



# Women bishops in the Church of England – YES

## Preparing a talk for parish and deanery debates.

### How to use these notes.

*These notes are written to accompany the powerpoint slides produced by WATCH. They also stand alone as briefing notes for a presentation without the slides. They aim to be comprehensive – to include everything you might need to create a talk and answer questions. If you use all this material the talk would last at least 45 minutes: so don't! Choose what you MUST include for your circumstances, and add some examples and anecdotes from your own Diocese or experience. Your task is to inform and encourage people to think – not to drown their thinking with too many facts or arguments. If in doubt, leave it out: people can always ask for more.*

*Slides 1-13 give a comprehensive summary of the issues around the legislation for women bishops. Slide 14 is deliberately blank to provide a clear finish to the presentation. Slide 15 is an optional extra slide – it is a summary of the options for provisions for those opposed that General Synod has consistently rejected, including the option of 'no provisions'.*

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## **1. Introduction to the debate.**

In July 2010 General Synod gave first approval to legislation that will enable women to be bishops. Between now and November 2011 every Diocese will debate and vote on whether they want this legislation. If eventually approved, it will allow women to be bishops AND will make provisions for those who will not accept them.

The vast majority of members of the Church of England want women bishops. Those outside the Church cannot understand what the fuss is about and why this is taking so long.

*The photo on Slide 1 is of women bishops at the 2008 Lambeth Conference, taken by Cynthia Black.*

### **2A. Do we want women to be bishops? YES**

- In 1992 the law allowing women to become priests explicitly excluded women from being bishops
- Since 2005 General Synod has voted in favour of women becoming bishops on five occasions, at the various stages of preparing this legislation.
- In the General Synod debate in July 2010 NO-ONE spoke against the first clause in this legislation, that says ‘women can be bishops’.
- It is clear that even those opposed expect the Church to have women bishops eventually.

### **2B. Do we want this legislation? YES**

- It gives the Church women bishops
- It is the result of 10 years of debate and discussion.
- At each stage there has been lengthy debate about how provisions for those opposed should be included.
- In July 2010 General Synod supported this legislation – with this particular set of provisions – by 373 votes to 14. That is a massive vote of support.
- The provisions in this legislation are the furthest the Church can go to support those opposed, without creating two tiers of bishops (with women in the ‘second division’), and without altering the traditional understanding and role of a Diocesan bishop.

## **3. Why do we want women to be bishops?**

### **A. Scripture demands it:**

- Women and men are both created in the image of God - they are equal in their creation:

*Gen 1:27 ‘So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.’*

As God incorporates both male and female then men are not somehow made more in the image of God or better able to represent Christ. The Church needs to demonstrate and celebrate this truth by having male and female bishops.

- Women and men are equal in their baptism:

Gal 3:27-28 *‘As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.’*

It took the Church less than a generation to stop discriminating between Jew and Greek; it took 1800 years to abolish slavery; please God, it will be less than 2000 years to overcome this highly symbolic example of gender discrimination, and allow women to be bishops.

- Women and men were equally filled with the Spirit at Pentecost:

Acts 1: 13-14; 2: 2-4, *in fulfilment of the prophetic vision Joel 2:28-29*

Women and men represent God together: how can we preach ‘good news’ of God’s unconditional love to the world if we do not treat women as equals in the Church?

### **B. Tradition: women have been kept in their place by the Church for too long**

- Early Church fathers: eg Clement of Alexandria wrote, ‘the very awareness of her own nature must arouse a sense of shame in woman’; Tertullian (of women): ‘you are the devil’s gateway’
- Middle ages: Thomas Aquinas wrote, ‘woman is a misbegotten male’
- 1936 Archbishops’ Commission: ‘We maintain that the ministration of women will tend to produce a lowering of the spiritual tone of Christian worship’
- This is an important issue of God’s justice - not based on secular equal rights - for all women – not just in the Church, not just in England, but for all women across the world who are kept in their place – as slaves to be trafficked, as wives to be beaten, as the ones who receive less education and therefore are the poorest of the poor.

### **C. Catching up with our sister Churches**

- The Anglican Communion – the Church of England is not the first Province to do this: we will be the 16<sup>th</sup> out of 38 Anglican Provinces to agree to have women bishops. None have made legal provision for those opposed.
- The Methodist Church: the Church of England is close to joining formally with them, but they have made it clear that they will not agree to this unless we allow women to be bishops. They have had a number of ordained women as Presidents since the first in 1992.
- URC: this year they have two women (ordained and lay) as joint Moderators of their General Assembly (equivalent of the Archbishop of Canterbury) and they have had others in the past.
- Baptist Union: have women as regional ministers – their equivalent of Bishops.

### **D. Women will make excellent bishops**

- Not ‘as opposed to men’ but ‘in addition to men’
- They are capable: we mustn’t take this idea for granted: in Victorian times they believed that if women were educated to too high a level then they would lose their fertility.

- They bring different experience and therefore different perspectives to discussions in the House of Bishops. The current House of Bishops is diminished by not having the contributions of women.
- They are ready: we have a good number of women who, if they were men, would be expecting to be on the shortlist for bishops. Can the Church afford not to use their talents fully?

#### **4. The two main arguments against women bishops.**

*Some additional arguments used are actually about having women priests. See the Supplementary notes below for these. This debate should not be about women priests as the Church of England agreed 19 years ago to their ordination.*

##### **4A. Headship:**

Those opposed from a conservative evangelical perspective believe that the Bible says that women should not be in authority over men.

- Some evangelicals believe that headship is part of the created order – that God created men to be in authority over women, women should not be in authority over men, and therefore women should never be bishops. But other evangelicals believe that men and women were created equal but that male authority – which so easily turns to domination – is a result of the Fall. They say that following our redemption by Jesus on the cross, having women as bishops is an important sign of our new life in Christ, where gender relationships are restored.
- The New Testament never talks of “headship” as a concept but uses “head” as a metaphor. This metaphor is as ambiguous in Greek as it is in English – it can refer to authority, eg head teacher, or to source, eg head of a river
- Two texts that use language of headship (1 Cor 11:3-10 & Eph 5:22-23) are not strictly about the relationships of men and women in the life of the Church. Corinthians concerns appropriate dress for worship while Ephesians concerns internal domestic relationships
- Alternative interpretations exist for two texts (1 Cor 14:33-38 & 1 Tim 2:12-15) showing that these are culturally specific and no longer relevant to today’s Church nor helpful to today’s mission. Paul himself writes about women speaking in Church as if this were a natural occurrence (1 Cor 11:5).
- Women were in authority in the Early Church: Paul sends greetings to women who were in positions of authority in local Churches (Romans 16): Prisca, Phoebe and Junia (whom he refers to as ‘ an apostle’ - for most of history her name was translated as Junias, since the bible scholars thought that she could not be female).
- There may even have been women bishops: there is a 6th century tomb in Umbria, Italy, inscribed ‘venerable lady, Bishop Q-’; and there is a 9<sup>th</sup> century mosaic in a chapel in Rome in which one figure is entitled ‘Theodora Episcopa’ – ‘the lady Theodora, Bishop’.

##### **4B. Sacramental assurance:**

Those opposed from an Anglo-Catholic perspective believe that to be sure that bread and wine are truly consecrated, only male priests in a fully male historic line of ordination are ‘acceptable’.

They say that they require not just a male bishop – which they can have under this legislation – but a male bishop who has not ordained women as priests, nor participated in the consecration of a woman bishop, nor been ordained by a woman, nor been consecrated by a woman, nor been ordained by a

man who was ordained by a woman. And so on. This would require every priest and bishop to carry a 'pedigree' of ordination – a family tree of who ordained them, going back to ...Archbishop Cranmer, or St Peter? The outcome of this would be to create a separate Church within the Church – ministered to by 'acceptable' priests and bishops, 'untainted' by being involved in ordaining or consecrating women.

Anglican law states that any priest or bishop legally and canonically ordained is a true priest or bishop and should be regarded as such by everyone. To suggest that their ordination is in doubt because they are female or ordain women, and that therefore the sacraments they administer are in doubt, seems to contradict this. In the Church of England we are confident in the sacraments because we trust in God's grace at work, not human action.

The argument that having women bishops would make unity with the Roman Catholic Church less likely can be challenged in two ways: since the Roman Catholic Church does not recognise Anglican priests as valid priests – whether male or female - having women as bishops makes little difference. In addition, the Archbishop of Canterbury recently announced that the discussions between the two Churches from which it is hoped movement towards unity will follow are about to re-commence, despite the expected consecration of women as bishops in the Church of England.

NB There are large numbers of Anglo-Catholic priests and laypeople who fully support the consecration of women as bishops: this tradition is not going to be lost to the Church.

### **Jurisdiction:**

These two arguments – headship and sacramental assurance - lead those opposed to say they are unable to accept the authority or legal jurisdiction of a female bishop. They require an 'acceptable' male bishop to have authority over them in his own right, not as delegated by a female Diocesan bishop.

**This is a crux point:** if we allow this, then the Church is restricting in law the authority of female bishops in their own Dioceses, and this differing treatment on the basis of gender would make them 'second class'. This would both undermine them as women, and undermine the integrity of the traditional role of the Diocesan bishop.

## **5. 90 years of discussions.**

**The idea of having women bishops is not an 'innovation':** the Church of England has been discussing this for 90 years.

- 1920 Lambeth Conference first discussed women's ordination
- 1944 Li Tim-Oi ordained as the first female Anglican priest, to work behind enemy lines in Macao
- 1975 Church of England agreed 'no fundamental objections' to women priests
- 1987 First women deacons ordained in the Church of England
- 1994 Women first ordained as priests in the Church of England – 1500 of them
  - We have had women priests for 17 years. Most young people know no different. Children sometimes ask 'can men be vicars?'
  - General Synod has already been discussing this for ten years. It will be at least another four years before the first women are appointed as bishops even if everything goes smoothly.
  - If this legislation is rejected – by the Dioceses or by General Synod – then we start again: the legislation cannot be amended and re-submitted for debate. We have to start again with a request for new legislation, which will delay the appointment of women as bishops for another period of years.

## 6. Statistics for the Church of England

29% of licensed clergy are women

*The Church has more than 3000 female priests including*

- *4 female Deans of Cathedrals*
- *14 female Archdeacons*
- *47% of those training for ordination are women*

Having women as priests is now 'normal' in the Church of England. Nearly a third of clergy in active ministry (ie not retired) are women: this means that if your parish doesn't have a clergywoman then a neighbouring one will.

*Use examples of what women priests are doing in your own Diocese – eg running large parishes, or rural parishes with a number of churches, prison chaplains, hospital chaplains, rural/area deans, cathedral canons – find an interesting story about one to tell.*

- Women are in senior posts, and have the capability and experience to be bishops: the Church is the only major organisation where women are currently banned from the leadership.
- Only a tiny number of parishes have asked for a flying bishop rather than their own: 363 across the whole of England - 2.8% of parishes.

*Find the number in your own Diocese in the Church Statistics for 2009:*

[www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/churchstats2008/eem2010.htm](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/churchstats2008/eem2010.htm)

## 7. Statistics for the Anglican Communion

- 25 out of 38 Provinces already have women priests
- 15 out of 38 Provinces have approved having women bishops – including Scotland, Ireland, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, North India, Philippines, Southern Africa and Sudan.
- 1988 First woman bishop - Barbara Harris
- 29 women bishops in
  - Australia, Canada, Cuba, New Zealand, USA
- *No Provinces have made legal provision for those opposed to women bishops*

In other words, we are not the pioneers!

Additional points:

- Many Provinces are waiting for the Church of England to do this, as the 'Mother Church'
- In Sudan they agreed to deacons, priests and bishops in one debate. This of course is what the Roman Catholic Church will do when it eventually gets around to it.
- The Archbishop of Cape Town, at his General Synod in September 2010, urged his Province to elect a woman as a bishop as soon as possible. The momentum is clearly in this direction across the Communion.

## **8. Women bishops in the Anglican Communion**

*If you have one, show the WATCH poster of women bishops.*

These are the women who are, or have retired as, bishops in the Anglican Communion.

All of them have worked with those who would not accept them by establishing informal, local arrangements for a mutually acceptable male bishop to provide sacramental care. As the Diocesan bishop, however, they have continued to visit the parishes concerned and care for them pastorally.

These arrangements have been made by negotiation between the female bishop and their parishes. There has been no legal provision allowing those opposed to avoid their female Diocesan bishop completely. This is surely how it should be.

## **9. What is the key issue for the Church of England?**

The Manchester Report of 2008 summarised the key issue as this:

How shall we appoint women as bishops in a way that -

- maintains the traditional understanding and role of bishops
- leaves space for those who in conscience cannot accept women as priests or bishops
- avoids any flavour of discrimination or half-heartedness by the Church towards women priests and bishops?

*(Manchester Report April 2008)*

**The key issue, which General Synod has examined now 3 times, is not ‘Shall we have women bishops?’ but ‘How do we deal with the particular problem of making provision for those opposed?’**

This is the circle that the discussions at General Synod have been trying to square for the past 5 years.

## **10. The draft legislation: what does it include?**

- Women may be bishops
- Every Diocesan bishop must draw up a Scheme describing the arrangements if a parish wishes to have a male vicar or bishop
- Every parish has the right to ask for arrangements under the Scheme
- All Schemes are subject to a national statutory Code of Practice
- Exemptions from the Equality Act 2010

NB it takes one clause to change the law so that women may be bishops. Of the other 11 clauses, 5 concern the provisions for those who will not accept them.

In July 2008 General Synod agreed that provision for those opposed should be in a statutory national Code of Practice. That Code is being written as we speak. It will contain details of how the provisions are to be implemented.

The opponents have said that ‘A Code of practice is not enough’. In fact, this legislation goes further than a Code of Practice, as it enshrines provisions in law.

## **10A What are the provisions for those who will not accept women bishops?**

1. Each Diocesan bishop must create a local Scheme describing the arrangements he or she will make if a parish wishes to have a male bishop or vicar.

- A 'local' scheme allows for local variations eg Gloucester has one parish ministered to by a PEV or flying bishop, whereas Chelmsford – which is a much larger Diocese – has 26.
- Parishes can still opt for a male vicar – ie Resolution B of the 1992 Measure for women priests is retained.
- If a parish asks for a male bishop, the Diocesan bishop will delegate duties agreed with the parish to a male bishop.
- The opponents worry that such a male bishop may not be acceptable to them. But how likely is it that any Diocesan bishop would make trouble for him or herself by imposing an unwelcome bishop on a parish?

2. A national statutory Code of Practice

- This will describe how the legislation is to be implemented. It cannot restrict or expand what is in the legislation – it can only give guidance about how it should be carried through in practice.
- The draft Code of Practice will be available before General Synod votes finally on the legislation: a draft is expected to be presented to the House of Bishops in Autumn 2011, and then to General Synod in February 2012.
- All Diocesan bishops will have to pay due regard to this Code of Practice – this is a strong statement in law that they are expected to comply with it.

3. Exemptions from the Equality Act 2010

- The women priests legislation of 1992 gave the Church of England specific exemption from the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act so that Resolutions A and B could be allowed.
- This legislation for women bishops requires new exemptions from the 2010 Equality Act, because any provision the Church makes for those opposed will contravene that Act.
- Many supporters of women bishops believe that in principle the Church of England, as the Established Church, should comply with Sex Discrimination Law. But it recognises that to enable those who will not accept women as bishops to stay in the Church, such limited exemption may be necessary.

## 11. Are these provisions fair? YES

The legislation is a compromise for both sides:

It is a compromise for those in favour, as there will still be parishes where women will not be able to serve as priests or bishops. Many people would ideally like arrangements for those opposed to be made informally, not in law, as has happened elsewhere in the Anglican Communion. And in July 2010 supporters in a spirit of compromise withdrew the amendment for a 'sunset clause', which asked for a 40-year time limit on provisions, so that eventually the gender of a bishop would be irrelevant in law.

It is a compromise for those against, as it does not create the separation from the rest of the Church that they would ideally like.

Those opposed who say these provisions are not enough want two things:

- A separate 'line' of bishops – pedigree bishops
- Separate jurisdiction – ie not to have to acknowledge the authority of a female bishop. In some cases this extends to not recognising the authority of any male bishop who has ordained women as priests, or taken part in the consecration of a woman as a bishop.

Surely this is wanting to create in effect a separate Church? And two tiers of bishops, where women are in the second tier?

This could open the door to parishes choosing their bishop according to whether she or he agrees with the parish's views on – for example, euthanasia, divorce, whether clergy should wear robes or not, Book of Common Prayer vs. Common Worship?

The Church of England is a broad Church but '**a bishop must be a bishop must be a bishop.**' Any further provisions would undermine women, and undermine the traditional role of the Diocesan bishop.

## 12. What happens next?

1. The draft legislation has completed its Revision Stage in General Synod – in July 2010.

2. Dioceses are now debating the legislation.

- Between now and November 2011 all 44 Diocesan Synods will debate and vote on whether to accept it. They can only accept or reject it – not amend it. (PCCs and Deaneries may debate and vote, but in the legislative process only the voting of Diocesan Synods counts.) Diocesan Synods can ask for amendments by a 'following motion' eg '*this Synod asks for further provision for those opposed* 'or '*this Synod urges General Synod to appoint women as bishops on exactly the same basis as men.*'

3. Provided more than half the Dioceses approve the legislation, the House of Bishops then has a final scrutiny of it.

- The legislation could be amended at this stage. This would be highly unusual, and would be likely to happen only if the great majority of Dioceses wanted the legislation to be altered. If

the legislation were amended, General Synod could reject it. The whole legislative process would then have to begin again, adding a number of years to the process.

4. There will be a final debate and vote in General Synod – this is planned for July 2012.

- The final approval requires 2/3 to vote in favour in each of three houses – the bishops, the clergy and the laity. This ensures that the legislation is well-supported across the Church.
- The recent General Synod elections have produced a new Synod of which 40% of the members are new. So it would seem premature to speculate about which way they will vote in the final debate. The opposition have said that they have enough votes to block the current legislation, but the same was true in 1992 with respect to the women priests legislation, and the vote went differently – it passed.

5. Parliament then considers and approves the legislation

- The Church of England is the Established Church: this means that everyone who lives in England automatically has the right to be a member of the C of E, and to be baptised and married in their parish church. Therefore Parliament has a role to play in making sure that any legislation passed by the Church that affects everyone in the country is fair to those who are members of the Church but do not attend.
- During the General Synod debate in July 2010 the MP who is the member of the Government responsible for steering Church legislation through Parliament made it clear that it would be extremely difficult (in fact he said impossible) to get through Parliament legislation that had been amended with further provision for those opposed that undermined the authority of female bishops.

6. Final legal processes and the appointments process mean that if all goes smoothly the first women may be appointed as bishops in 2014.

### **13. Conclusion**

- Let us say ‘Yes’.
- For the sake of the reputation, credibility and mission of the Church, let’s get on with enabling women to be bishops.
- Let’s pass this legislation, which will make women bishops and still allow space for those who will not accept them.
- Then we can get on with tackling the other major issues of our age (*insert your own suggestions here – global poverty, climate change, Government cuts, the Big Society, etc*).

### **14. Supplementary notes:**

#### **Provisions for those opposed that General Synod has rejected.**

Committees of General Synod have met over four years to tussle with the issue of how to enable women to be bishops and also provide for those who won’t accept them. A number of other options have been suggested for those opposed, and General Synod has twice decided not to accept them.

- A separate Province for parishes opposed
- Separate Dioceses for parishes opposed
- A statutory Society whose members are opposed to women bishops and from whose membership Bishops to minister to those opposed would be drawn

- Automatic transfer of some parishes to a male bishop when a female bishop is appointed
- Co-ordinate jurisdiction (the Archbishops' amendment), where a female bishop is the Diocesan bishop but a male (Coordinate) bishop shares her legal authority (jurisdiction) in the parishes who want a male bishop (see below)
- A 'single-clause' measure – by which women can be bishops, full stop.

Why were they rejected by General Synod?

- Separate province – this would create in effect a separate Church within the Church of England, and was unacceptable to most people
- Separate Dioceses – this too would create a separate 'Church within a Church', with all the bureaucratic structures and financial burdens involved. This was rejected in July 2010 by 258 votes to 134
- Statutory society – this was deemed legally too cumbersome, and equivalent in many ways to forming a new Diocese
- Automatic ('statutory') transfer – this would reduce the authority of women bishops and create two tiers of bishops: some with authority across their whole diocese, and some with authority over parts of it. This was rejected in July 2010 by 270 votes to 135
- A single clause measure – which says 'women can be bishops. Full stop. This is recognised as the most coherent way forward theologically and in terms of church practice. But it would be a step too far for many supporters of women bishops who want to allow space for all faithful Christians within the Church.

### **The Archbishops' amendment – Coordinate Jurisdiction.**

This amendment was presented to General Synod in June 2010 after the draft legislation had been agreed and published by the Revision Committee responsible for it. It was an untimely intervention. General Synod did not have scrutiny of how it would work legally or in practice. The amendment suggested that a female bishop would choose to share the authority (jurisdiction) over parishes who will not accept her with a male bishop (to be called a Coordinate bishop). This differs from the draft legislation in that authority over a parish is not delegated by her, it is shared in law with a male bishop. There are other instances where this happens (eg bishops generally share their jurisdiction with archdeacons), but in those cases one of the pair still retains final authority.

There are a number of problems with this amendment:

1. A female bishop would have to share her authority with a male bishop who may not accept that she is a bishop.
2. If the two Coordinate bishops in a Diocese disagree, whose authority would prevail? If the female (Diocesan) bishop's, then surely this is what is offered in the draft legislation; if the (Coordinate) male bishop's, then this is the same as statutory transfer, which General Synod resoundingly rejected.
3. The amendment would create a situation where, in some parishes within a geographical Diocese, two bishops held equal jurisdiction. This is counter to the historic tradition of the episcopacy, where one Diocesan bishop holds full authority over one geographical area, and any other bishop acting as a bishop in that Diocese does so at his invitation and under his authority. There are historical examples where such dual episcopacy has occurred, but they have invariably produced conflict and confusion, and none of them has been in the Church of England, with its particular view of Dioceses as geographical territories.

4. One of the callings of a Bishop is to be a focus of unity in his or her Diocese. The overlapping jurisdiction of two bishops, one of whom may not recognise the other as a bishop, would seem to militate pretty strongly against that.

5. The amendment is proposed as a way of enabling those clergy who will not make their oath of obedience to a female Diocesan bishop to do so to another (Coordinate – male) bishop. But as the authority is shared, not given up, then they are still subject to the female bishop's authority.

### **Support in General Synod**

The amendment was supported by the majority of General Synod but defeated by the House of Clergy (by 5 votes) and therefore fell. Some people think that this form of voting was unfair, and that the amendment should be given a second chance at some point in the legislative process. But voting 'by Houses' ensures that there is sufficient support for a proposal across all groups who will be required to implement it.

We know of a number of people who supported the amendment out of loyalty to the Archbishops rather than agreement with the amendment.

In the past, proposals to allow women to be ordained as priests were defeated three times by the House of Clergy when the other Houses voted in favour: voting by Houses can work both ways.

It is likely that the newly-elected House of Clergy in Synod will take a similar view to the previous one – in not supporting any such amendment - especially as the proportion of women in that House has increased.

## **14. Further resources.**

On the WATCH website, under 'Resources', or from the WATCH office

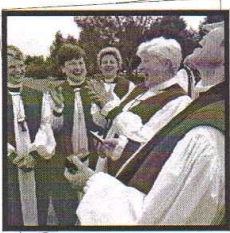
- WATCH Paper – '**Women's ordination – a brief history**' – *how we have got to this point.*
- WATCH paper – '**Women bishops – some ecumenical considerations**' – *further information about the perspectives of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other Protestant Churches.*
- WATCH Paper – '**Priesthood and gender**' – *refuting the arguments that women should not be priests*
- WATCH Training Days paper – '**History of Progress**' – *a timeline of progress towards women's ordination since 1920*

From the WATCH office: '**Women with oversight**' – *examples of women in authority from Scripture and the Tradition of the Early Church.* '**Women bishops in the Anglican Communion**' A3 poster; '**A woman's place is in the House of Bishops**' tea-towels and postcards.

On the Church of England website, under General Synod

- **Revision Committee Report - GS1708-09Y**  
[www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/july2010/gspapers/gs1708-09y.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/july2010/gspapers/gs1708-09y.pdf)
- The press release on the **Archbishops' amendment** [www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2927](http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2927)
- Proceedings of the **July 2010 General Synod**  
[www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/proceedings/july2010/july2010.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/proceedings/july2010/july2010.pdf)
- Papers sent to Dioceses for **Diocesan Synod debates**  
[www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/)

[www.womenandthechurch.org](http://www.womenandthechurch.org)      Contact: [info@womenandthechurch.org](mailto:info@womenandthechurch.org)  
WATCH Office – St John's Church – Waterloo Road – LONDON - SE1 8T



**WOMEN BISHOPS  
IN THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND**

**YES**

PHOTO: CYNTHIA BLACK

**Do we want  
women to be bishops?**

**Do we want this legislation?**

**Yes –  
we want women to be bishops**

- Scripture demands it: women and men are both equally made in the image of God
- Tradition: women have been 'kept in their place' by the Church for too long
- It's time we caught up with other Anglican Churches throughout the world, as well as the Methodists, URC, Baptists...
- Women will make excellent bishops

**Arguments against**

*Headship: the Bible says that women should not be in authority over men*

- Surely this was written for a particular context?
- Other bible texts and historical evidence indicate that women were in authority in the Early Church.

*Sacramental assurance: to be sure that bread and wine are truly consecrated, only male priests in a male historic line of ordination are acceptable*

- This would create a separate 'church within a church' in which only 'pedigree' priests and bishops could serve.

**90 years of discussions**

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**Where are we now?**

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2009 figures

## Anglican Communion

- 25 out of 38 Provinces already have women priests
- 15 out of 38 Provinces have approved having women bishops – including Scotland, Ireland, Brazil, Japan, Mexico, North India, Philippines, South Africa, Sudan.
- 1988 First woman bishop - Barbara Harris
- 29 women bishops in Australia, Canada, Cuba, New Zealand, USA
- No Provinces have legal provision for those opposed to women bishops

## Women Bishops of the World in the Anglican Communion 2010



## Key issue for the Church of England

How shall we appoint women as bishops  
in a way that -

- maintains the traditional understanding and role of bishops
- leaves space for those who in conscience cannot accept women as priests or bishops
- avoids any flavour of discrimination or half-heartedness by the Church towards women priests and bishops?

*Manchester Report April 2008*

## What is in the legislation?

- Women may be bishops
- Every Diocesan bishop must draw up a Scheme describing the arrangements if a parish wishes to have a male vicar or bishop
- Every parish has the right to ask for arrangements under the Scheme
- All Schemes are subject to a national statutory Code of Practice
- Exemptions from the Equality Act 2010

## Are these provisions fair?

**Yes**, because:

- There will be arrangements for any parish that wishes to have a male vicar or bishop

**and**

- 'Bishops will be bishops' – female bishops will not be second-class

**If we make any further provisions,  
we will create two tiers of bishops,  
with women in the lower tier.**

## What happens next?

- All 44 Dioceses must debate and vote 'yes' or 'no' by November 2011
- Final vote in General Synod in July 2012 – needs 66% of bishops, clergy and lay people to vote in favour
- Parliament considers and approves
- First women appointed bishops in 2014

## WOMEN BISHOPS – YES



Photo: Anglican World – Lynn Ross



## OPTIONS EXPLORED AND REJECTED BY GENERAL SYNOD

- A separate Province for parishes opposed
- Separate Dioceses for parishes opposed
- Automatic transfer of some parishes to a male bishop when a female bishop is appointed
- Co-ordinate jurisdiction (the Archbishops' amendment), where a female bishop is the Diocesan bishop but a male (Coordinate) bishop shares her legal authority (jurisdiction) in the parishes who want a male bishop
- A 'single-clause' measure: by which women can be bishops – full stop.