



WATCHNEWS

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Report Paves Way for Women Bishops

WATCH is pleased that the **Legislative Drafting Group on Women Bishops** has published its **Report** and thanks the Bishop of Manchester, the Group's Chair, for making the Report available to members of General Synod in advance of the July meeting.

WATCH notes the three broad approaches outlined in the Report and strongly commends the first approach, which is to proceed without further delay to opening the Episcopate to women. This represents the simplest possible statutory approach with no legal arrangements for those who remain opposed to having women as bishops and priests.

WATCH agrees wholeheartedly with the Report's statement that this approach is the clearest and has the most "obvious ecclesiological and theological coherence." We are confident that this approach will commend itself to General Synod, which has already shown its strong support for women bishops, and also to the wider Church, which has warmly received the ministry of women priests for the past 14 years and women deacons for the past 20 years. Opening the Episcopate to women will end a long period of uncertainty in the Church about the nature and value of ordained women.

By adopting the first approach, the Church of England will be in line with the 15 Provinces of the worldwide Anglican Communion which have already voted to have women as bishops. WATCH would like the Church of England to follow the good example set by these Provinces and pass legislation that is free from discrimination against women. We also agree that the discriminatory clauses in the Women Priests Measure 1993 and the Act of Synod should be rescinded.

Christina Rees, Chair of WATCH says, "This Report helps to clarify the way ahead for women to be bishops. There is still a way to go, but at last we can see the day coming when all orders of ministry will be open to both women and men."

WATCH hopes that the House of Bishops, meeting next month, will commend the first approach when it brings its review of the Report to General Synod in July.

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