



WATCHNEWS

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Women bishops ‘highly unlikely’ for another five years

At the recent meeting of General Synod, members were told by the Chair of the Legislative Drafting Group that it was “highly unlikely” that the vote on women bishops would be taken by July 2010.

The Bishop of Manchester, the Rt Revd Nigel McCulloch, chair of the group preparing draft legislation for women bishops, outlined the process and predicted the likely time it would take.

The bishop’s statement shocked a large number of Synod members, who met and expressed their outrage at the length of time the process was taking.

The Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, one of the youngest members of Synod, said she only learned in theological college that women still couldn’t be bishops. “Many people, especially young people, are unaware that women can’t be bishops in the Church of England, and are horrified when they discover that the Church currently has such inequality enshrined in legislation. Synod voted over two years ago to remove this barrier. Let’s just get on with it.”

Revd Mark Bennet commented “The wider church has been waiting for women to be made bishops, yet the House of Bishops seems afraid to push this forward. Instead, discredited theological arguments are being rehashed, while our existing leaders hold tight to the power they have.”

Christina Rees, chair of WATCH said “One could be forgiven for thinking that everything possible is being done to slow down the process. At this rate, it might well be eight years between Synod voting to remove the legal barriers to women bishops and actually appointing a woman as a bishop. Meanwhile, the Church is still sending out the message that men are more privileged and valued than women.”

A new Synod will be elected in the autumn of 2010, with the first meeting taking place in November. It is not clear what would happen to the progress of legislation for women bishops if the final vote is not taken during the lifetime of the current Synod.

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