”) as set out in paragraphs 9, 10 and 14 of the Declaration.

Principles 1 and 2

26. Principles 1 and 2 focus respectively on acknowledgement that those whom the Church of England has duly ordained and appointed to office are the true and lawful holders of their office “*and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience*” (principle 1) and on the firm expectation that “*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*” [of ordaining women as bishops and priests] (principle 2). In short, they are about recognition and acceptance by all authorised ministers of the jurisdiction and authority of their diocesan bishop and the lawful nature of the orders of all bishops and priests regardless of their gender.
27. As we have seen, chrism masses organised by bishops of the Society take place under the authority of the diocesan bishop and frequently with the participation of the diocesan. Moreover, according to the Bishop of Wakefield, it is the usual practice of bishops who are members of the Society to inform the relevant diocesan bishop of their intention to preside at such a mass, even where the specific authority of the diocesan to do so is not required because the presiding bishop already has a more general authority of such a kind as to allow him to do so.
28. Chrism masses alternative to the one presided over by the relevant diocesan bishop have been going on for twenty years. They arise from (a) the less than full degree of communion between those diocesan bishops who ordain women and those among their clergy who, for reasons of theological conviction, cannot accept the ordination of women as priests and (b) the arrangements for the oversight and pastoral care of such clergy made by the Church.
29. The propriety of the masses flows from (a) their lawfulness and (b) their place in the provision of sacramental and pastoral ministry for clergy and laity who are unable to receive the ministry of women priests and bishops and who consequently do not regard themselves as being in full communion with their diocesan bishop. That ministry is

provided by other bishops under the terms of the House of Bishops' Declaration and, crucially, is provided under the authority of the relevant diocesan bishop.

30. Attendance at chrism masses – whether presided over by the diocesan bishop or by another bishop with the diocesan's agreement – whilst desirable has never been compulsory. It cannot therefore in my view be said either that failure to attend a chrism mass presided over by the diocesan bishop is a breach of principles 1 and 2, or that holding or attending an alternative chrism mass is such a breach – provided that the mass is clearly taking place under the overall authority of the relevant diocesan. I have seen no evidence to suggest that the chrism masses organised by the Society breach that crucial requirement.
31. For the reasons I have given I do not find that the continuation of chrism masses presided over by bishops of the Society is a breach of principles 1 or 2 of the House of Bishops' Declaration.
32. I pause at this point to observe that, as women are appointed as diocesan bishops, it will become even more important that not only the proprieties but the courtesies as between one bishop and another are observed in relation to such matters and, for example, that all diocesan bishops, whether male or female, are informed in advance when an alternative chrism mass is to be held in their diocese. The continued offering of opportunities for the diocesan to attend and play a role in such masses, if they so wish, along the lines described by the Bishop of Wakefield in his letter of 7 May will also be important. In saying this, I have no reason to believe that such courtesies will not be observed but simply underline their importance in developing good practice in terms of mutual recognition and mutual honouring.

Reciprocity and Mutuality

33. However, principles 1 and 2 cannot be viewed in isolation. As the Declaration itself says, the five principles “*need to be read one with the other and held together in tension, rather than being applied selectively*” (Declaration, paragraph 5).
34. The House of Bishops has also declared its belief that “*the outworking of these principles needs to be accompanied by simplicity, reciprocity and mutuality*” (Declaration, paragraph 6). In her letter of 18 April, Ms Cotton drew my attention particularly to the importance of these latter two concepts in addressing WATCH's concern.
35. On the subject of reciprocity, the declaration says *inter alia*:

*“**Reciprocity** means that everyone, notwithstanding differences of conviction on this issue, will accept that they can rejoice in each other's partnership in the Gospel and cooperate to the maximum possible extent in mission and ministry. There will need to be an acknowledgement that the differences of view which persist stem from an underlying divergence of theological conviction.*

“In particular reciprocity will mean that those of differing conviction will do all within their power to avoid giving offence to each other. 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.”

(Declaration, paragraphs 9 and 10)

36. In her letter of 13 April, Ms Cotton draws attention to the degree of hurt which the holding of alternative chrism masses causes women clergy and their supportive male colleagues. This sense of hurt should not be underestimated. It arises, she suggests, from the extent to which such masses emphasise division within a diocese and underline the fact that women’s orders are not yet accepted by a significant number of their fellow clergy. In that sense, such masses are a focus for *“the hurt that others will have because not everyone will receive their ministry”* (paragraph 10 of the Declaration).
37. Ms Cotton also refers to Principle 5, with its recognition that pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England who cannot accept the ordination of women must be made *“in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England”*. She draws attention also to what paragraph 14 of the House of Bishops’ Declaration says in the context of mutuality:

“Mutuality reflects the Church of England’s wider commitment to sustaining diversity. It means that those of differing conviction will be committed to making it possible for each other to flourish. All should play a full part in the lives of the deaneries and dioceses and be prepared to engage with the diocesan bishop whoever he or she is”.

She argues in this context that:

“The continuation of such events, sacramentally unnecessary as they are, seems to us [WATCH] to be a thoughtless challenge to mutual flourishing”.

38. It will be clear from what I have already said that I do not accept WATCH’s view that alternative chrism masses are sacramentally unnecessary. They are a consequence of the less than full communion between some bishops and a minority of priests who differ from those bishops on the subject of the ordination of women, and of the fact that the Church of England has decided to make alternative sacramental provision for this minority. But are the masses *“a thoughtless challenge to mutual flourishing”*?
39. It is clear that, on the one hand, such masses are seen by those who cannot accept the ordination of women as priests and bishops as an essential component of their flourishing, and on the other are seen as a denial of the full flourishing of those who constitute the majority, notably of women priests themselves. The concept of mutuality is crucial to holding these two positions in tension and to answering the question I posed in the preceding paragraph. For *“mutual flourishing”* is not the same as *“my flourishing”*. It is about recognising and living with both the deeply felt theological conviction and sacramental need which drive the provision of these masses and the hurt that others will feel because these masses continue to be held. Both the need and the hurt are an inevitable consequence of the division and consequent tension which the Church of England still exhibits over the ordination of women and which (some would say) it has bravely, and in consequence of its understanding of its obligation under the Gospel, decided to continue to hold within itself whilst this development is tested and received within the Church.

40. If these considerations lead me to reject WATCH's assertion that the chrism masses organised by the Society are "a thoughtless challenge to mutual flourishing" and to add that living with the hurt they occasion is a necessary consequence of the current state of less than full communion in some quarters of the Church, they do not lead me to deny the relevance of the concept of mutual flourishing to the manner in which these masses are advertised and conducted. I do not imply any criticism of those who organise and preside at them, or of what has gone before, when I say that it will be essential that they continue to be advertised and conducted wholly within the spirit of the House of Bishops' Declaration, not that is as narrow gatherings of one embattled section within the Church but as outward-looking celebrations of what those present have to bring to the wider Church of England as well as to the Church catholic of which the Church of England is part. It is therefore encouraging to read in the Bishop of Wakefield's letter of 7 May that *"there is nothing about them or the way in which they are celebrated that is in any way hostile to the flourishing of others"*; the fact that women clergy have been robed and thanked for their presence at such masses; and his assurance that he and his fellow bishops *"encourage our clergy and people to show respect to ordained women and to all lawful office holders in the Church of England, and to engage with their diocesan bishops"*, and are *"committed to supporting ordained women in their ministry as far as we are able"*. The continual demonstration, on the one hand by the majority of understanding as to why these masses are held and on the other by the minority of its firm commitment to the assurances given by the bishop, will not remove any pain these masses may cause, but should at least help that pain to be lived with.

41. Before I conclude, there is one other argument advanced in Ms Cotton's letter of 18 June which I should address. This is that:

"The situation is only made worse and not better by encouraging people to attend both the diocesan and the PEV services".

Whilst Ms Cotton does not amplify this point, I am afraid I do not find it convincing. Given that the Church is divided on the issue of the ordination of women and has nonetheless decided to try to maintain the highest possible degree of communion whilst making appropriate provision for those in the minority, some people participating in both occasions may be seen as a rather crucial way of stressing the degree of communion which both sides share. Conversely, isolating the different events would seem further to underline the existence of division.

Conclusion

42. In brief, I understand the concern expressed by Ms Cotton on behalf of WATCH that the chrism masses organised by bishops who are members of the Society of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda emphasise the continuing division within the Church of England on the subject of the ordination of women and are hurtful to women clergy and their male supporters. However I do not find that these masses are, in themselves, a breach of the principles set out in the House of Bishops' Declaration. Rather they are a consequence of the underlying division and of the pastoral arrangements the Church has thought it right to make for those who hold the minority view. Provided the masses continue themselves to be conducted within the spirit of the Five Principles, with due sensitivity to the feeling of others, and with full regard to the lawful authority of the relevant diocesan bishop

(whether male or female), they will continue to be consistent with the House of Bishops' Declaration.

43. I add two further thoughts, which are for the House of Bishops and diocesan bishops in particular to consider. Paragraph 14 of the House of Bishops' Declaration says:

"All should play a full part in the lives of the deaneries and dioceses and be prepared to engage with the diocesan bishop whoever he or she is".

Chrism masses are by no means the only occasion when the canonical unity of the clergy of a diocese with their bishop can be demonstrated. (The difficulty with chrism masses is that they have a sacramental focus, and sacramental unity is inevitably less than complete between those bishops and priests who favour the ordination of women and the minority who, on grounds of theological conviction, do not.) It is important in underlining the continued unity of the Church of England in terms of both jurisdiction and mission that suitable opportunities be found from time to time publicly to demonstrate that unity, not least to an increasingly embattled laity. How that is best done is a matter which bishops will no doubt continue to consider as befits the circumstances in their own diocese.

44. My second thought is this. In her letter of 18 June, Ms Cotton makes a very important, not to say moving plea for the development of a forum in which those of differing convictions on the ordination of women as priests and bishops can together discuss what, for example, "mutual flourishing" means for each of them and for the Church. What (to use my own words) would a state of mutual flourishing look like which was more than one of merely tolerating difference and living with hurt but in which, to quote paragraph 14 of the House of Bishops' Declaration, *"those of differing conviction will be committed to making it possible for each other to flourish"* and in which the aim of all concerned is to promote what is held in common, honouring each other in the process? Ms Cotton asks of me, *"Can we find a better way to discuss such things, with your help?"*
45. In his letter of 27 June commenting on a draft of the factual sections of this report, the Bishop of Wakefield picked up this matter, welcoming Ms Cotton's *"suggestion that there might be a better way of discussing such things than submitting to you, as formal 'concerns' under the Regulations, matters that have not been discussed with those who are the subject of such complaints."* He went on *"If you can help in identifying a better way to discuss such things, I am sure that would be appreciated."*
46. Whilst I intend to play my part in helping the Church to address it, the challenge which Ms Cotton and the Bishop of Wakefield have identified is not one just for me but for the whole Church. It is an issue for all who value the integrity and effectiveness of the Church's witness and one to which the Church needs to find a solution if it is to discover ways of modelling in reality the principles embodied in the House of Bishops' Declaration.

Sir Philip Mawer

31 July 2015

Women and the Church

Affirming ♦ Campaigning ♦ Transforming



Mr Philip Mawer, Independent Reviewer
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13th April 2015

Dear Mr Mawer

Chrism Masses – a powerful expression of disunity.

We have discovered that there are to be many 'alternative' chrism masses this year, as in former years, at which SSWSH bishops will preside. Our question is, in what possible way does the continuing of these occasions honour the Five principles, in particular the first two and the call to promote mutual flourishing?

We understand that clergy who are members of SSWSH can be in full communion with their Diocesan bishop, even if he has ordained women as priests. There is thus no sacramental need for 'alternative' chrism masses, and the annual Diocesan Chrism Mass would seem to be an occasion on which such clergy can show their full involvement in their diocese and their honouring of the first two of the five principles.

Such 'alternative' chrism masses separate clergy within a diocese or region simply on the basis of their views on the ordination of women. Their existence has always been a cause of much pain to clergywomen and their supportive male colleagues, and an expression of division within the diocese. The continuation of such events, sacramentally unnecessary as they are, seems to us to be a thoughtless challenge to mutual flourishing.

We understand that those who dissent from the ordination of women may wish to gather together for support and friendship, and to celebrate the eucharist together. But to do this in a way that perpetuates division on an occasion when all the clergy of a diocese are urged to unite in renewing their common vows seems to us to be wrong.

We would therefore urge you to investigate the continuing of such alternative chrism masses.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Cotton

Chair of WATCH
chair@womenandthechurch.org

Women and the Church

Affirming ♦ Campaigning ♦ Transforming



Sir Philip Mawer
Independent Reviewer
Church House
Great Smith Street
LONDON
SW1P 3AZ

18th April 2015

Dear Sir Philip

In reply to your letter of 13th April, I confirm that we are raising this issue under paragraph 27 of the Regulations.

Having looked at the Declaration itself, in our view our concern relates especially to paragraphs 9, 10, 14, describing the reciprocity and mutuality with which that the outworking of the 5 Principles should be accompanied. Other paragraphs may also be of relevance to our concern, which is about the working out of the 5 Principles in practice in this particular area.

Yours sincerely

Hilary

Hilary Cotton
Chair



The Diocese of
West Yorkshire
& the Dales

APPENDIX C

Direct number: 01924 250781

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7th May 2015

Sir Philip Mawer
c/o Jonathan Neil-Smith
Office of the Independent Reviewer
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Dear Philip

Chrism Masses

Thank you for your letter of the 21st April to the Secretary of the Council of Bishops of The Society. The Chrism Masses that are the subject of the letter from WATCH were not arranged by The Society or by the Council of Bishops corporately, but by the individual bishops who presided at them, as part of their episcopal ministry. However, I am responding on my own behalf and also on behalf of the other bishops who presided at these Chrism Masses – namely, the Bishops of Beverley, Burnley, Ebbsfleet, Fulham and Richborough.

Our role when ministering under the House of Bishops' Declaration is 'to provide oversight' (Declaration, para. 22) and 'pastoral and sacramental ministry' (para. 27). A ancient feature of the sacramental ministry of a bishop is gathering together in the course of Holy Week with the priests and deacons who look to him as their bishop to consecrate the oil of Chrism and the other Holy Oils which they (bishop and priests) will use by the priests who minister under his oversight in their sacramental ministry during the ensuing year. The letter from WATCH ignore both the ancient and primary and more recent purposes of this annual Passiontide celebration.

Thus contrary to what is claimed in the letter from WATCH, there is indeed a 'sacramental need' for these Chrism Masses: they are an essential part of our sacramental ministry, as bishops, to the clergy and people who have been placed by means of the House of Bishops' Declaration under our oversight. It could be argued that *not* celebrating them would be a breach of our duty under the Declaration 'to provide oversight' and offer 'sacramental ministry'. The letter from WATCH does not explain why (as they appear to believe) our ministry, including the consecration of Holy Oils, is less necessary following the opening of the episcopate, and in particular the office of diocesan bishop, to women than it was before.

The claim by WATCH that priests who are unable, for theological reasons, to receive the ministry of women as priests are nonetheless in 'full communion' with the diocesan bishops who ordain women as priests misunderstands the nature of ecclesial communion. If a priest cannot receive communion from someone whom a bishop ordains to the priesthood, his communion with that bishop – though by no means broken – is less than 'full'. The House of Bishops' Declaration recognizes this when it speaks of maintaining 'the highest possible *degree* of communion'. If there were *full* communion, there would be no need for the Declaration and no need for bishops to 'provide oversight' and offer 'sacramental ministry' under it.

The WATCH letter describes our Chrism Masses as causing pain to 'clergywomen and their supportive male colleagues'. Any pain must be a cause of concern, but in these circumstances the underlying pain is the decision to ordain women as bishops and priests while also recognizing that their ministry cannot be received by all in our church and in consequence providing complimentary oversight and pastoral and sacramental ministry to the minority. This situation is, in different ways, painful for all. Our Chrism Masses reflect that reality; they are not the cause of it.

The logic of WATCH's argument is that our ministry should not exist because it causes pain to others. Some might argue that the ministry of women as bishops and priests should not exist for the same reason. The Church of England has chosen to accept neither of those arguments, but has instead resolved both to ordain women and to make provision for those who cannot receive their ministry. We accept that decision and uphold the House of Bishops' Declaration that embodies it. WATCH's letter raises a question as how far this is true of them.

It is customary for priests to concelebrate the Chrism Mass with the bishop under whose oversight they minister and for them to renew their priestly vows on that occasion. The letter from WATCH does not explain how priests who cannot receive the ministry of women as priests and bishops could concelebrate a Chrism Mass with them.

The fifth Guiding Principle says:

'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.'

The Chrism Masses that we celebrate are an essential part of this 'sacramental provision', and they are necessary for the flourishing of the priests and people who have been committed to our care. There is nothing about them or the way in which they are celebrated that is in any way hostile to the flourishing of others. Nothing about them fails to comply with the first and second Guiding Principles by showing disrespect to lawful office-holders, conflicting with the duty of canonical obedience owed by the clergy to their ordinaries, or questioning the clarity of the Church of England's decision. Quite the contrary; to date, several women priests in senior positions, especially in hosting cathedral chapters, have been robed and thanked for their presence.

This year, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishops of London and Durham, and a number of other diocesan and suffragan bishops attended Chrism Masses celebrated by us in their dioceses. Some other diocesans who were unable to attend sent messages which were printed in the service booklets. Those in the congregation have included ordained women. Several of us and some of the clergy for whom we have oversight also attend the Chrism Mass of their diocesan bishop. All of this indicates a widespread commitment across the Church of England to 'mutual flourishing' and 'living in the highest possible degree of communion'.

On 30 March, following the Bishop of Beverley's Chrism Mass for the Diocese of York, the Archbishop of York tweeted: 'Joyous & uplifting service today @DioceseofYork St Hilda of Whitby in Grangetown. Thanks be to God!' Before the Bishop of Richborough's Chrism Mass in Canterbury Cathedral the next day, the Archbishop of Canterbury tweeted: 'Now off to Chrism mass for traditional Catholics in this area, grateful for their ministry, privilege to be there, #5principles.'

It is a cause of sadness and indeed concern that the letter from WATCH breathes a very different spirit. Not having seen the covering letter to which you refer, it is difficult for us to comment on it. You mention that in it WATCH directed your attention to paragraphs 9, 10 and 14 of the House of Bishops' Declaration. We therefore invite you to reflect and comment upon the extent to which the letter from WATCH displays 'acknowledgement that the differences of view which persist stem from an underlying divergence of theological conviction' (para. 9), shows 'sensitivity to the feelings of vulnerability that some will have that their position within the Church of England will gradually be eroded' (para. 10), and displays 'commitment to sustaining diversity' and commitment 'to making it possible for [those of differing conviction] to flourish' (para. 14).

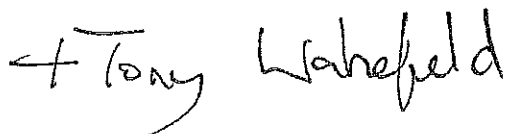
The letter from WATCH refers to 'mutual flourishing', but it seems to be predicated on the belief that female bishops and priests will only flourish if the flourishing of others is limited. This is not our understanding of 'mutual flourishing'.

We encourage those who have been committed to our care under the House of Bishops' Declaration to play their full part in the life and structures of the Church of England at deanery, diocesan and national level, to live in the highest degree of communion possible with our fellow members of the Church of England given the ordination of women as bishops and priests, and to collaborate as far as possible in shared mission and outreach. We encourage our clergy and people to show respect to ordained women and to all lawful office-holders in the Church of England, and to engage with their diocesan bishops. We are heartened by the frequency with which letters to diocesan bishops reporting the passing of a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration end with an assurance of the parish's commitment to playing a full part in the life of the diocese.

As bishops of the church of God, together serving in all the dioceses of the Church of England, we serve not only the minority of which the House of Bishops' Declaration speaks but the unity, health and faithfulness of the whole Church. also those dioceses as a whole. In that context, we are also committed to supporting ordained women in their ministry as far as we are able.

Our energies are directed not towards limiting the freedom and flourishing of others, but to the 'care of all the churches' especially those committed to our charge and leading them in mission. We are committed to providing them with the oversight and the pastoral and sacramental ministry promised to them in the House of Bishops' Declaration. We will do our best to promote the Five Guiding Principles and to defend the Declaration from any who seek to undermine its provisions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Wakefield". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Right Reverend Tony Robinson
Area Bishop of Wakefield

On behalf of the Bishops of Beverley, Burnley, Ebbsfleet, Fulham and Richborough.



The Right Revd the Bishop of Wakefield
Pontefract House
181a Manygates Lane
Wakefield WF2 7DR

Independent Reviewer
Sir Philip Mawer

18 May 2015

Dear Bishop Tony

Chrism Masses

Thank you for your letter of 7 May in response to mine of 21 April to Dr Colin Podmore. I am grateful to you for clarifying the responsibility for organising these masses and for responding, on behalf of your fellow bishops as well as yourself, to the arguments set out by WATCH.

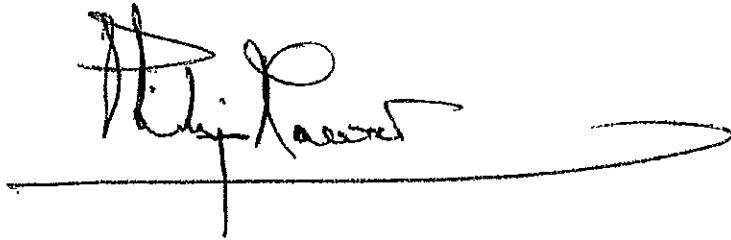
In the light of your letter, I have one question of substance to raise and a couple of procedural points to clarify. The question of substance – and forgive me if it betrays ignorance of past and current practice in this matter – concerns what interaction there is prior to them between the bishops who preside at these masses and the diocesans of the dioceses in which they are held (assuming the presiding bishop is not also the relevant diocesan). To put the point differently, under whose legal jurisdiction are they held and is it the practice of the bishop who presides to inform the relevant diocesan bishop of what is intended? I assume that the diocesan is informed and consents to the masses but it would be helpful if you could confirm the process for me.

As to the procedural points, first, you mention in your letter that you have not seen the covering letter from WATCH mentioned in my letter to Dr Podmore of 21 April. I enclose a copy. You will see that I covered its substance when I wrote to Dr Podmore.

The other procedural point is this. Your response expresses or at least implies a number of criticisms of the stance taken by WATCH in its letter to me. I therefore feel obliged to give WATCH the opportunity to respond to those criticisms. I will let you know in due course when I have heard from WATCH and should meanwhile be grateful for your advice on the point of substance which I have raised above.

I am copying this letter to the other bishops on whose behalf you wrote and to Dr Podmore.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Mawer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sir Philip Mawer



The Diocese of
West Yorkshire
& the Dales

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(e-mailed on 21 June 2015)

Sir Philip Mawer
c/o Jonathan Neil-Smith
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Church House
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Dear Sir Philip,

Chrism Masses

Thank you for your letter of 18 May in response to mine of 7 May. I am writing, again on behalf of the bishops to whom this is copied, in response to the point of substance that you have raised.

The answer to your question as to whose legal jurisdiction these masses are celebrated is simple and clear: every eucharist celebrated in any diocese of the Church of England is celebrated under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop.

It may help if I offer you a little more information, as background to your consideration of this matter.

The nature of these chrism masses varies somewhat. This year the Society bishops celebrated sixteen. One was celebrated by the Bishop of Chichester as bishop of that diocese: it was the only chrism mass that he celebrated and is therefore not one of those that were the subject of the letter from WATCH. Three were celebrated by the Bishops of Burnley and Fulham and myself, as suffragans of our dioceses, for those dioceses or (in the case of the Fulham chrism mass) the Dioceses of London and Southwark (under a local arrangement for episcopal care of resolution parishes).

The other twelve masses were celebrated, by the Bishops of Beverley (4), Ebbsfleet (3) and Richborough (5), not just for the dioceses in which they were celebrated but for the clergy of a number of neighbouring dioceses. (These bishops have oversight over parishes and clergy in ten, thirteen and fourteen dioceses respectively.) In a sense, these regional chrism masses are more 'in' than 'of' the dioceses in which they happen to be celebrated in any particular year.

It is important to note that these chrism masses have been celebrated for twenty years and are very much an established part of the Church of England's life. Some are held in the same church every year. Others rotate between a number of churches in different dioceses. This is

relevant to your question as to the amount of interaction that occurs with the diocesan bishop. Where it is simply a case of repeating a service that has been held many times before, there may be less interaction. For example, the Bishop of Richborough is an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Norwich and each year celebrates a chrism mass in the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, which is not a parish church. He may not necessarily inform the Bishop of Norwich on each occasion that he is going to do again what he customarily does.

In the enclosed table we have put together some information about this year's chrism masses which may assist you.

This year, seven were celebrated in cathedrals, one in the Shrine at Walsingham, and eight in churches that are under the oversight of the bishop concerned by virtue of a resolution under the Act of Synod or the Declaration. In thirteen cases, the bishop was either the diocesan bishop, a suffragan bishop or an assistant bishop of the diocese. Suffragan and assistant bishops have a general permission to preside at the Eucharist in the dioceses concerned. When a diocesan bishop places one of his or her churches under the oversight of a bishop under the Declaration, that of course includes permission to preside at the Eucharist in that church. Thus it is not a matter of seeking the diocesan bishop's 'consent' for this specific celebration of the Eucharist.

However, the diocesan bishop is usually informed in advance. Diocesan bishops are commonly present at these services, and often they are invited to give the blessing at the end. Where they are unable to attend, they sometimes send a message to be printed in the service booklet. This year, six diocesan bishops (including both Archbishops) attended, and four more sent apologies.

I hope that this gives you a fuller understanding of these services and the basis on which they are held.

Yours sincerely,

+ Tony Wakefield

Area Bishop of Wakefield

cc The Bishops of Beverley, Burnley, Ebbsfleet, Fulham and Richborough,
Dr Colin Podmore

CHRISM MASSES OF SOCIETY BISHOPS, 2015

Bishop	Date	Church	Comments
Beverley	29 March	S. Aidan, Grangetown, Sunderland	Bishop of Durham preached.
Beverley	30 March	S. Hilda, Grangetown, Middlesbrough	Bishop is a Suffragan of the Diocese. Service held at the request of the Archbishop of York, who was present.
Beverley	31 March	Manchester Cathedral	Bishop is an Asst. Bishop of Diocese. Diocesan bishop informed in advance.
Beverley	1 April	SS John & Mary Magdalene, Goldthorpe Diocese of Sheffield	Bishop is an Asst. Bishop of Diocese. Diocesan bishop informed in advance.
Burnley	31 March	S. Andrew, Burnley	Bishop is a Suffragan of the Diocese. Bishops of Blackburn and Lancaster present.
Chichester	31 March	Chichester Cathedral	Bishop is the Diocesan Bishop. <i>With renewal of ministerial vows, for all clergy of the Diocese.</i>
Ebbsfleet	28 March	St Michael & All Angels, Heavitree, Exeter	Was to have been in cathedral but for diary clash. Bishop is an Asst. Bishop of Diocese. Diocesan bishop unable to be present.
Ebbsfleet	31 March	Worcester Cathedral	Bishop is an Asst. Bishop of Diocese. Bishop of Worcester sent a message; Bishop of Dudley present.
Ebbsfleet	1 April	Lichfield Cathedral	Bishop is an Asst. Bishop of Diocese. Bishop of Lichfield planned to attend but prevented by illness; sent message.
Fulham	31 March	S. Augustine, Kilburn	Bishop is a Suffragan of the Diocese. Bishop of London present.
Richborough	25 March	S. Hugh, Ayres Monsell, Leicester	St Hugh's Church is under the Bishop of Richborough's oversight.
Richborough	28 March	Guildford Cathedral	Bishop is an Asst. Bishop of Diocese. Bishops of Guildford, Dorking, Basingstoke and Southampton present. Bishop of Portsmouth sent apologies.
Richborough	31 March	Chelmsford Cathedral	Bishop of Chelmsford sent apologies.
Richborough	31 March	Canterbury Cathedral	Bishop is a Suffragan of the Diocese. Archbishop of Canterbury present.
Richborough	1 April	Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham	Bishop is an Asst. Bishop of Diocese. The Shrine Church is non-parochial.
Wakefield	29 March	SS John & Barnabas, Belle Isle	Bishop is a Suffragan of the Diocese. Diocesan bishop informed in advance.

Women and the Church

Affirming ♦ Campaigning ♦ Transforming



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Sir Philip Mawer
c/o Church House
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18th June 2015

Dear Sir Philip

Chrism Masses

You invited us to respond to the Bishop of Wakefield's letter of 7th May. Our comments on that letter are as follows.

1. The concern we asked you to address was about how the alternative chrism masses honoured the first two of the 5 Principles, and the need for pastoral and sacramental ministry for the minority to contribute to 'mutual flourishing'. The letter from the Bishop of Wakefield seems to us not to address these points. It offers a rationale for the holding of such events, and that many rejoice in their occurrence, but that does not seem to us to be a satisfactory response to the concerns we raised.

In terms of two Chrism masses for different theological convictions, the issues are:

- a. If renewal of vows implies a relationship with the bishop, then having parallel services for different groups would seem to enshrine division rather than serve to heal it – different clergy are in relationship with different bishops in the same diocese and the diocesan is no longer the focal bishop. Since most dioceses have suffragan bishops, the parallel might be if each suffragan held a separate Chrism Mass – this would seem very odd and would marginalize the diocesan. Why then would it be acceptable for PEVs or their equivalent to do so? This would set up a de facto separate diocese – and so we have a Third Province in all but name.
- b. The situation is only made worse and not better by encouraging people to attend both the diocesan and the PEV services.
- c. If it is the blessing of oils that causes theological problems, the issue must be why oil blessed by a bishop who ordains women is unacceptable and instead there must be oil blessed by a 'non-ordaining' bishop. This can only imply that the first bishop's ministry is deficient and it is hard to avoid de facto theologies of taint here even if the specific term is not used. The question returns to: 'Is the bishop who ordains women really held to be a bishop?'. If so, he / she can consecrate oils.

2. We have some comments on the claims made in para 2 of the Bishop's letter concerning the history of the chrism mass.

While there are early descriptions of Holy Week ceremonies, such as that of Egeria in the fourth century, there are no references to the practice of a bishop gathering his clergy for a eucharist and renewal of vows on Maundy Thursday. There is no reference to blessing oils on this day until the Gelasian Sacramentary of c. 750. (Although the practice of blessing oils for various liturgical uses may go back further than this – though the history is not easy to reconstruct with precision). The link with a renewal of ordination vows in a service on Maundy Thursday is not ancient.

The modern practice of a bishop gathering clergy for a Maundy Thursday eucharist was introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1970. He added it to the Blessing of Oils on Maundy Thursday which Pius XII had reintroduced (from the Gelasian Sacramentary) in 1955. This was adopted by many Anglican dioceses over time.

The Prayer Books of 1549, 1552 and 1662 contain no reference to such services. The ASB of 1980 contains no service for this either and nor does *Lent, Holy Week and Easter*. Only in *Times and Seasons* (2006) do we get a Church of England rite for this, though many dioceses had been holding such a service using adapted versions of the Roman rite.

It is important to note several things:

1. There is no ancient rite of renewal of ordination vows on Maundy Thursday and no certainty of an ancient 'Chrism Mass' for blessing of oils before c.750AD
2. The development of the blessing of oils for use at baptism / confirmation on Maundy Thursday was so as to have a fresh supply for Easter baptisms.
3. In both Roman and Church of England rites, the blessing of oils is climactic in the synaxis / Ministry of the Word and the renewal of vows is treated as an adjunct.
4. The modern practice dates back barely 45 years in Roman practice and slightly less in Anglican practice.

The theology of the Maundy Thursday diocesan rite has been questioned around both the blessing of oils and the renewal of vows.

It is unclear from Anglican theology whether oils must be blessed by a bishop or whether a priest may do this. Arguments for the former tend to derive from a Roman Catholic ecclesiology more than one rooted in Anglican approaches and the theology of the Prayer Books. To have oils blessed by the bishop is not problematic for those who do not think it necessary whereas to have oils blessed by a priest would be problematic for those holding that episcopal blessing is necessary. The current arrangements (i.e. episcopal blessing of oils) are a compromise.

Arguably, more Anglicans would agree on the appropriateness of renewing ministerial vows in the presence of a bishop, though Maundy Thursday may not be the best time logistically to do this.

3. The key issue in all of this is summed up in the final paragraph of the second page, concerning the understanding of 'mutual flourishing'. The representation of our understanding is not correct here. Mutual flourishing is, we believe, not meant to be about each group flourishing independently, 'tolerating' the others' presence, but flourishing together even though that causes tension - which is why all clergy renewing their vows together would seem to be a case in point.

Wrestling with what this means in principle and in practice is partly why we have raised this particular concern with you: how can mutual flourishing be established beyond a case-by-case conversation between all those concerned?

Our intervention in this case seems to have caused offence, even though our intention was to challenge rather than attack. The response from the Bishop does not give us confidence that our views are being respected. Can we find a better way to discuss such things, with your help?

I look forward to reading what you can send me in draft in due course.

With thanks for your work on all of this,

Hilary Cotton
Chair



The Diocese of
West Yorkshire
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Saturday 27th June 2015

Dear Sir Philip,

Chrism Masses

Thank you for your letter of 24 June.

I am grateful to have sight of the letter from WATCH. There are two points in it that on which I think it important to comment as your consideration of this matter draws to a close.

The letter from WATCH says 'If it is the blessing of oils that causes theological problems, the issue must be why oil blessed by a bishop who ordains women is unacceptable... This can only imply that the first bishop's ministry is deficient and it is hard to avoid de facto theologies of taint here even if the specific term is not used.' These assertions prompt two comments:

- Our point was not the negative point that oil consecrated by a bishop who ordains women is 'unacceptable', but the positive point that priests use oil consecrated by the bishop under whose oversight they minister, that under the House of Bishops' Declaration a pastoral and sacramental ministry of oversight is committed to us, and that our pastoral and sacramental ministry of oversight involves the consecration of oils for use in the sacramental ministry of priests who minister under our oversight.
- It is disappointing that – not for the first time – instead of seeking to understand our beliefs, WATCH has imputed to us beliefs that we do not hold. We do not believe, and have never suggested, that the ministry of a bishop who ordains women to the priesthood and shares in their ordination to the episcopate is 'deficient' or 'tainted'. Our theology is one of communion, not of taint. At our Chrism masses the priests who look to us are able to concelebrate the Eucharist with, and receive the Holy Oils from, a bishop with whom they are in full communion because they are able to receive the ministry of all whom that bishop ordains. That is nothing more than priests who are able to receive the sacramental ministry of women as bishops and priests enjoy at

other Chrism Masses. To misrepresent this theology of communion as a theology of 'taint' does nothing to build mutual understanding.

I welcome Hilary Cotton's recognition that WATCH's intervention has caused offence, and also her suggestion that there might be a better way of discussing such things than submitting to you, as formal 'concerns' under the Regulations, matters that have not been discussed with those who are the subject of such complaints. If you can help in identifying a better way to discuss such things, I am sure that would be appreciated.

Thank you also for the opportunity to comment on the factual sections of your report. We normally refer to 'The Society' and do not use the initials SSWSH (other than in the url of our website) and I would appreciate it if your report could follow our convention in that matter. In para. 16(d) you report an imputation by WATCH. I would be grateful if you would also report my rejection of that imputation. Otherwise, I have no problems with your summary.

Yours sincerely,

+ Tony Wakefield

Area Bishop of Wakefield

cc The Bishops of Beverley, Burnley, Ebbsfleet, Fulham and Richborough,
Dr Colin Podmore
