



## Women and the Episcopate a supplementary background note.

The General Synod Office has sent to Dioceses a paper headed

**“WOMEN AND THE EPISCOPATE: A BACKGROUND NOTE”** reference ‘A8 (WE) BACKGROUND’.

This supplementary note is intended to offer some additional information to complement what is contained there. Paragraph numbers tally with that paper’s.

### Deacons and priests:

4. There are more than 3000 female priests in active ministry in the Church of England.
5. Financial provisions were also made for those who left as a result of the Church’s decision to ordain women as priests. Over the next ten years, 441 clergymen left the Church of England, of whom 11 returned to serve as clergy again. The cost to the Church was £30million.
6. Those making promises to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament had no mandate from General Synod to do so, and therefore could make no guarantees that the promises would be kept.
7. the latest figures are from 2009
9. ‘The danger to be avoided is that, where ecclesial communion is impaired, communities may begin to define themselves against each other and develop in isolation from each other’. This is exactly what those who will not accept women priest have done in many places, as a direct consequence of the Act of Synod. The PEV Bishop of Ebbsfleet wrote in his valedictory letter on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010

*‘Had the Ebbsfleet project succeeded, we would all have become a local church, not unlike an Ordinariate, but within the Church of England,...’*

10. Protestant Churches who have admitted women to all areas of ministry include:

Porvoo Churches of Scandinavia, with whom we are in full communion

The Methodist Church, with whom we are seeking full unity – **though they won’t agree to this until we open all offices to women.**

### The Anglican Communion

11. The first women to be ordained as a priest was Florence Li Tim-Oi, ordained by Bishop R.O. Hall of Hong Kong in 1944, to serve behind enemy lines in Macao.

The first formal discussion on women’s ordination in the Anglican Church took place at the Lambeth Conference of 1920.

In 1971 the ACC meeting in Limuru advised the then Bishop of Hong Kong ‘that if he decides to ordain women to the priesthood, his action will be acceptable to the Council’. In November 1971 he ordained Joyce Bennett and Jane Hwang as Priests – the first in the Communion since Li Tim-Oi.

12. There have been 29 women bishops in the Anglican Communion, of whom one has died and a number retired.

13. The first sentence of the Lambeth Conference Resolution of 1998 (III.2) indicates that the unity of each Diocese needs to be maintained under the jurisdiction of the Diocesan bishop.

The full resolution reads:

*This Conference, committed to maintaining the overall unity of the Anglican Communion, **including the unity of each diocese under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop:***

*(a) believes such unity is essential to the overall effectiveness of the Church's mission to bring the Gospel of Christ to all people;*

*(b) for the purpose of maintaining this unity, calls upon the provinces of the Communion to uphold the principle of 'Open Reception' as it relates to the ordination of women to the priesthood as indicated by the Eames Commission; noting that "reception is a long and spiritual process" (Grindrod Report);*

*(c) in particular calls upon the provinces of the Anglican Communion to affirm that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans;*

*(d) therefore calls upon the Provinces of the Communion to make such provision, including appropriate episcopal ministry, as will enable them to live in the highest degree of Communion possible, recognising that there is and should be no compulsion by any bishop in matters concerning ordination or licensing;*

*(e) also affirms that "although some of the means by which communion is expressed may be strained or broken, there is a need for courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect, and prayer for one another, and we confirm that our desire to know or be with one another, remains binding on us as Christians*

## **The Draft Legislation**

41. Because of the late submission of the Archbishops' Amendment to the General Synod in July 2010, the suggestion made in it for further provision for those opposed was not able to be explored by the Revision Committee. Whether it would be acceptable to all sides, theologically, ecclesiological and legally coherent enough, or workable in practice had not been examined before General Synod was asked to vote on it. The Revision Committee's Report of May 2010 did, however, conclude after exploring similar options that delegated jurisdiction was the only way forward that adequately satisfied these three criteria.

43. The vote to include provisions for those opposed as drafted in the legislation was passed by 373 to 14, with 17 abstentions.

## **Some questions and answers.**

10. Is there provision in the legislation for parishes whose Diocesan bishop does not ordain women to request the ministry of a bishop who does?

No. There are no such 'reciprocal' arrangements in the legislation.

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