



Points frequently raised by those who will not accept women as bishops.

1. 'We need proper provision - a Code of Practice is not enough'.

- Proper provision IS in the legislation: any parish can pass a resolution to avoid having a female vicar and/or to ask for the ministry of a male bishop; additional provisions will be made through a statutory Code of Practice now being written.
- After four years of discussion in various Committees, General Synod decided that legislation with a statutory Code of Practice was the only possible way forward which would maintain the integrity of the office of Bishop and allow women to become bishops on the same terms as men
- If further legislative provision is made then senior women have indicated that they would not be willing to take up appointment as bishops.
- The implication in this statement is that bishops would not be trusted to follow a Code of Practice. There are two challenges to this: the Code will be statutory, which means that any bishop who goes against it will have to provide evidence of very good reasons for doing so, as a legal challenge could be brought against them; and yes, bishops are human, but to demand greater protection in law because of distrust of them sends out an unfortunate message about how some members of the Church view their own leaders.
- In fact the legislation itself now contains provisions for those opposed – ie there is already more than a Code of Practice in place.
- A Code of Practice as envisaged is a clear compromise for those who want bishops to be bishops – male and female - with no distinction on the basis of sex.

2. 'We are 'loyal Anglicans' even though we disagree with the ordination of women'.

- This is a quote from the Lambeth Conference Resolution of 1998 where it says, *'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'*
- But the same Resolution begins with the sentence, *'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,.....'** (our emphasis)*
- In other words, they are loyal Anglicans but they also have to recognise the authority (jurisdiction) of their Diocesan bishop – male or female. Further provision in law would destroy the unity of the Diocese under the jurisdiction of one Diocesan bishop – and one of the fundamental duties of a Diocesan bishop is to be a focus of unity in the Diocese.

3. 'Promises were made to those opposed in 1992 that are now being broken'.

- General Synod made no legal promises to those opposed apart from those in the legislation allowing parishes to pass Resolutions A and B.
- The Act of Synod contained no promises to those opposed about how long it would be in force.
- Some indications were made to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament that the intention was to have provisions in place for as long as people needed them: but the people who made those promises had no mandate to do so from General Synod and therefore they could not guarantee them.

4. 'We are not being sexist'.

- Some opponents argue that because they can accept only bishops who have not ordained women, that means they will not accept the majority of male bishops (who have ordained women) as well as female bishops – thus proving that they are not discriminating simply against women.
- This is still all about avoiding (ordained) women and IS therefore sexist: they are discriminating against men on the grounds of their views and actions concerning women.

5. 'Jesus chose 12 male disciples, therefore women should not be priests or bishops'.

- They were also circumcised, Palestinian, probably bearded... none of which we insist upon now.
- Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the resurrection, when women could not be legal witnesses, and is called 'the apostle to the apostles' by the church.
- Many women were amongst the disciples, and supported Jesus financially (Luke 8:3) as well as leading communities in the early church.
- When the male disciples fled from the Garden of Gethsemane, the women remained faithfully with Jesus to his death on the Cross.
- Jesus broke many taboos with women – speaking to the Samaritan women at the well, healing the haemorrhaging woman, allowing Mary (Martha's sister) to sit in the public room at his feet.
- Women were amongst those who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and have therefore received the God's power to preach the Gospel
- This is an argument against women priests, not bishops – and we already have 3000 of them: this is not the issue now.

6. 'The Church is becoming too feminised/the women are taking over/ men won't want to come to Church'.

- Women are not taking over – 14 Archdeacons out of 110? In General Synod 46% of the House of Laity are women, but only 28% of the House of Clergy and 0% of the House of Bishops.
- Women have always been the majority of churchgoers. But until relatively recently only men have been PCC members, Churchwardens, Readers and Vicars. Now women are more visible as leaders, not just helpers. In all areas of professional life where women have been admitted to a previously male arena, their 'novelty' creates heightened visibility, which leads to a perception that there are more of them present than is the reality.
- This argument assumes that the Church needs a male leadership to attract men – there is little evidence that this has worked so far.
- Quote from John Bell, of the Iona Community, on Thought for the Day: speaking of Jesus - *"Is there another male figure in world history who has so clearly engaged with, depended on and encouraged women without the familiar accompaniments of seduction or exploitation? ... I suggest that the consecration of female bishops is not the major issue. For both liberals and conservatives the bigger issue is the feminisation of communities of faith until they are as representative and nurturing of the giftedness of women as Jesus was. Now if churches became like that they wouldn't be catching up with society, they would be leading it".*

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