

## **C of Synod approves next steps for women to become bishops**

**The General Synod of the Church of England yesterday approved a package of measures as the next steps to enable women to become bishops.**

In the debate in the morning session the synod welcomed the package of proposals outlined in the report of the Steering Committee for the [Draft Legislation of Women in the Episcopate \(GS 1924\)](#).

The Steering Committee's package of proposals follows the mandate set by the synod in July and includes the first draft of a House of Bishops declaration and a disputes resolution procedure. This debate invited synod to welcome the proposals and the five guiding principles, already agreed by the House of Bishops, which underpin them.

Proposing the package of measures Bishop James Langstaff of Rochester said: "These measures look to the day when the Church of England as an ecclesial entity will have made a clear decision to open all orders of ministry to women and men without distinction, whereby all those so ordained are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy."

The following motion was carried this morning with 378 votes for, eight against and 25 abstentions:

'That this Synod, welcoming the package of proposals in GS 1924 and the statement of principles endorsed by the House of Bishops at paragraph 12 of GS 1886, invite the House of Bishops to bring to the Synod for consultation in February a draft declaration and proposals for a mandatory disputes resolution procedure which build on the agreement reached by the Steering Committee as a result of its facilitated discussions.'

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In its afternoon session, the synod also voted to progress the legislation to the next legislative stage of revision at its meeting in February 2014.

As a result of the votes carried today, synod has agreed to dispense with the normal Revision Committee process and move straight to revision in full at synod which next meets in February 2014, thereby clearing the way for a possible vote on final approval later in 2014.

*[CNI note: To date 35 women have been consecrated bishop in the Anglican Communion. Of these, 25 are currently serving. As at 20 November 2013, three Anglican women are bishops-elect.]*

### **The Guardian reports:**

Members of the general synod passed a motion with a majority of 378 to eight, with 25 abstentions. It paves the way for endorsement of women bishops alongside a "declaration" by bishops setting out guidance for parishes which reject female ministry.

The package also includes the creation of an ombudsman to rule on disputes. It could see traditionalist clergy who oppose women bishops and refuse to co-operate with the ombudsman's inquiries facing disciplinary proceedings.

**From the Church Times:**

Canon Rosie Harper, diocese of Oxford, warned the General Synod during the debate that it was regarded as "weird" by the outside world. "I'm struck by the sheer weirdness of a community arguing about discrimination in the 21st century. People don't care enough to be angry, but they do see us as weird. If we are serious about our mission, we have to stop being weird."

Bishop Langstaff said at the press conference that the Church should not be "too hung up" on how it was perceived by society. "It's not the be-all and end-all. But we have a particularly calling to seek to be the Church that relates to the life of the nation. So how society is perceiving us is not the most important thing, but it's not unimportant."

He denied that pressure from the Government was responsible for the shift since November, although he admitted that it might have "sharpened minds".

**From The Telegraph**

The proposals have been radically cut down. The previous measure required a complex "code of practice" governing how traditionalist parishes in dioceses with a woman bishop would be able to opt out of her authority.

Traditionalists said it did not provide enough "protection" for them but supporters of women bishops said it would have made them "second class bishops". This time there will be a simple piece of legislation allowing women to become bishops and archbishops and then a "declaration" that traditionalists should be accommodated for. Decisions on how to do this would be taken locally and there would be an ombudsman, or independent reviewer, to settle any disputes over the arrangements for traditionalists who will not accept the authority of a woman.

**A statement from the Archbishop of Canterbury received from the Lambeth Press Office:**

"Today's overwhelming vote demonstrates the widespread desire of the Church of England to move ahead with ordaining women as bishops, and at the same time enabling those who disagree to flourish. There is some way to go, but we can be cautiously hopeful of good progress. The tone of the debate was strikingly warm and friendly, and a great debt of gratitude is owed to the Steering Committee for the draft legislation, and to those who facilitated the meetings so effectively. The more we learn to work together the more effective the church will be in meeting the huge challenges of spiritual renewal, and above all service to our communities, so as to both proclaim and demonstrate the reality of the love of Christ."

The Most Revd Justin Welby  
Archbishop of Canterbury