

House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests

Wakefield Cathedral - Report of the Independent Reviewer

Introduction

1. On 5 November a member of the congregation of Wakefield Cathedral, Mr Dennis Belk, wrote to my office expressing concern at a recent change of practice concerning the publication of the names of those due to preside at celebrations of Holy Communion in the Cathedral (see letter attached as ANNEX 1).
2. He enclosed correspondence of the previous month with the Dean and the Bishop of Wakefield (an area bishop in the Diocese of Leeds) – attached as ANNEX 2 - in which he explained that he was the third generation of his family to worship at the cathedral, which is also his parish church. He wished to continue to worship there, though had reservations about the priestly ministry of women and did not therefore attend the Eucharist when a woman was due to celebrate. Indeed, he had on three occasions left services at the beginning when there had been last minute changes to the advertised arrangements resulting in a woman being the celebrant.
3. Until recently the practice at Wakefield Cathedral had been to publicise in advance the names of celebrants on the cathedral notice sheet. This had enabled him to see whether the service was one at which he would feel able to receive communion. Within a week of his installation the new Dean had, however, discontinued this arrangement. This, said Mr Belk, caused him distress since he no longer had a way of knowing in advance whether a service was one in which he could participate.
4. In the reply from the Dean which Mr Belk forwarded he had thanked Mr Belk for the eirenic tone of his letter, while making it clear that the change of practice was a matter of policy. By way of explanation the Dean said that : *‘Removing the names of those-male and female- who are to preside at a particular service helps to make the point that it is our offering of the Eucharist that is central, rather than the particular individual who is presiding.’* He added that *‘all the clergy at the cathedral-male and female- will continue to offer you a warm welcome and that your prayerful presence at the Eucharist will be valued whether or not you feel able to receive communion.’*
5. In his reply to Mr Belk the Bishop wrote: *‘I entirely understand and share your concern about the change of practice at Wakefield Cathedral, which would affect me in the same way that it affects you.’* He said that he *‘shared Mr Belk’s disappointment at the decision that has been taken at Wakefield Cathedral. Unfortunately, the Dean and Chapter seem determined to carry on with the new practice.’* He also mentioned the name of a local parish church and its priest, from whom Mr Belk would receive a welcome if he decided to worship with them.

6. The House of Bishops' Regulations under which I operate¹ set out two procedures for the resolution of disputes, one for the bringing of grievances by Parochial Church Councils and the other for the raising of concerns by any person in relation to any aspect of the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration of 2014 on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. The provision for the bringing of concerns is, as my predecessor noted in guidance notes issued in December 2015, cast in broad terms and leaves a wide discretion to the Reviewer whether to conduct an inquiry into a concern and how to go about doing so.
7. Having reflected on Mr Belk's letter I was satisfied that the concern he had raised was sufficiently specific to form the basis of an inquiry. And while the point at issue seemed relatively narrow and had arisen in a particular context I concluded that it had potentially wider relevance in view of the importance of cathedral ministry across the Church of England.
8. I therefore wrote to Mr Belk on 22 November saying that I intended to inquire into his concerns and that I had written to the Dean seeking clarification of some issues. I also copied my letter to the Dean to the Chair of the College of Deans (formerly the Deans' Conference). The Dean sent me an acknowledgement on 7 December and a reply (copied to the Chair of the College of Deans) on 21 December – attached as ANNEX 3.
9. In the light of the Dean's reply I concluded that I wished to have a discussion with him and, separately, Mr Belk to explore the background further before concluding my report. I accordingly wrote to them on 15 January offering to go to Wakefield for a conversation with each of them. I also sent them an outline of my initial thinking and some questions as a basis for discussion.
10. I am grateful to the Dean and to Mr Belk for the time they devoted to meeting me in Wakefield on 30 January. Our separate conversations were extremely useful and, in completing this report, I have taken account of the points that they each made. I am also grateful to David Hoyle, Chair of the College of Deans, for a conversation in which I was able to explore with him more generally the implications of the House of Bishops' Declaration to cathedrals.

The issues

11. Arrangements in relation to cathedrals and non-parochial places of worship are contained in paragraphs 31-33 of the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (GS Misc 1076). They make four points:

¹ The Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (Resolution of Disputes) Regulations 2014 (GS Misc 1087)

- The arrangements available to parishes for the passing of resolutions do not apply to cathedrals given the right of the diocesan bishop to officiate there in accordance with the cathedral's constitution and statutes
 - Neither gender nor theological conviction in relation to the ordained ministry of women should be an obstacle to appointment as dean or cathedral canon
 - All appointed to cathedral ministry should be willing to work together in close partnership and with the highest possible degree of communion in the interests of the institution they serve
 - The Five Guiding Principles are of as much relevance to non-parochial places of worship as to parishes.
12. The first three of these are not directly relevant to the issue raised by Mr Belk. Given the relative lack of prescription in paragraphs 31-33 in relation to cathedrals and other non-parochial places of worship and the absence of any canonical provisions concerning information to be given in advance of Communion services² a judgement on the new non-disclosure policy of the Dean and Chapter at Wakefield turns, therefore, on assessing it in the light of the five guiding principles and their outworking in terms of simplicity, reciprocity and mutuality.
13. As the Faith and Order Commission noted at page 47 of a recent publication³: *'The Five Guiding Principles cannot be used mechanically to determine the answers to every question that arises from the Church of England's decision in 2014 to ordain women to the episcopate. What they provide is a way to frame those questions that all can share and that can thereby help us to talk to and with, and not past or at, one another.'*
14. As the Commission also noted, when explaining the Five Guiding Principles to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament in 2014 the Archbishop of Canterbury had said that they constituted *'a promise to love one another.'* Developing this thought, the Commission observed that love *'always seeks the good of the other- and one way to express the good for people is in terms of their flourishing.'* Seeking the good of the other is, of course, a responsibility laid on both the majority and the minority by the House of Bishops' Declaration, which emphasises the importance of reciprocity and mutuality.
15. The issues lying behind Mr Belk's expression of concern about the non-disclosure of information at the cathedral are therefore, at root, about mutual flourishing. How can he, as a traditionalist, who wishes to be a regular worshipper at the cathedral, best demonstrate respect and support for the clergy, male and female there while being true to his theological conviction? How can the Dean and Chapter, while disagreeing

² The Book of Common Prayer Communion Service contains provisions concerning the giving of notice for when the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated but not concerning the identity of the celebrant.

³ *The Five Guiding Principles- A resource for study* (Church House Publishing 2018)

with the theological conviction of those who, like Mr Belk, both stand in the Catholic tradition and are unable on theological grounds to receive the priestly ministry of women, nevertheless acknowledge and contribute positively to their flourishing in accordance with the House of Bishops' Five Guiding Principles?

The distinctiveness of cathedrals

16. On the face of it the question raised by this concern-whether the name of the president should be publicly available in advance of a celebration of Holy Communion- is of general application across the Church of England. I intend, however, to confine my analysis to the arrangements at our cathedrals. The reasons are twofold.
17. First, as the summary of part of the House of Bishops' Declaration at paragraph 11 above makes clear, cathedrals are in a distinctive position since, unlike parishes, they do not have the ability to pass resolutions under the Declaration. While there can in principle be a diversity of convictions within the cathedral chapter about the episcopal and priestly ministry of women⁴ and while there may be some regular cathedral worshippers who, like Mr Belk, retain reservations about their ministry, all cathedrals must be fully open to the ordained ministry of all, without reference to gender. This, therefore, poses challenges about the sensitive management of diversity and practical encouragement of mutual flourishing that are distinct to cathedrals.
18. Secondly, while there are notable variations in the scale and resource of our English cathedrals these variations pale in significance compared with the diversity of scale and resource of parish churches. While there are a few parish churches which have a larger budget and more paid staff than all but the largest cathedrals, there are a very large number of rural churches in small communities which have extremely slender resources, are part of multi-church benefices, and have a limited pattern of services and no website. It is, therefore, impractical to generalise about the arrangements that parish churches should be expected to make concerning the dissemination of information about forthcoming services. What makes sense in one parish may simply not be feasible in another.

Diversity of practice

19. A selective review of cathedral websites reveals some variation over the amount of information published about forthcoming services. For Sunday services which include a sermon it seems to be the general practice to give the name of the preacher. For services more generally, some cathedrals give the name the canon in residence for the week concerned. But in many cases there is no information about who will be leading morning and evening prayer. For Communion services some cathedrals give the name

⁴ My understanding is that in practice the number of Traditional Catholics on chapters across the country is now quite small and Conservative Evangelicals have never been attracted in numbers to cathedral ministry. So on average the theological diversity in relation to gender and ordained ministry will not be as wide in cathedral chapters as across the Church of England as a whole.

of who is to be the president, but most seem not to. Wakefield is one of many that do not give the name of the celebrant on their service sheets and website.

20. For choral services full information is provided about settings and anthems. In addition, where on weekdays only part of the choir is to be present this fact is signalled. Interestingly, in cathedrals where there are boys' and girls' choirs, practice seems to vary on whether to indicate which is to be on duty on a particular day (Wakefield is one of many that does give this information).
21. It is interesting to speculate whether the extent of the information disclosed reflects considered judgements and a rationale about what should be included or is more a matter of local custom and practice that has grown over time.
22. Approaching the matter solely from first principles it would be possible to argue that any information that exists should be as widely shared as is practicable in order to enable people to make informed choices. Some people may be influenced in their decision whether to attend by knowing as much as possible about the service in advance. And in any event, it can be argued that, since the information exists, people should be entitled to have it.
23. Alternatively, one could in principle take the austere view that all that is really required is to signal in advance the type of service (including whether it is a choral or said) and its time. People ought not, on this view, to be encouraged in the notion that whether to attend divine worship might be influenced by who is preaching, the identity of the celebrant or the particular anthem or setting that the choir is singing.
24. On the evidence of the websites, it is clear that no cathedral takes this purist line. Significant prior information is generally available about the music to be performed in choral services and the name of the preacher is normally advertised. Beyond that there is a degree of variation over where each place stands on the spectrum of openness.
25. Even where a cathedral chapter has a strong commitment to freedom of information, practical considerations may come into play. Only so much information can be included on a single page of a website. Like all institutions, cathedral chapters are entitled to take a pragmatic view on where to draw the line between information which is needed internally to keep the wheels turning (the rotas of lesson readers, intercessors, vergers etc.) and information which needs to be in the public domain.
26. I mention all this by way of context to help give some perspective to the one issue which is at the heart of this case and therefore for me to consider namely **whether the set of arrangements put in place across the Church of England in 2014 when all orders of ministry were opened equally to women and men has particular implications for the information cathedrals should make available over who is to preside at services of Holy Communion.**

Conflicting considerations

27. It is not an easy question. As the Dean has said: *'it is our offering of the Eucharist that is central, rather than the particular individual who is presiding.'* It ought not in general to matter to someone whether the person due to preside is Canon A or Canon B, or for that matter, Bishop C or Archbishop D. And if someone does want to know who is to preside in order to avoid attending when the celebrant is to be a female priest that can feel like facilitating discrimination and encouraging a theological view which the majority in the Church of England do not share.
28. On the other hand, knowing who is to preside at a particular Holy Communion service does matter a good deal to those who are part of the minority within the Church of England which, on theological grounds, is unable to receive the sacramental ministry of women priests. The fact that the Church of England has committed itself to enabling them to *'flourish within its life and structures'*⁵ introduces an additional material consideration into the equation.

Intention and effect

29. In a letter to Mr Belk the Dean wrote: *'I am sure you will realise that there was no intention to inconvenience you-or indeed anyone else.'* Writing subsequently to me the Dean offered his firm belief that not disclosing the names of celebrants in advance *'affords more not fewer opportunities for those of different convictions to flourish in space that is shared, as it mitigates any temptation not to attend a particular Eucharist on the grounds that the President is a woman.'*
30. Intention is, however, not the same thing as effect. The test of any intended course of action is not simply the values and intentions lying behind it but what in practice the consequences will turn out to be. Will the benefits outweigh any disadvantages, or will the last state be as bad as, or perhaps worse than, the first?
31. There is no reason to challenge the Dean's account of his intentions, though he was undoubtedly aware that inconvenience would be caused and must have concluded that that was a necessary price to bear for a desirable change of practice. In conversation with me he indicated that, during his interview for the position of Dean, he had questioned the rationale for the previous practice of publishing celebrants' names and, on appointment, had consulted his chapter colleagues (though not the wider cathedral community) about discontinuing the practice. All had been supportive. Moreover, he had not subsequently received any complaints, except from Mr Belk. Indeed he had received some favourable comments,
32. The Dean cites with approval page 29 of the FAOC document quoted in paragraph 13 above where it speaks of *'not corraling some within the boundaries of their own*

⁵ See the Fourth Guiding Principle

parishes or networks, but providing space for all to flourish in its common life and in structures shared by all.' This is self-evidently right.

33. The question, though, is whether the foreseeable effect of denying Mr Belk the possibility of knowing in advance whether a service is one in which he can fully participate will be to nurture the diversity of the cathedral congregation or lead to a greater separation, with Mr Belk withdrawing into the security of a parish in the Catholic tradition that does not receive the priestly ministry of women. The latter is in fact what has happened since October.
34. On this the Dean has stressed to Mr Belk that his *'prayerful presence at any Eucharist will be valued whether or not you feel able to receive Communion.'* Writing to me the Dean observes that if *'someone feels unable to receive Communion from the person presiding at the Eucharist that is a matter of great sadness, but I would hope that such a person would still feel able to participate prayerfully, to the extent that they are able. In the end, however, if someone chooses to exclude themselves, there is little I can do.'*
35. The Dean is clearly right in implying that people can derive spiritual nourishment from a service in which they are unable, for conscientious reasons, fully to participate. Singing hymns, hearing the scriptures read and expounded, joining with others in the declaration of our faith, praying together; these are all parts of an act of worship in which everyone can with benefit join, irrespective of differences of view on the ordained ministry of women.
36. It is unfortunate that, on the three earlier occasions when Mr Belk discovered on the day that the celebrant arrangements were different from what had been advertised, he felt unable to remain in the cathedral to take part in as much of the service as he was able. Reciprocity and mutuality are a key outworking of the Five Guiding Principles. Paragraph 10 of the House of Bishops' Declaration notes: *'In particular reciprocity will mean that those of differing conviction will do all within their power to avoid giving offence to each other.'* Walking out of a service risks giving offence, though Mr Belk assures me that in fact he was able to withdraw unobtrusively on each occasion.
37. Nevertheless, in my judgement the Dean does not give sufficient weight to two points. First, as those of us can testify who have attended mass at a Roman Catholic church and, out of deference for their rules, not received communion, it is a painful matter for a Christian to attend a celebration of the Eucharist and not receive the sacrament. Roman Catholics who attend an Anglican service of Holy Communion and, again out of deference for the rules of their church, do not receive communion similarly experience the pain of the separation which exists within the household of faith.

38. This experience continues, for now, to be an unavoidable part of our ecumenical journey. And it is at times an unavoidable outworking of having within the Church of England a minority who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops and priests. But it does involve pain. If the House of Bishops' encouragement of mutual flourishing means anything it must mean that there is a duty not to cause pain where it can be avoided. For someone like Mr Belk who, as he assures me, takes seriously the responsibility to prepare carefully for receiving the sacrament it is extremely difficult to turn up at a Communion service not knowing whether he will in fact be able to do so.
39. Secondly, openness and transparency are generally to be preferred in dealings between Christians except where the nature of some particular information means that it has properly to be treated as confidential. It is very hard to identify any obvious reason why cathedral duty rotas should in the normal course of events be confidential.
40. As noted above in paragraph 25 there may be pragmatic reasons why rotas are not routinely put in the public domain. And there may also be reasons of practicality why cathedral chapters prefer not to publicise the identity of the celebrant in advance: it has been explained to me that, in smaller cathedrals, particularly for mid-week celebrations, there may often have to be last minute changes of plan.
41. But that does not mean that someone asking for a factual piece of information from them should be told that they can't have it and will have to turn up on the day to find out. Such an approach risks discourtesy and a lack of generosity. And towards someone who has been and wishes to remain a member of a cathedral community it does not show sufficient pastoral sensitivity. By elevating to such a high level the principle of avoiding giving any encouragement to discrimination it gives insufficient weight to the Five Guiding Principles in the House of Bishops' Declaration and the settlement that the Church of England reached in 2014.
42. In the course of this inquiry I asked the Dean whether any thought had been or might yet be given to a way in which the needs of Mr Belk and anyone else with the same theological conviction might be met without necessarily retaining the previous arrangement of identifying celebrants on the service sheets. I asked whether, for example, the duty rota might be posted on the website or alternatively be made available on request.
43. He replied that, while it would be possible, it would undermine his commitment to providing shared space '*in which mutual flourishing moves from the realm of theological principle to lived reality.*' He also noted that letting regular members of the cathedral community have the rota begged the question of whether the facility should be extended to visitors and occasional attenders. I return to this below.

Conclusion

44. The Church of England is '*fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open to all irrespective of gender*' (Guiding Principle Number One) and it is only right that chapters should think through carefully how that commitment should be carried through into every aspect of the day to day operation of a cathedral.
45. At the same time cathedrals have a responsibility under the Fourth and Fifth Guiding Principles to contribute to mutual flourishing of both the majority and the minority. The Dean accepts this: indeed he explains the new policy precisely by reference to this objective. The problem is that the foreseeable effect of the policy is precisely to increase the greater separation that the Dean says that he wishes to avoid.
46. Even though it is said with regret it is not, in my view, sufficient to imply that, if Mr Belk chooses to exclude himself, that is a matter for him. He has been a longstanding member of the cathedral community (notwithstanding the presence for some time of female priests in the chapter, whose pastoral ministry he has valued) and has signalled his preference to be a regular worshipper there once again.
47. It would, indeed, as the Dean has said, be good if anyone who is unable on grounds of conviction to receive communion from a female celebrant were on occasions to attend such services and participate to the maximum extent possible: generosity is a two way street. But to expect someone whose theological conviction does not enable him to receive the sacramental ministry of women routinely to turn up to a celebration of Holy Communion when he cannot discover in advance whether he will be able to receive Communion seems to me to be asking too much.
48. The Church of England, even though it has reached a clear decision and theological conviction on ministry and gender, has committed itself to enabling the minority to flourish within its life and structures. Denying brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ information which is not intrinsically confidential and which they need in order to act consistently with their theological conviction tends to undermine that commitment.
49. My conclusions are as follows.
 - **Whether a cathedral routinely publishes the names of celebrants on its service sheets and/or websites must remain for the judgement of the dean and chapter. I do not believe that the House of Bishops Declaration creates a presumption either way. The Dean of Wakefield was, therefore, perfectly entitled to bring the practice at his cathedral into line with that of many (though not all) other cathedrals.**
 - **Nevertheless, even where the identity of the celebrant at a service is not routinely published in advance it should not be regarded as confidential**

information. It should, therefore, be supplied with a good grace to anyone who asks for it in advance so that they can make an informed choice over whether to attend a particular service in the light of their theological conviction in relation to gender and ordained ministry.

- **Reciprocity and mutuality mean that the majority and minority need to avoid putting stumbling blocks in the way of each other or giving offence: members of chapter need to act with generosity, forbearance and pastoral sensitivity to any cathedral worshippers- especially regular members of the cathedral community- who are unable on grounds of theological conviction to receive the sacramental ministry of women priests; similarly the latter need to show respect to all chapter clergy and seek to maintain the highest possible degree of communion.**

Sir William Fittall
28 February 2019

ANNEX 1

5th November 2018

Sir Philip Mawer
Church House
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3AZ

Dear Sir Philip

6/11

Publicising the Presidents of the Eucharist on the Cathedral's Service sheets

I write this letter to seek your help and advice on a practice which is prevalent in the Church of England, especially in many Cathedrals; namely the failure to publicise the Presidents of the Eucharist. As a traditional Catholic this causes me great concern. I wish to "flourish" within the main body of the Church, but this has become almost impossible.

We recently had a new Dean installed at Wakefield Cathedral, and within a week of taking up his post he withdrew the names of the Presidents of the Eucharist on the Cathedrals service sheets. This has put me in a compromising position. I enclose the correspondence with the Dean and the Area Bishop of Wakefield.

Although there are suitable churches around Wakefield, I wish to go to my church: Wakefield Cathedral. It seems unkind that the Dean has come to this decision in order to "make a point". I would not force my convictions on others, as I defend their right to rejoice in the ministry of women. I do not, however deserve to be marginalised in this way.

I do hope you will help in this matter, for I feel sure there are many Catholic Christians in the Church of England who are affected by this practice.

Yours sincerely

Dennis Belk

Dennis Belk

8th October; 2018

The Very Reverend the Dean of Wakefield
Cathedral Centre
8-10 Westmorland St
Wakefield
WF1 1PJ

Mr Dean

Advertising the Presidents of the Eucharist on the Cathedral's Service sheets

I wish to extend my welcome and best wishes as you begin your ministry amongst us. We have been prayerfully awaiting your arrival. Your service of installation was a wonderful occasion, and I was glad to be part of it.

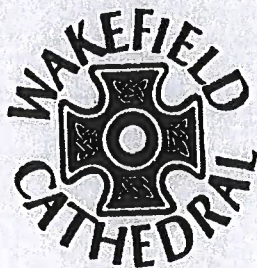
My name is Dennis and I am a member of the Cathedral congregation and on its electoral roll. I am the third generation of my family to worship in the Cathedral. It is my church and I have no desire to worship anywhere else. Since the advent of women's ministry in the church I have had sincerely held theological reservations concerning their ministry, especially at the altar. This has meant that in order to stay within the main body of the Church of England I have had to scrutinize the Service sheets in order to avoid embarrassment at having to leave the service at the beginning. Sadly on three occasions this has been necessary, when last minute adjustments have had to be made. On those occasions I have been welcomed to the Eucharist the following day by my friends of The Community of the Resurrection. It has not been easy to receive the sacrament in the Cathedral, but it has been made manageable only by careful planning. Having the names of the Presidents on the Cathedral's Service sheets has been essential to me. The decision to omit this information causes me great distress.

May I respectfully ask you to reconsider this change? I appreciate that to plan a month in advance may present problems. May I suggest a compromise to include this information on the Weekly Service sheet which is common practice in other Cathedrals?

I look forward to meeting you in due course. I shall make myself known to you at the first opportunity.

Yours sincerely

(Dennis Belk)



Cathedral Centre
8-10 Westmorland Street
WAKEFIELD
WF1 1PJ

Mr Dennis Belk

16 October 2018

Dear Dennis (if I may),

Many thanks indeed for your letter of 08 October. I apologise that it has taken me so long to reply.

I really appreciated the eirenic tone of your letter. Thank you.

I am sorry that the change in arrangements has made things more difficult for you to worship at the cathedral. I am sure you will realise that there was no intention to inconvenience you – or indeed anyone else. The change is closely related to our commitment to be a cathedral where the diaconal, priestly, and episcopal ministry of women is fully recognised and celebrated alongside of that of their male counterparts. Removing the names of those – male or female – who are to preside at a particular service helps to make the point that it is our offering of the Eucharist that is central, rather than the particular individual who is presiding.

I realise that this response does not provide a way out of your difficulty. But I do want to assure you that all the clergy at the cathedral – male and female – will continue to offer you a warm welcome and that your prayerful presence at any Eucharist will be valued whether or not you feel able to receive Communion.

With kind regards and all good wishes,

Simon

The Very Revd Simon Cowling
Dean of Wakefield

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WAKEFIELD CATHEDRAL
in the Diocese of Leeds



18th October, 2018

The Rt Revd Tony Robinson
Area Bishop of Wakefield
Pontefract House
181A Manygates Lane
Wakefield
WF1 1PJ

Dear Bishop Tony

Advertising the Presidents of the Eucharist on the Cathedral's Service sheets

We have met at various services and functions within the Episcopal area of Wakefield, although you will not know me by name. I have always considered you to be a kindly and helpful person, so I write this letter in order to seek your help and guidance.

You may or may not be aware that the new Dean of Wakefield Cathedral has made a change to the Cathedral's Service sheets, specifically by omitting the names of the Presidents of the Eucharist. This change makes it almost impossible for me to attend the services at the Cathedral, as I have sincerely held theological reservations concerning the ministry of women, especially at the altar.

I enclose copies of my letter to the Dean and his response. As he says in his letter this change is "making a point". I don't understand this: the point is well established within the Church of England. My concern is that, by this change, I have been marginalised and excluded from the sacramental life of the Cathedral. I wish to continue to worship within the main body of the Church of England. I do not feel that the Dean is acting within the spirit of the House of Bishops' "5 Guiding Principles". I certainly do not think I will "flourish" by merely abstaining from receiving the sacrament on those occasions when a woman presides

I respectfully ask that you advise me. I do not wish to leave my church. The previous Dean felt that there was a need to give full information, and by so doing was able to embrace all members of the congregation regardless of their convictions.

I look forward to your response as this matter causes me great concern.

Yours Sincerely

Dennis Belk

1st November 2018

Mr D Belk

Dear Dennis

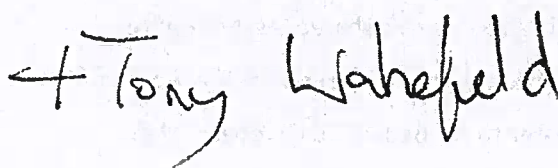
Thank you for your letter of 18 October, and for enclosing your correspondence with the Dean. I am sorry for the delay but I wanted to speak to the Dean before replying.

I entirely understand and share your concern about the change of practice at Wakefield Cathedral, which would affect me in the same way that it affects you. Our diocese is committed to the Five Guiding Principles, and to being an inclusive diocese, doing as much as we can to ensure that both those who rejoice in the ordination of women as priests and bishops and those who are unable to receive their ministry are not just able to exist within the Church of England but are made to feel welcome and enabled to flourish. The practice hitherto of all three of our cathedrals in announcing who will be presiding at each Eucharist has been an example of this commitment to inclusion. It also helps to avoid a situation in which people feel obliged to leave a service, which is likely to be painful not only for them but also for the person presiding. I therefore share your disappointment at the decision that has been taken at Wakefield Cathedral. Unfortunately, the Dean and Chapter seem determined to carry on with the new practice.

St Peter's Church in Horbury is a traditional catholic parish and you would find a very warm welcome there from Fr Christopher Johnson.

I am sorry not to be more helpful. Please do please ring me if you wish to discuss this matter further.

With kind regards





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E: dean@wakefield-cathedral.org.uk

By email

Sir William Fittall,
Central Secretariat,
Church House,
SW1P 3AZ

21 December 2018

Dear Sir William,

I refer to your letter of 22 November and my initial reply of 07 December. I am now in a position to write to you more fully.

I address myself firstly to the two particular points you raise in your 22 November letter. The decision to remove the names of those presiding at the Eucharist was taken in full awareness of the House of Bishops' 2014 Declaration. The Five Guiding Principles articulate the Church of England's commitment to enable those who are 'unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests ... to flourish within its life and structures' (Guiding Principle number 4); and in the *Resource for Study* that accompanies the Five Guiding Principles it is stated clearly (p 29) that flourishing 'means not corralling some within the boundaries of their own parishes or networks, but providing space generously for all to flourish in its common life and in structures shared by all'. It is my firm belief that removing the names of eucharistic presidents affords more, not fewer, opportunities for those of different convictions to flourish in space that is shared, as it mitigates any temptation *not* to attend a particular Eucharist on the grounds that the president is a woman. This was a point I made, in a slightly different way, in my letter to Mr Belk of 16 October: '...I do want to assure you that all the clergy at the cathedral – male and female – will continue to offer you a warm welcome and that your prayerful presence at any Eucharist will be valued whether or

not you feel able to receive Communion.' It would, of course (to take your second point), be possible to let Mr Belk and other regular members of the cathedral congregation have sight of the duty rota in order to let them know in advance who is presiding, but that would be to undermine my commitment, articulated above, to provide shared space in which mutual flourishing moves from the realm of theological principle to lived reality. Letting regular members of the cathedral worshipping community have sight of the duty rota also begs a question: how far is this facility to be extended in a community which (like all cathedrals) also has many visitors and occasional attenders?

It might be helpful for me to make a couple of other points, both of which are related to the Bishop of Wakefield's 01 November response to Mr Belk. Firstly, although it is true that all three cathedrals in the Diocese of Leeds had hitherto indicated who would be presiding at every Eucharist, this was in no sense an agreed policy. As well as being a mother church for the whole diocese, each cathedral also works within its own context. When I arrived here as Dean I judged that the particular context of Wakefield Cathedral made it important for us to emphasise (as I wrote to Mr Belk) that we are committed to being 'a cathedral where the diaconal, priestly, and episcopal ministry of women is fully recognised and celebrated alongside of that of their male counterparts.' I believe that removing the names of eucharistic presidents makes this point eloquently but without fuss. Secondly, the Bishop of Wakefield suggested that naming the eucharistic president 'helps to avoid a situation in which people feel obliged to leave a service...'. Whilst I appreciate the pastoral sentiment underlying his comment, my rejoinder would be that nobody should ever feel obliged to leave a service: I want to emphasise as strongly as I am able that nobody is excluded from any act of worship at Wakefield Cathedral. If someone feels unable to receive Communion from the person presiding at a Eucharist that is a matter of great sadness, but I would hope that such a person would still feel able to participate prayerfully to the extent that they are able. In the end, however, if someone chooses to exclude him or herself there is little I can do.

As part of my preparation for replying to your letter I enquired informally of my fellow deans how many of their cathedrals indicate the eucharistic president in advance. I had replies from three quarters of them. Half those who responded do not give advance notice; six always give advance notice; and the rest operate mixed economies of various types. This information may or may not be relevant to your inquiry, but it does show that the pattern across the Church of England (and not just in the Diocese of Leeds) varies considerably.

I hope that my reply is helpful to your inquiry. I want to conclude my letter by quoting again from the *Resource for Study* that accompanies the Five Guiding Principles: '(It) would be easy to ... accept the wisdom of the worldly maxim that good fences make good neighbours – that the simplest way to endure this impasse of disagreement is to ensure we have no more to do with one another than is strictly necessary, and the lines of separation are well- established.' (p 35). Like the Faith and Order Commission, I strongly resist this so-called wisdom. I believe there is a better way forward in which we commit to one another (literally) through corporate worship – that is to say in body as well as in mind and spirit.

Yours sincerely,

Simon Cowling

The Very Revd Simon Cowling
Dean of Wakefield

Cc The Bishop of Leeds
 The Bishop of Wakefield
 The Very Revd Dr David Hoyle, Chair of the College of Deans