

The Consecration of Women to the Episcopate

Diocesan Guidelines for Discussion

Background

When major legislation (a measure or a canon) that makes changes to the ordinal (among other things) is going through General Synod, it requires what is known as an Article 8 Reference. The legislation to provide for Women Bishops in the Church of England falls under this category. The draft legislation is referred to the Dioceses for the legislation to be voted on at Diocesan Synod. Dioceses are strongly urged to refer the matter to Deanery Synods. This paper sets out the process and provides resource materials for the discussion. Details of all this can be found here: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/gsmisc964.pdf>

The Motion

Each diocesan synod is required to vote by houses on the following motion *without amendment*:

‘That this Synod approve the proposals embodied in the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure and in draft Amending Canon No.30.’

Responses are required to reach the Clerk of the General Synod before 5pm on **Monday 14th November 2011**. If a majority of Diocesan Synods approve, then final Approval by General Synod *could be* as early as July 2012 after which legislation will be considered by the Ecclesiastical Committee and each House of Parliament.

1 Discussion Process

Deanery Synods should discuss the issues and vote by Houses during the first half of 2011. This follows the pattern set in 1991 when Deanery Synods voted on the *Draft Ordination of Women Measure*. It must be stressed that this vote is purely to help focus and inform our discussion and has no legal or morally binding status whatsoever. It should be borne in mind that newly-elected Deanery Synod members will take up their office for the next three years on 1st June 2011.

The Diocesan Bishop’s Council has asked that Deanery synods should be given the flexibility of having the first six months of 2011 for their discussions.

Deanery synods are invited, if they so wish, to submit a written report of their deliberations to brief the July 2011 Diocesan Synod. For those deaneries wishing to send written briefs, the deadline is 30th June 2011.

Parishes: the same material may be used in parishes if the PCC so wish.

Individuals: a mediated discussion board will be set up on the web for comments. We will confirm the address later in January.

Diocesan Synod: there will be a major discussion on Thursday **14th July** by which time we would hope to have feedback from all the Deanery Synods.

An **Extraordinary Diocesan Synod** will be convened on Thursday **13th October** when there will be further discussion and the formal vote will then be taken by Houses on the Motion.

2 Discussion Material

Much has already been written on the issues and this brief guide does not set out to rehearse the arguments, but rather to point to sources of material and to clarify some procedural questions.

Prebendary David Houlding, Chairman of the Diocesan House of Clergy, spoke in the November 2010 Diocesan Synod and suggested the following three questions as a way of shaping the discussion:

1. Do you believe that women should now be ordained as bishops in the Church of England?
2. Do you believe that there should in principle be arrangements put in place for those who in conscience would not be able to accept them?
3. Does this draft legislation provide for this to happen?

Core documents

An introduction and outline of the history of the debate is a good starting point and is found here:

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/womenbishops/>

The current Motion under debate with supporting material is found here:

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/>

You can read the draft Measure itself here:

[http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/a8\(we\)m.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/a8(we)m.pdf)

And the draft amending Canon is here:

[http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/a8\(we\)ac.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/a8(we)ac.pdf)

The best summary of the draft legislation is found in the Background Note in section 38 following with its helpful Annex of Questions and Answers. This is one of the core documents found above and at:

[http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/a8\(we\)background.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/article8ref/a8(we)background.pdf)

The fullest discussion from a theological and Biblical point of view is found in the Report from the Bishop of Rochester below.

Reports

'Women Bishops in the Church of England' chaired by the Bishop of Rochester in 2004

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/papers/womenbishops.pdf>

'Women in the Episcopate' (The Guildford Report) chaired by the Bishop of Guildford in 2006 is found by clicking on the appropriate link here:

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/womenbishops/>

London Diocesan **Sacred Synod** papers offer a valuable perspective from the differing London points of view:

<http://communications.london.anglican.org/ministrymatters/sacred-synod-discussion/>.

Resource People

Diocesan Members of General Synod are available to help with discussions, and there are many other clergy and laity willing to participate in facilitating discussion.

Some Procedural Questions

1. What voting majority is required for Diocesan Synod to approve the Motion?
A simple majority in the House of Clergy and also the House of Laity is required.
2. What is meant by 'a majority of Diocesan Synods approve'?
There are 44 Diocesan Synods in the Church of England. A majority of them have to vote in favour of the legislation
3. What happens if a majority of Diocesan synods do not approve?
The Measure cannot be given final approval by General Synod unless a majority of Diocesan Synods have approved it.
4. Can we propose further, separate motions about the Motion?
A "following motion" can be moved at Diocesan Synod. Such motions can ask General Synod to consider any further matter arising out of the legislation and the proposals for its implementation.
5. What will happen to A, B and C parishes?
Under the legislation before us, the various resolutions under the Women Priests Measure and the Act of Synod will disappear. The Measure makes provision for those opposed to the Ordination of Women in a different way. There are transitional provisions for Resolutions A & B to remain in force for a further 3 years.
6. What does the Code of Practice look like?
A House of Bishops Working Group is drafting the Code. It should be available in draft form when General Synod comes to the Final Approval stage.