

**Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests  
(Resolution of Disputes Procedure) Regulations 2014**

**Report of the Independent Reviewer for 2019 to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York**

1. This is the fifth annual report required by Regulation 30 of the Bishops and Priests (Resolution of Disputes Procedure) Regulations 2014 and my second since becoming Independent Reviewer in February 2018.

**Grievances and Concerns Received under the Regulations**

2. In last year's report I noted that the grievance that I had received from a PCC and investigated in 2018 was the first since the 2014 Regulations had come into force. No further grievance was received in 2019.
3. I noted in last year's report that, just before the end of 2018, I had received an expression of concern and decided that, although the issue was a relatively narrow one, it had potentially wider relevance and should, therefore, be inquired into.
4. The concern was about a change of practice at Wakefield Cathedral relating to the publication of the names of those due to preside at services of Holy Communion. A regular worshipper at the Cathedral whose theological convictions did not enable him to receive the priestly ministry of women complained that the new arrangements prevented him from knowing in advance whether a Communion service was one at which a woman priest was due to preside.
5. My report was published on 5 March 2019<sup>1</sup>. It concluded that whether a cathedral routinely published on its service sheets and/or websites the names of those due to preside at services of Holy Communion was for the judgement of the Chapter. The House of Bishops Declaration had not created a presumption either way. Nevertheless where the identity of the person due to preside at a service was not routinely published in advance it should not be regarded as confidential information and should be supplied with a good grace to someone who asked for it in order to 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.
6. Following a period of reflection and consultation the Dean of Wakefield announced on 13 June that, while the cathedral's policy remained unchanged, it would in future be operated with what he described as a 'significant adjustment'; regular worshippers whose consciences did not enable them to receive the priestly ministry of women would be able to receive the quarterly rotas in advance.

<sup>1</sup> See [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/wakefield\\_cathedral\\_independent\\_reviewer\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/wakefield_cathedral_independent_reviewer_report_0.pdf)

### **Other correspondence received**

7. In September I received a letter from a curate asking me a number of hypothetical questions about the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration. I said that it was not part of my role to provide private advice or answer hypothetical questions. I was able, however, to make some general comments and to draw his attention to published material which might be relevant to his questions.
  
8. In November further correspondence took place and a Church Times article appeared concerning a parish which had a resolution in place under the House of Bishops' Declaration following a tied PCC vote and the use of a casting vote by the Chair in favour of the resolution. Since the matter had been addressed in earlier correspondence described in my annual report for 2018 it was sufficient to refer back to that report. As explained there, votes on resolutions under Paragraph 19 of the House of Bishops' Declaration need to be calculated in accordance with the normal provisions of the Church Representation Rules concerning decision-making by PCCs.

Sir William Fittall

26 February 2020