



WATCH STATEMENT

6th December 2006 for immediate release

on the Appointment of the Women Bishops Legislative Drafting Group

WATCH is pleased that the Women Bishops Legislative Drafting Group has been appointed and is particularly pleased to see that it has a good balance between men and women members, something specifically requested in one of the amendments passed in the July General Synod along with the main motion. WATCH regrets, however, that it has taken over four months for the group to be appointed, and hopes that it will now expedite its important work of preparing draft legislation for opening the episcopate of the Church of England to women.

WATCH notes the appointment of those with a variety of differing views on the subject of having women as bishops, including those implacably opposed to women's ordination, and would remind the members of the Drafting Group that they have been charged with:

- (i) preparing the draft measure and amending canon necessary to remove the legal obstacles to the consecration of women to the office of bishop;
- (ii) preparing a draft of possible additional legal provision to establish arrangements that would seek the highest possible degree of communion with those conscientiously unable to receive the ministry of women bishops; (and)
- (iii) submitting the results of its work to the House of Bishops for consideration and submission to Synod.

WATCH would like to stress the point that it is not the remit of the drafting group to revisit the decision that the General Synod has already taken to proceed with making it legal for women to be appointed as bishops. The group must understand that there is to be no re-creation of the Rochester Commission, which was asked in 2000 to address the theology and practicalities of having women as bishops in the Church of England. The Rochester Commission produced its report at the end of 2004 and the General Synod debated it in February 2005.

In July 2005 the General Synod passed a motion setting in train "the process for removing the legal obstacles to the ordination of women to the episcopate." This past July a further motion was passed, agreeing with the majority of the House of Bishops that having women as bishops "is consonant with the faith of the Church".

WATCH looks forward to seeing the draft legislation that the group proposes and to the steady and swift progress of this process, with the expectation that the General Synod will have voted on the final legislation by July 2010, the end of the current quinquennium.

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