

NEW PROPOSALS FOR WOMEN BISHOPS

The House of Bishops appointed a Working Group to look at the options. The report of this working group was published in full. They firstly set out a Vision and the Archbishops set out the principles on which they wanted to move forward.

The five elements of the vision need to be held together rather than used selectively.

1. Once legislation has been passed to enable women to become bishops the Church of England will be fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and will hold 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;
2. Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must then be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;
3. Since it will continue 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 will acknowledge 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;
4. Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests will continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England will remain committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and
5. 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.

Four options

The Working group set out four options for the for new legislation.

Option 1

- a simple measure which removes bars on women becoming bishops
- the removal of previous arrangements for those who oppose women priests (the old Resolution A & B arrangements, and the Act of Synod which introduced the "flying bishops")
- provision for those who cannot accept women bishops by means of either a new Act of Synod or a Declaration from the House of Bishops

We don't yet know exactly the shape of this alternative provision, but we do know that it will be provided on a national basis and that any such Act of Synod or Declaration will be available prior to final approval of the measure, so the provision can be seen and debated in full.

Option 2

- The same components as Option 1, but with reference in the measure to the new Act of Synod, with a clause that provision under these means can only be changed with a special majority in General Synod
- This option would definitely not use a House of Bishops Declaration, but instead use an Act of Synod

In practical terms this would operate in exactly the same way as Option 1, but it would increase the legal force of the Act of Synod or Bishops Declaration, and make it harder to change them in future.

Option 3

- a much more complex option, which includes the same components as Option 2, but also retains some of the legislation passed in 1993 (Resolution A and B processes) to allow parishes to pass resolutions preventing women priests from either presiding at communion or acting as priest in charge
- significant modification of the 1993 would need modification for this to work

The House of Bishops have said that they don't like this option much, as it is highly complex.

Option 4

- this option is to put all the required provisions in a new measure, which contains all provision for those who cannot accept women bishops in the face of the measure

The Bishop's have proposed a motion for the July 2013 Synod session supporting Option 1

The House has, therefore, decided that the motion which it wishes to bring to the Synod in July is as follows:

‘That this Synod:

(a) reaffirm its commitment to admitting women to the episcopate as a matter of urgency;

(b) instruct the Appointments Committee to appoint this month a Steering Committee to be in charge of the draft legislation required to that end;

(c) instruct the Business Committee to arrange for the First Consideration stage for that draft legislation to be taken at the November 2013 group of sessions, so that the subsequent stages can follow the timetable set out in paragraph 141 of the annex to GS 1886; and

(d) instruct the Steering Committee to prepare the draft legislation on the basis described in paragraphs 79-88 of the annex to GS 1886 as ‘option one’ and invite the House of Bishops to bring to the Synod for consideration at the February 2014 group of sessions a draft Act of Synod or draft declaration to be made by the House to accompany the draft legislation.’

TIMETABLE

☐ **November 2013: First Consideration**

☐ **January – April 2014: Revision Committee considers draft legislation**

☐ **July 2014: Revision Stage in full Synod**

☐ **August – end of November 2014: Article 8 reference to the dioceses**

☐ **February 2015: Report back from the dioceses and Final Drafting Stage**

☐ **May 2015: Article 7 reference to the House of Bishops**

☐ **July 2015: Article 7 reference to the Convocations and House of Laity
Either July/ November 2015: Final Approval (followed by Parliamentary
consideration and Royal Assent).**