

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
STANDING COMMISSION ON THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS DECLARATION

**Introduction**

1. The terms of reference for the Standing Commission require it to make an annual report to the House of Bishops. This paper forms the first annual report of the Standing Commission from July 2022 – July 2023.

**Overview**

2. This report is made up of the following sections:
  - a. Introduction and background;
  - b. Discussions on membership;
  - c. Modes of working;
  - d. Focussed pieces of work/projects in progress; and,
  - e. Plans for the Commission's second year.

**Actions**

3. The House of Bishops is asked to note this report.

**+Michael Ipgrave, Chair**  
***On behalf of the Standing Commission***  
**July 2023**

**HOUSE OF BISHOPS**  
**FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF THE**  
**STANDING COMMISSION ON THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS DECLARATION**

**Introduction and Background**

1. In July 2021, the House of Bishops asked Synod to take note of a report from the Implementation and Dialogue Group and of the decision to form a Standing Commission on the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests ([GS2225](#)). The key recommendation in this report, approved by the House of Bishops, was the creation of a Standing Commission which “would be focused solely on the good working of the Declaration and related processes now and in years to come.” The draft terms of reference were contained in Annex Two of GS2225. The Synod took note of this report.
2. Subsequently, the Archbishops, in consultation with the House of Bishops, appointed the first members of the Standing Commission in June 2022. In July 2022, this group of members met for the first time. This report therefore documents the work of the Standing Commission from July 2022 until July 2023.
3. There are four sections of this report. The first two focus on the workings of the Standing Commission; the second two focus on the specific work projects of the Standing Commission.

**Section 1: Discussions on membership**

4. In June 2022, it was announced that the following people had been appointed by the Archbishops, in consultation with the House of Bishops, to be members of the Standing Commission:

Bishops

- a. The Bishop of Lichfield, the Rt Revd Dr **Michael Ipgrave (Chair)**
- b. The Bishop of Fulham, the Rt Revd **Jonathan Baker**
- c. The Bishop of Ripon, the Rt Revd Dr **Helen-Ann Hartley**
- d. Complementarian Evangelical Bishop – at the time of announcement, there was a vacancy in this post. During the vacancy the Revd **Charlie Skrine** (London) represented the bishop. (In February 2023, the Rt Revd **Rob Munro** became Bishop of Ebbsfleet and took his place on the Commission.)

Clergy

- e. The Revd Dr **Miranda Threlfall-Holmes** (Liverpool)
- f. The Revd Canon **Tim Goode**, (Southwark)
- g. The Venerable **Pete Spiers**, (Liverpool)
- h. The Revd Canon **Smitha Prasadam** (Europe)

Laity

- i. Dr **Ros Clarke** (Lichfield)
- j. Mrs **Emma Joy Gregory** (Bath and Wells)
- k. Canon Dr **Addy Lazz-Onyenobi** (Manchester)

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I. HH Canon **Peter Collier** KC (York)

5. The original terms of reference drafted by the Implementation and Dialogue Group suggested 10 members for the Commission. However, the Archbishops and the House of Bishops increased the membership to 12 to ensure proportional representation on the Commission of those who are and are not in favour of the ordination of women.
6. In order to allow for 4 members of the Commission who were not in favour of the ordination of women (2 Traditional Catholics and 2 Complementarian Evangelicals), it was agreed that proportionally there should be 8 members (not 6) who were in favour of the ordination of women. This also meant that there could be diversity within the Traditional Catholic and Complementarian Evangelical members of the group along the lines of gender, province and Synodical House.
7. However, the Commission members also discussed its membership at its first meetings and were concerned with the following things:
  - a. First, that there were no Traditional Catholic (TC) or Complementarian Evangelical (CE) clergy on the Commission;
  - b. Secondly, that if the group were to add TC and CE clergy to the membership, more members would need to be added who were in favour of the ordination of women to maintain the proportional representation;
  - c. Thirdly, that there were no representatives from the National Association of Diocesan Advisers in Women's Ministry (NADAWM), and that there was only one female bishop on the Commission; and,
  - d. Finally, that the time commitment for this Commission may not be possible for all members, and that, with the original membership, absence from a meeting could mean under-representation of a particular viewpoint.
8. Different options were considered for lessening these concerns and in January 2023, the House of Bishops Standing Committee agreed to add 4 further members to the Standing Commission as follows:
  - a. TC clergy: The Revd **Adam Gaunt**, General Synod member from the Diocese of York;
  - b. CE clergy: The Revd **Charlie Skrine**, General Synod members from the Diocese of London and formerly representing the CE PEV pending the consecration of Rob Munro as Bishop of Ebbsfleet;
  - c. Chair of NADAWM: The Revd Canon **Kate Massey**, Diocese of Coventry; and,
  - d. Suffragan bishop: The Rt Revd **Sarah Clark**, Bishop of Jarrow in the Diocese of Durham.
9. Since then, changes in roles have meant a slight change in the make-up of the Commission. +Helen-Ann Hartley became Bishop of Newcastle. She remains a member of the Commission and a Synod member. Smitha Prasadam has also been announced as the next Bishop of Huddersfield. [She remains on the Commission but is now, of course, an episcopal member and no longer sits on General Synod.] Tim Goode has a new role in the Diocese of York and therefore changes the ratio of Canterbury/York province representation. He also remains on the Commission but no longer sits on General Synod.

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10. Annex A gives the up-to-date membership of the Standing Commission. Here is a short summary of the current diversity of the group – there are 16 members of the Commission:

- a. 10 of those are in favour of the ordination of women. Of the 6 who are not, 3 are Traditional Catholic (1 bishop, 1 clergy, 1 lay) and 3 are Complementarian Evangelical (1 bishop, 1 clergy, 1 lay);
- b. There are 8 men and 8 women;
- c. There are 6 bishops, 6 clergy and 4 lay people;
- d. There are 8 members from each province;
- e. There are 2 UKME members; and,
- f. There are members who have a declared disability.

### Section 2: Modes of Working

11. The original Terms of Reference for the Standing Commission (in GS 2225) state that:

*‘This body will support dioceses with the monitoring of the implementation of the House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. The work of this body will be based upon careful engagement with people who embody a range of experiences and viewpoints within the Church of England.’*

12. Its responsibilities are set out as follows:

- a. To **receive and disseminate good practice** in relation to the implementation of the House of Bishops Declaration at all levels within the Church.
- b. To **consider how effectively the Declaration**, including the Five Guiding Principles, is being promoted throughout the Church.
- c. To **receive and comment on reports** published by the Independent Reviewer.
- d. To provide an **annual report** to the House of Bishops.
- e. This body is **not policy making** body.

13. The Standing Commission discussed these responsibilities in its first meeting and following this agreed three modes of working to help group together its work and enable the members to understand their specific role. These were: listening, focused pieces of work, and building an understanding of mutual flourishing.

14. Listening. It was agreed by all members that listening effectively underpins all of the work of the Standing Commission and that this would lead to understanding. Two main ways of doing this were agreed and have been put into practice:

- a. First, listening to each other. Every meeting of the Standing Commission begins with a significant period where members can talk about how they are feeling in relation to the Five Guiding Principles, their experiences and any concerns they have, while the rest of the members listen and seek to learn.
- b. Secondly, listening to others. This may be by way of an approach or letter from interested parties. This may also be through case studies which we have commissioned. This has already begun with some of the project work taking place. More on this in the next section.

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15. Focused Pieces of Work. Members having discussed all the possibilities for pieces of work it could do at its first meeting, it was important to recognise that prioritisation of focused pieces of work would be key to being able to deliver anything of substance. Noting that the members have other day to day commitments, and that there is not a huge amount of staff resourcing available, choosing one or two projects would be manageable, noting that other topics may come about during the year and submissions from external partners may be made. Section 3 of this report describes the focused pieces of work to which we have committed ourselves.
16. Building an Understanding of Mutual Flourishing. This mode goes hand in hand with listening and focussed projects. While members are well-versed in the Five Guiding Principles, it is essential that the Commission, and wider-Church, continues to build an understanding of Mutual Flourishing and what it means to live out the Five Guiding Principles day to day. This is done in the following ways:
  - a. The Commission listens and shares their experiences and will itself build up its understanding which it may wish to share with dioceses. The Commission also hears from dioceses to bring together an understanding of Mutual Flourishing, as well as perhaps other churches in the Anglican Communion and Ecumenical partners.
  - b. The Commission is also putting together a library of resources for itself, and may also wish to share this with the wider-Church in due course. It may also wish to commission work from others where it recognises there are gaps in understanding.
17. All of these modes seek to set a positive tone for any dialogue on the Five Guiding Principles and Mutual Flourishing. That is not to say that the Commission is not willing to consider any concerns about this area, but that concerns are approached in a respectful, honest and kind manner.
18. Appreciating that this is not a policy-making body, the Commission wishes to use these modes of working to offer to the House of Bishops its findings and any suggestions for improvements on work around the Five Guiding Principles.
19. The Commission is also clear that, in operating within these modes, its work to disseminate good practice should benefit all within the Church so that all can flourish.

### **Section 3: Focused Pieces of Work**

20. The Commission agreed to undertake one or two focused pieces of work each year. In its first year, the following focused pieces of work have begun:
  - a. A reflection of the London Plan
  - b. Consideration of PEV Guidelines
21. The Commission has also begun thinking about arrangements for consecrations with a view to sending a letter to the College of Bishops in September to suggest further work in this area.

#### Reflection on the London Plan

22. The London Plan is a declaration made and signed by the Bishop of London and all the Area and Suffragan Bishops. It relates to the Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure 2014, the House of Bishops'

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Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests 2014 and its associated regulations made under Canon C29. The London Plan has set out how certain parts of the Bishop of London's authority – such as the authority to ordain and license clergy – may be delegated to the other bishops of the Diocese of London. It allows parochial church councils to petition the Bishop of London to make provision for episcopal ministry in that parish to be exercised by a bishop other than the Diocesan or Area Bishop.

23. The aim of the Standing Commission's reflection is to learn more about and understand the London Plan and highlight good practice which might be disseminated to other dioceses, noting that not all elements will be relevant or helpful for non-London dioceses.
24. This is an opportunity for the Standing Commission to look at the London Plan and reflect on how it works in the Diocese of London, particularly looking at the following areas:
  - a. consistency and clarity;
  - b. use of language;
  - c. theology in practice;
  - d. putting together documentation which works for all people in the diocese; and,
  - e. the importance of leadership and working to a plan.
25. The Standing Commission agreed the following methods for this reflection:
  - a. Reading the background papers and understanding the policy documents from the diocese;
  - b. Meeting representatives from the Diocese of London to ask questions, understand the London Plan and learn about the positives as well as the challenges; and,
  - c. Discussing together as a whole Commission the London Plan, what works well, what challenges there are, and what might be disseminated more widely as good practice, noting that the particular nature of London may not translate well to all other dioceses.
26. In February, the Standing Commission began to discuss what sort of areas they might wish to explore with representatives from the diocese and having read the documentation. In June, a sub-group of the Commission met with around 30 representatives from the diocese all from different parishes and with different ministries.
27. Following this, the Commission held its usual meeting during July Synod and started to reflect as a whole group on the discussions with the representatives and began to pull out from those what good practice it might wish to feed back to the House of Bishops, as well as the challenges that come with such a plan.
28. A final reflection will be submitted to the House of Bishops in the autumn of this year.

### PEV Guidelines

29. In October 2022, the Standing Commission was approached by the Archbishops to consider taking on a piece of work to develop/update the guidelines for

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dioceses/diocesan bishops to encourage a more consistent approach to extended episcopal care for parishes which do not accept the ministry of women to the priesthood. The Commission was invited to work up a proposed set of guidelines for approval from the Archbishops and the House of Bishops and agreed that this would be best done once all of the new PEVs had been in post for at least a year.

30. At its July meeting, the Commission discussed a draft project plan for this work and agreed that the aim of the project would be to:

- a. To produce guidelines for dioceses/diocesan bishops which encourage a more consistent approach to extended episcopal care for parishes who do not accept the ordination of women to the priesthood. These will be proposed guidelines for the Archbishops and the House of Bishops to comment on, edit if necessary and approve for use across dioceses.
- b. To consider examples of good practice already happening in dioceses and see how this can be applied across all dioceses, noting that some dioceses have a very different culture and context and therefore not all current practice will apply across all dioceses.
- c. To consider the following specific areas in writing the proposed guidelines:
  - i. Status of PEV in Dioceses
    - Honorary Assistant Bishops status
    - Membership of Bishops' Senior Teams
    - PEVs as Sponsoring Bishops
  - ii. Relationships
    - Working with female diocesan bishops
    - Changes of leadership in a diocese
    - Changes of people in the roles of PEVs
  - iii. Services and Liturgical Matters
    - Consecrations
    - Ordination of deacons and priests
    - PEV roles in inauguration of new ministries
  - iv. Communications (with dioceses and parishes)

This is not an exhaustive list and may grow as the project progresses.

31. The Commission will wish to spend some time looking at this area **together as a group**, as well as having **read relevant documents** in advance of meeting together.

32. The Commission will also want to **listen to people** who have experience and knowledge in this area, as well as those who have concerns. This will mainly be bishops, though other senior staff in dioceses will have input and parishes who come under the oversight of a PEV will also wish to comment. This may be done in the following ways:

- a. A **survey** is sent to the College of Bishops which asks them questions about their work with PEVs and resolution parishes;
- b. Inviting **PEVs to attend a meeting** with a small working group of the Commission to ask them questions about what they consider would be helpful within the PEV Guidelines, and what difficulties they face as well as what good practice they have seen;

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- c. The Standing Commission will also want to hear from **resolution parishes** and learn from their experience working with PEVs and within dioceses where they require alternative episcopal oversight. This might be done by sending a **survey** to some parishes as proposed by PEVs, or a **group of representatives** may be asked to **meet with members** of the Standing Commission to discuss some of the areas the Commission is considering.
  - d. The Standing Commission will draw upon the findings in the **London Plan Reflection** completed in the autumn 2023, and also may wish to approach other dioceses who have similar plans or set-ups to find other good practice. It will also want to ensure read across to the **Consecrations** work being undertaken by the Commission as well, given the connection of the two areas.
33. A proposal for **PEV Guidelines will be shared with the House of Bishops** for discussion in 2024 at a time determined to be most helpful considering other priorities for the House. Given the amount of engagement needed on this project, and factoring in other work priorities such as LLF, it is not yet clear whether this will be delivered within the Commission's second year, but the majority of the work will take place over the next 12 months.

### **Section 4: Plans for the Commission's Second Year**

34. As noted above, both the reflection on the London Plan and PEV guidelines projects will continue into the Commission's second year. The Commission also assumes it will take forward some work around arrangements for consecrations following the initial conversations at the College of Bishops in September.
35. The Commission is also committed to meeting with the new Independent Reviewer, Maggie Swinson, to discuss how the Commission can work most effectively with the Independent Reviewer.
36. Given these areas of work, the Commission is cautious about confirming any other focused pieces of work between July 2023 and July 2024 at this stage.
37. Members are conscious that a lot of time and resourcing needs to be given to the Living in Love and Faith process, and the Chair of the Commission is also taking a sabbatical in the autumn of 2023.
38. The Commission would also like to leave space for pieces of work which might arise from any submissions it may receive either from the Independent Reviewer or from any other correspondents.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

39. The whole Standing Commission has met four times in its first year. As detailed above, a number of topics have been discussed and projects begun. Necessarily, a large amount of the Commission's time in its first few meetings was spent discussing its membership and modes of working. Though these conversations meant that the Commission wasn't able to begin project work straight away, it also recognised the importance of building a solid foundation and ensuring good working relationships before beginning project work. This in itself is a lesson that the Commission would want to pass on to others; that time for preparation, getting



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the right people in the room, reflection and building good working relationships are the right foundations for creating openness, honesty, respect and learning. I believe that the Commission is now able to have open, respectful and yet robust conversation because of this initial work.

40. This enables the Commission to apply this to its project work and ultimately to then make any recommendations of good practice for the wider Church, its bishops, dioceses, clergy and parishes. As this report has noted, a lot of the projects started in year one need to continue into year two, and some may take longer. This is partly because these projects need time, but also because there are many other things going on in the life of the Church which may take priority at different times. It is also worth remembering that members of the Commission are volunteering for this role and have other commitments, and that there is not a great deal of staff resourcing available for this work.
41. As noted, the House and College of Bishops will receive a number of documents from the Standing Commission over the next year which will come from its project work and will offer reflections for bishops to consider.
42. The House of Bishops is asked to note this annual report.

**+Michael Ipgrave, Chair**  
***On behalf of the Standing Commission***  
**July 2023**

## HOUSE OF BISHOPS

## Annex A: Membership List

**Standing Commission on the  
House of Bishops Declaration and the Five Guiding Principles**

**Membership List (as of July 2023)**

<b>Chair:</b>	
<b>+Michael Ipgrave*</b>	Bishop of Lichfield
<b>Bishops:</b>	
<b>+Jonathan Baker</b>	Bishop of Fulham, London
<b>+Helen-Ann Hartley*</b>	Bishop of Newcastle
<b>+Rob Munro</b>	Bishop of Ebbsfleet
<b>+Sarah Clark</b>	Bishop of Jarrow, Durham
<b>+Smitha Prasadam</b> (originally clergy member)	Bishop of Huddersfield, Leeds
<b>Clergy:</b>	
<b>Miranda Threlfall-Holmes*</b>	Liverpool
<b>Tim Goode</b>	York
<b>Pete Spiers*</b>	Liverpool
<b>Adam Gaunt*</b>	York
<b>Charlie Skrine*</b>	London
<b>Kate Massey*</b>	Coventry
<b>Laity:</b>	
<b>Ros Clarke*</b>	Lichfield
<b>Emma Joy Gregory*</b>	Bath and Wells
<b>Addy Lazz-Onyenobi*</b>	Manchester
<b>Peter Collier*</b>	York

\*General Synod member