

Women Bishops?

On 10 July 2010 the General Synod in York re-affirmed, without debate, that women can and should be made bishops in the Church of England [as they are already elsewhere in the Anglican Communion].

The next six hours that day were spent discussing how those, who believe women cannot and should not be bishops, and who therefore would not accept the authority of a woman bishop, can remain members of the Church of England.

- For High Church traditionalists the issue is 'sacramental assurance':

"I can only be sure that I receive God's grace in the Eucharist if the priest is not only not a woman, but also not a male priest who has been ordained by a woman."

- St Paul wrote that no woman can have 'headship' over a man. So for Conservative Evangelicals to allow that to happen is to undermine the literal authority of the Bible.

The debate is therefore: 'In what way can the Church meet a parish's request to have the oversight not just of a male bishop, but also one who has not ordained a woman, and also has not been consecrated by a bishop who has ordained women, let alone been consecrated by a woman?'

The solution proposed is that a woman bishop is to be trusted to delegate her authority to a

nominated bishop, who fulfils that restrictive definition. In the end that proposal was passed by

373 votes to 14. All the other three options debated (including a last-minute, narrowly defeated, amendment by the Archbishops) would have reduced her authority by *requiring* her to do so.

The traditionalists insist on such a requirement. The Bishop of Oxford has written that this would have 'entrenched two sorts of bishop in the Church's life'. Such a 'transfer of jurisdiction' away from a woman bishop begs the question, 'When is a bishop not a bishop?'

The traditionalists are not content with the outcome. Any proposal which would satisfy them could only mean that a woman bishop is treated as second-class.

A Code of Practice is being drawn up by the House of Bishops which will provide guidance as to how to meet the needs of those parishes which request alternative oversight by a male bishop who is acceptable to them.

Dioceses - and deaneries – have been asked to discuss the proposals. Diocesan Synods must vote on them by November 2011. If more than half of the 44 dioceses vote for them, the General Synod will be asked to give them Final Approval: that will need a two-thirds majority of Bishops, Clergy and Laity voting separately.

Discuss what should be done!

