

Report on Guildford Diocesan Synod meeting 25 June 2011

Women bishops plus diocesan budget discussions: Adrian Vincent

Women bishops

The draft legislation on women in the episcopate had been referred by the General Synod to dioceses in September 2010. The Guildford Diocesan Synod debated and voted on the motion at its meeting on 25 June 2011. The motion was:

1. "That this Synod approve the proposals embodied in the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure and in draft Amending Canon No30."

I spoke in this debate. My speech was:

"In the Church of England the starting point for any motion on women bishops tends to be the 1998 Lambeth Conference Resolution, "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".

This results in two aims for any legislation:

- 1.) To introduce women bishops;
- 2.) To have provisions for those who disagree to allow them to stay in the Church of England.

Any draft legislation needs to be checked against these dual aims.

From 2000 to 2007 I was the minute taker for all the Church of England's working groups on women bishops. All the various options were discussed including: a third province; a non-geographic diocese; transferred episcopal arrangements; and later we had the Archbishops' motion for co-ordinate jurisdiction. Any of those options would probably meet the two criteria of introducing women bishops and enabling those opposed to stay. But none of those options are before you today. What we have is draft legislation, which even those who wrote the legislation admit that it will mean that traditionalists will have to leave. I quote from report of the committee that produced the draft legislation:

[200] "...traditional catholics [201]...sought oversight not simply from a male bishop, but from a man whose authority did not derive from another bishop with whom they were in impaired communion... The provision...for a parish to request the ministry simply of "a male bishop" would not therefore address the theological needs of traditional catholics.

[202] They went on to suggest that it was illogical – and, indeed, something of a pretence – to enact legislation that recognized the existence of doubt about women's priestly and episcopal ministry but then failed to make provision that properly reflected the nature of that doubt."

The Report concluded:

[449.] "...we need to report the view...that we have come up with a solution that may possibly work for some, though by no means all, conservative evangelicals but will simply not do for traditional catholics."

So, the authors of the draft legislation acknowledge that many traditionalists will have to leave.

In 2004 traditionalists published a draft Measure in the book *Consecrated Women?* that would have introduced women bishops and provisions for those opposed. Those in favour of women bishops said that the provisions for traditionalists were too great, and they would rather delay the coming in of women bishops than have provisions that were not right. Now we have a draft Measure with provisions that are too little. And the same logic must apply, and unfortunately we must reject the draft legislation until we get

legislation that meets the dual aims of women bishops *and* provisions which enable traditionalists to stay.”

I voted against the motion. The motion was passed: 69 for; 25 against; 5 abstained.

The Diocesan Synod then debated some following motions asking the House of Bishops to make amendments to the draft legislation prior to final approval stage at General Synod, all of which were lost:

2a Called for “...amendments to the draft...Measure to ensure that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops are able to receive Episcopal oversight with a bishop with authority (i.e. ordinary jurisdiction) conferred by the Measure rather than by delegation from a Diocesan Bishop.”

I voted for the motion. The motion was lost: 40 for; 54 against; 3 abstained.

2b Called for “...any arrangements that are proposed so that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops may receive Episcopal oversight from a male bishop are time-limited...a period of twenty years would seem reasonable.”

I voted against the motion. The motion was lost: 9 for; 75 against; 1 abstained.

2c Called for “...a Letter of Request by a parish...be issued not merely by a decision of the PCC, but by consultation and majority approval of those on the electoral roll of the parish...”

I voted against the motion. The motion was lost: 3 for; 73 against; 8 abstained.

2012 budget.

The Diocesan Synod gave first consideration to the Diocesan Budget for 2012. The suggestion is for provision for a 3% increase in stipends and salaries, funded out of a 2% increase in parish share and 1% of efficiency savings.

I did not speak in this debate, having at the previous meeting already made the point that in my view Guildford Diocesan stipends should be set in accord with the guidelines set by the Central Stipends Authority.