



## **WATCH PRESS STATEMENT**

**16 November 2006**

### **Women Priests Are 'Normal'**

WATCH is aware of the widespread media coverage of the reported comments of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the interview he gave to the Catholic Herald. We are disappointed both in what the Archbishop is quoted as saying and the way it has been reported. Certain comments taken out of context are undermining of the Church of England's confidence in its women clergy, apparently placing a continuing question-mark over women's orders and the value their ministry has to the Church.

The Church of England has ordained more than 2000 women as priests out of a total of 9500 priests in active ministry, and is profoundly grateful for their ministry. They minister across the country in everything from cathedrals to the smallest parish church, in cities and in inner cities, in towns and in villages. Their presence as 'the vicar' is appreciated and their leadership in communities is a source of pride and inspiration. They also minister as chaplains in schools, universities, hospitals and prisons. Ordained women also serve as chaplains in the armed forces and in the workplace. As Dr Williams says, the presence of women as priests is 'normal'.

WATCH knows that Dr Williams is fully supportive of women in the ordained ministry; indeed, he and the Archbishop of York took the lead at the Church's General Synod in July in proposing motions that will lead to the ordination of women as bishops.

WATCH also knows that women priests are here to stay, and that in a matter of a few years' time the Church will welcome women as bishops.

WATCH would encourage all ordained women and those who support them not to be disheartened by the comments reported today, but rather to rejoice in the fact that the vast majority of people both inside and outside the Church welcome the ordained ministry of women and long to see them taking their place alongside men at every level in the Church.

For a statement from the ACNS in response to the media reports of his interview, please go to [www.cofe.anglican.org/news/abcherald.html](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/abcherald.html)

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