



WATCH briefing

Diocesan Synod debates: ‘following motions’.

It seems likely that in many Diocesan Synods a ‘following motion’ will be proposed asking for even more provision for those opposed to women bishops. The Church of England Evangelical Council has formulated one such motion that can be found, with their rationale for it, at:

www.ceec.info/library/positional/Following%20Motion%20and%20Explanatory%20Memorandum.pdf

The wording of this following motion is:

This Synod:

- 1. desires that all faithful Anglicans remain and thrive together in the Church of England; and therefore*
- 2. calls upon the House of Bishops to bring forward amendments to the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure to ensure that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops are able to receive Episcopal oversight with authority (ie ordinary jurisdiction) conferred by the Measure rather than by delegation from a Diocesan Bishop.*

WATCH views this motion as a wish to revisit ideas which have been considered in detail already, have been rejected, and which will not work in practice.

What is a following motion?

It ‘follows’ on from the main motion asking Diocesan Synods to approve the legislation for women bishops. Dioceses cannot themselves amend the legislation, but can pass a following motion asking for it to be amended.

How can we make sure that this following motion is defeated in our Diocesan Synod?

1. Get the voters out: make sure NOW that members of Diocesan Synod who support women bishops are committed to attending the meeting at which the debate will be held. We can be sure that the opponents of women bishops will get their supporters there in numbers.
2. Find out who is proposing and seconding the following motion, and think what arguments they might typically use. Brief potential speakers, and encourage those other than the ‘usual suspects’ to speak against it. The main points against are overleaf. WATCH can provide more detailed briefing if you wish.
3. Brief your Bishops on the issues so that they fully understand the implications of passing this motion – in particular, that if the legislation is amended it will almost certainly be rejected by General Synod.
4. Decide whether to propose a ‘countering’ following motion – one that pulls the debate back to the middle-ground of the draft legislation. There are arguments for and against this in a separate WATCH paper (to follow).
5. Consider circulating Diocesan members with an explanation of the arguments against the following motion – see overleaf.

What happens if this following motion is passed?

It depends on how many Dioceses pass it. Information about the motion and the voting on it will be reported to General Synod in February 2012 and to the House of Bishops after that. We assume that for the House of Bishops to be persuaded to amend the draft legislation there will need to be considerable support from Dioceses for this or similar motions. If the House of Bishops then amends the legislation, the amended legislation will have to go back around the Dioceses for debate and voting again, before coming back to General Synod for final approval. The most likely result then is that General Synod will reject the amended legislation – as it has previously resoundingly rejected such additional provision for those who will not accept women bishops.

**If you want women to be bishops,
Vote **FOR** the draft legislation
and **AGAINST** the following motion**

- **There are already wide-ranging provisions in the draft legislation to accommodate those who will not accept women bishops.** Every effort has been made to make those provisions as generous as possible without either compromising the role of the Bishop in a Diocese, or making women second-class bishops. The provisions require every Diocese to have to have a scheme of arrangements for parishes who want a male vicar and/or bishop. The following motion asks for even more provisions than these.
- **The following motion asks for much, much more than the Act of Synod and PEVs (Flying Bishops).** PEVs minister in parishes at the invitation of and under the delegated authority of the Diocesan bishop. This motion asks for parishes to be effectively under a different Diocesan bishop. This cuts right across the **historic tradition of having one Bishop in full authority in one Diocese.** For example: the Bishop of Chichester would become the Bishop of Chichester and the sort-of Bishop of parts of Guildford, Portsmouth, Canterbury etc.
- **The motion will divide the Church rather than preserving unity.** What kind of unity is there in a Diocese where some parishes have a completely different Diocesan bishop? How will these parishes relate to the Diocese as a whole? If a parish cannot accept the delegated authority of a female bishop, then how can they recognise the delegated authority of her officers – Archdeacons, Area/Rural Deans, or even Churchwardens (who are Bishop’s officers)? These are legal matters – not to be satisfied by ‘oh, we’ll work it out somehow’.
- **Clergy already swear an oath to a woman - the Queen.** As Supreme Governor of the Church of England, clergy are under her authority. So they already accept the authority (or headship) of a woman, don’t they?

If the draft legislation is amended in the way the following motion requests

1. General Synod will reject it.

In July 2008 and July 2010 motions asking for this type of provision – by statutory transfer of authority rather than delegated transfer – were defeated, in 2010 by 65% to 35%. There is no likelihood that this vote will be reversed in the new Synod.

2. Women will not accept appointment as bishops.

Senior women have indicated that they will not be willing to be bishops under legislation amended in this way. This is because they are so concerned about what such legislation would do to the integrity of the role of the Diocesan bishop as well as the constraints it would put on their ministry.