

Background information regarding the pro and against stances on the ordination of women as priests

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Background in the Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton

Now *The Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton* is in an interregnum period between Parish priests, the Parochial Church Council (PCC) is compiling the parish profile and the person specification for applicants. Part of this process includes considering whether this Parish wishes to retain or rescind the Resolution under the *House of Bishops Declaration* relating to the ordination of women priests and the consecration of women bishops. This includes deciding whether to remain members of The Society and Forward in Faith, as *The Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton* is currently a Forward in Faith and The Society parish.

In 1992 Forward in Faith was formed in response to the General Synod of the Church of England resolving to ordain women into the priesthood. In 2010 The Society under the patronage of St Wilfred and St Hilda was formed in preparation for the anticipated consecration of women bishops (The Society is supported by Forward in Faith).

The decision to pass the Resolutions A & B under the *Ordination of Priests (Women) Measure* was made by Fr Cavell Cavell-Northam and the PCC only in the early 1990s, and the Parish established a relationship with Forward in Faith. After Fr Cavell's retirement, a Forward in Faith priest Fr Ross Northing SSC was appointed by the PCC as incumbent Rector of All Saints Calverton and Vicar of St Mary & St Giles Stony Stratford (the two parishes merged to become The Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton on 1 January 2012). In 2015 the PCC passed a resolution under the provisions of the *House of Bishops Declaration* when the first women bishops were consecrated.

In this interregnum, although by church law ultimately it is the decision of the PCC of the *Parish of Stony Stratford with Calverton*, it has been decided by the PCC that the views of the congregations of this parish shall inform its decision-making regarding the appointment of a new parish priest. For this reason the PCC has arranged a meeting at **5:00pm on 8 October 2022** in **St Mary & St Giles church** in which you can learn more about the respective perspectives of Forward in Faith and The Society as well as Anglo-Catholic priests who are in favour of the ordination of women.

The meeting will be chaired by Area Dean Rev. Tim Norwood with four speakers:

- Fr. Peter Anthony of <https://asms.uk> All Saints Margaret Street, London
- Fr. Gary Ecclestone of <https://stjameshanslope.org> St James, Hanslope
- Rev. Ruth Harley of <https://watlingvalley.org.uk> Watling Valley Partnership churches
- Rev. Gill Barrow Jones of <https://www.wolvertonbenefice.org> Wolverton Benefice churches

You can ask questions, hear comments from others and reflect on your perspective before telling the PCC your views via a questionnaire which will be handed out at the end of the meeting for return by 16 October 2022. If you are unable to attend the meeting, you will be able to obtain a copy of the questionnaire from Sunday 9 October in both churches.

Your responses to the questionnaire are anonymous unless you choose to write your name and contact details at the end. Only members of the PCC will see the raw data collected by the questionnaire. The PCC may or may not choose to publish the analysis of the data when it announces its decision. It will not publish anything which identifies and connects your name with your views on this topic.

Written by Anna Page, PCC member (September 2022)

The following history of the PCC decisions has been written by Fr Gary Ecclestone.

The PCC has made four separate and discrete choices over the years:

1. Back in the early 1990s under Fr Cavell it passed Resolutions A & B under the *Ordination of Priests (Women) Measure* and then petitioned the Bishop of Oxford for extended episcopal care under the terms of the *Act of Synod*. The Act of Synod created new Episcopal Sees to ensure there were enough bishops to care for traditional Anglo-Catholics, which were Richborough, Ebbsfleet and Beverley referred to as the *Provincial Episcopal Visitors*, as their work crossed the boundaries of the various individual dioceses; they worked under the direction of the Archbishops at the invitation of Diocesan Bishops. The Diocese of London revived the See of Fulham to provide local arrangements in London. At this point the Bishop of Oxford invited the Bishop of Ebbsfleet (whom the legislation had nominated for the purpose) to have pastoral and sacramental care of the parish.
2. Once the Parish had done that it was eligible to affiliate to Forward in Faith, which it chose to do. Membership of FinF is *purely optional* but FinF resources the work of traditionalist parishes and bishops, it has a full time director, part time researcher and produces a monthly magazine 'New Directions' it acts to represent the movement to the wider church and as an umbrella organisation coordinating events and activities alongside other organisations such as ACS, the Church Union etc. Forward in Faith has individual members and corporate (i.e. parish) members.
3. In 2015 that legislation was superseded upon the CofE's decision to consecrate women to the episcopate. All parishes that were cared for under the previous provisions needed to pass a new Resolution under the provisions of what is called the *House of Bishops Declaration*. This was done by the PCC once again. The See of Ebbsfleet remained available for the Bishop of Oxford to call upon, which he did.
4. As part of the new arrangements it was necessary to form a new body (The Society of St Wilfred and St Hilda – referred to usually as simply The Society) which would gather together those Bishops to whom the Archbishops and Diocesan Bishops could look to provide pastoral and sacramental care for *Declaration Parishes*. These bishops included the Provincial Episcopal Visitors. The Bishop of Fulham, and those bishops serving in dioceses who are traditional Anglo-Catholics i.e. Chichester, Lewes, Burnley and Wakefield. The Archbishops invite these bishops to consecrate new bishops to serve the *Declaration Parishes*. This ensures that our bishops continue in the unbroken apostolic succession and therefore ensures sacramental assurance for traditional Anglo-Catholic Anglicans. The CofE also makes provision for traditional Evangelicals, currently by way of the Bishop of Maidstone.
5. Having passed a Resolution under the *House of Bishops Declaration* (and only then) PCCs then have the opportunity of formally affiliating with The Society. Affiliation is not obligatory.

The PCC is now faced with ONE legal decision and TWO pastoral decisions:

The *legal* decision is as to whether the PCC wishes to *retain* the current Resolution under the House of Bishops Declaration or not. If it does the Parish will continue to be cared for by the Bishop of Ebbsfleet (or in fact his successor the new Bishop of Oswestry). If it does retain the current Resolution, then the PCC can subsequently review the *TWO pastoral* decisions, whether it wishes to remain affiliated formally to Forward in Faith and to The Society both of which are optional. It could even decide to suspend membership of those organisations pending the appointment of a new Parish Priest for further discussion with them once they are in post.

If the PCCs votes to *rescind* the Resolution previously passed under the House of Bishops Declaration, then affiliation to FinF and The Society would automatically lapse and the episcopal care of the parish would revert to the Bishop of Buckingham.

Introduction

Factsheet: Women priests in the Church of England (2019)

<https://religionmediacentre.org.uk/factsheets/25-years-of-women-as-priests-in-the-church-of-england/> (written in 2019)

Women have now been able to become priests in the Church of England for 25 years. This marked the culmination of decades of wrangling and activism, although arguments around the representation of women in senior positions in the church have continued in the quarter-century since.

When did women become able to be ordained as priests?

The Movement for the Ordination of Women was founded in 1979 and was the main group campaigning for women to become priests. It wound up in 1994 after it had achieved its objective. A group called Watch <https://womenandthechurch.org/> was formed in 1996 to campaign for gender justice in the church.

After 19 years of debate, the Church of England's parliament – the General Synod – took the decision in 1992 to allow women's ordination. The measure had to be approved by a two-thirds majority in each of the synod's three houses of bishops, clergy and laity. It passed by a margin of only two votes among lay people.

Thirty-two women were priested at a service in Bristol Cathedral on 12 March, 1994. They were ordained in alphabetical order, which means that Angela Berners-Wilson is officially the Church of England's first woman priest.

She had previously served 15 years as a deaconess and deacon and went on to be a chaplain at Bath University. She is now a parish priest and a prebendary at Wells Cathedral.

What about women bishops?

Figures for 2017 show that 28% of clergy are women and 23% of senior leadership positions are held by women [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Ministry Statistics 2017 final report v2.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Ministry%20Statistics%202017%20final%20report%20v2.pdf).

On 17 November 2014, the General Synod voted in favour of removing the legal obstacles preventing women from becoming bishops, ending a process that began nine years earlier.

Libby Lane became the first woman to serve as a bishop of the Church of England when she was consecrated in 2015 as suffragan Bishop of Stockport in 2015, an assistant bishop in the diocese of Chester. She is now the diocesan Bishop of Derby.

As of March 2019, there are 18 women bishops: London, Bristol, Gloucester, Newcastle, Derby, Aston, Crediton, Dorking, Hull, Jarrow, Lancaster, Loughborough, Penrith, Repton, Ripon, Sherborne, Taunton and Warrington

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_female_Anglican_bishops.

Five are diocesan bishops with seats in the House of Lords, including the Rt Rev Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London, and the third most senior bishop in the Church of England.

What was the resistance to women priests?

In 1993 the Act of Synod was passed allowing for the creation of “flying bishops” (provincial episcopal visitors) to minister to churches that did not accept the ordination of women. Today there are seven: the bishops of Richborough (based in St Albans), Ebbsfleet, Maidstone, Fulham, Beverley, Wakefield and Burnley.

363 parishes https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/Church_Statistics_2009-2010.pdf (from a total of 13,000) opted to come under the care of these “flying bishops” (2010 stats). 1,000 parishes object to women priests working in their churches (2010 stats as above). 430 priests resigned

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2004/20-february/news/uk/conscience-payouts-to-priests-top-26m> from the Church of England over the issue and claimed compensation.

Forward in Faith <https://www.forwardinfaith.com/index.php> was set up in 1992 after the vote to allow women’s ordination. It has branches in many parts of the UK and says it is committed to the catholic faith and order, and opposed to women priests and bishops. The Bishop of Wakefield chairs the group.

Reform <https://www.reform.org.uk/> is a conservative evangelical group set up in 1993 against the ordination of women, now also campaigning on issues such as homosexuality. It is led by the Rev Mark Burkill, from Leyton, east London.

There was also a Group for Rescinding the Act of Synod which called for the law which paid compensation to those who resigned and set up structures for opponents of women’s ordination to be withdrawn, calling it “institutionally sexist”.

What are the theological arguments in this debate?

Opponents of women’s ordination may draw on the following arguments:

- The Bible says women should not hold authority over men (Ephesians 5:21-22 says the husband is the head of the wife, the ‘headship’ argument)
- The 12 disciples were all men and there has been a 2,000-year line of male “apostolic succession”
- Ordaining women as priests is an obstacle to unity with the Roman Catholics and Orthodox churches, which do not allow women priests
- A priest represents Jesus at the altar and Jesus was a man

Those in favour of women’s ordination counter that:

- The text from Ephesians should be read in its cultural context. Elsewhere St Paul said “in Christ there is no male or female” (Galatians 3:28)
- Jesus had many women disciples, including Mary Magdalene
- Unity talks continue but Roman Catholics and the Orthodox do not accept Anglican ordinations or sacraments are valid. The issue of women’s ordination is one of many obstacles to unity.
- Jesus is representative of all humanity, male and female

Wikipedia article on Anglo-Catholicism (extract)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Catholicism>

Recent developments

Since at least the 1970s, Anglo-Catholicism has been dividing into two distinct camps, along a fault-line which can perhaps be traced back to Bishop [Charles Gore](#)'s work in the 19th century.

The Oxford Movement had been inspired in the first place by a rejection of [liberalism](#) and [latitudinarianism](#) in favour of the traditional faith of the "Church Catholic", defined by the teachings of the [Church Fathers](#) and the common doctrines of the historical [eastern](#) and [western Christian churches](#).

Because of the emphasis on upholding traditions, until the 1970s most Anglo-Catholics rejected liberalising development such as the conferral of [holy orders](#) on women. Present-day "traditionalist" Anglo-Catholics seek to maintain tradition and to keep Anglican doctrine in line with that of the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches. They often ally themselves with conservative [evangelical Anglicans](#) to defend traditional teachings on [sexual morality](#) and women's roles in the Church. The main organisation in the Church of England that opposes the ordination of women, [Forward in Faith](#), is largely composed of Anglo-Catholics.

[Gore's](#) work, however, bearing the mark of liberal Protestant [higher criticism](#), paved the way for an alternative form of Anglo-Catholicism influenced by [liberal theology](#). Thus in recent years, many Anglo-Catholics have accepted the [ordination of women](#), the use of [inclusive language](#) in Bible translations and the liturgy, and progressive attitudes towards homosexuality and the blessing of [same sex unions](#). Such Anglicans often refer to themselves as "[Liberal Anglo-Catholics](#)". The more "progressive" or "liberal" style of Anglo-Catholicism is represented by [Affirming Catholicism](#) and the [Society of Catholic Priests](#).

A third strand of Anglican Catholicism criticises elements of both liberalism and conservatism, drawing instead on the 20th century Roman Catholic [Nouvelle Théologie](#), especially [Henri de Lubac](#). This movement rejected the dominance of [Thomism](#) and [Neo-Scholasticism](#) in Catholic theology, and advocated instead for a "return to the sources" of the Christian faith (scripture and the writings of the [Church Fathers](#)) while remaining open to dialogue with the contemporary world on issues of theology. [John Milbank](#) and others within this strand have been instrumental in the creation of the ecumenical (though predominantly Anglican and Roman Catholic) movement known as [radical orthodoxy](#).

Some traditionalist Anglo-Catholics have left official Anglicanism to form "[continuing Anglican churches](#)" such as those in the [Anglican Catholic Church](#) and [Traditional Anglican Communion](#).^[*citation needed*] Others such as [Ann Widdecombe](#) have left Anglicanism altogether for the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches, in the belief that liberal doctrinal changes in the Anglican churches have gone too far.

Wikipedia article on Affirming Catholicism (extract)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affirming_Catholicism

The movement was formalised on 9 June 1990 at [St Alban's Church, Holborn](#), in London by a number of Anglo-Catholic clergy in the [Diocese of London](#) who had been marginalised within, or expelled from, existing Anglo-Catholic groups because of their support for women's ordination to the priesthood. It developed a theological stance which was staunchly liberal in matters of inclusivity but traditionally Catholic in matters of liturgy and the centrality and theology of the [sacraments](#) whilst believing that traditional restrictions on who may receive them should be re-examined.

The pro ordination of women priests stance

Top ten reasons to ordain women

<https://www.womensordination.org/resources-old/top-ten-reasons-to-ordain-women/>

10. A priest's job is to serve the people of God — it's not about gender (or for that matter, marital status or sexual orientation).
9. The Second Vatican Council calls for all discrimination to be eliminated. "Every type of discrimination ... based on sex ... is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent" — *Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, #29*
8. Women were prominent leaders in Jesus' ministry. In all four gospels, Mary Magdalene was the first witness to the most important event in Christianity — the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
7. There is a severe worldwide shortage of priests and an increasing number of women called to ordained ministry.
Fact: Between 1975 and 2005, the worldwide Catholic population increased by 57%, from 709.6 million to 1.12 billion, but the number of priests remained about the same, with an increase of 0.4%. — *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate*
6. The Bible includes many passages depicting women as leaders in early Christianity.
"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon (*diakonos*) of the church at Cenchrea." — *Romans 16:1*
5. Archaeological discoveries provide evidence that women served as deacons, priests, and bishops in early Christianity.
4. In the 20th century, women have been ordained to the Roman Catholic priesthood.
Fact: On December 28, 1970, Bishop Felix Davidek ordained Ludmila Javorova a priest in the underground church of Communist Czechoslovakia. In 1991, Cardinal Miloslav Vlk of Prague confirmed that five other women were also ordained as priests during that time.
3. In 1976, the Pontifical Biblical Commission determined that there is no biblical reason to prohibit women's ordination.
2. Because women and men are created in God's image, both may represent Christ as priests.
"Humankind was created as God's reflection: in the divine image God created them, female and male, God made them." — *Genesis 1:27*
1. Through baptism in Christ, the distinctions between women and men disappear, so women should also be able to answer God's call to priestly ministry.
"In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, slave or citizen, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus." — *Galatians 3:28*

Compiled by the **Women's Ordination Conference** www.womensordination.org * (202) 675-1006

Priesthood and gender (2017 article)

<https://womenandthechurch.org/resources/priesthood-and-gender/> leads to
<https://womenandthechurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/priesthood-gender.pdf>

A reworking by WATCH of the original MOW pamphlet "Jesus and Gender" by the Revd Dr Jonathan Inkipin

Women have been ordained as priests in the Church of England since 1994. They have been priested in many other parts of the Anglican Communion for much longer. Indeed it is more than 55 years since Li Tim-Oi was ordained as the first woman priest by Bishop Hall in southern China in 1944. Yet there are still people who find it hard to accept the fact that women can be priests. One argument used, which may seem trivial to many people but is serious and important for others, is the fact that Jesus was male and only chose men to be his apostles and therefore women cannot be priests. This argument is pressed further by those who say that the priest at the Eucharist represents Christ and so only men can be priests as only male human beings can be true representatives of the male Christ. This pamphlet tries to explain some of these issues.

Men and women in the body of Christ

Does it matter that Jesus was a man and not a woman?

To be born at all, Jesus had to be either male or female. At the time he was born it would have been much more difficult for a woman to have travelled around, preached and gathered a following. Jesus was male and this made his ministry possible for him in the time that he lived. However, the fact that Jesus was born a male is in itself of no more theological significance than the other characteristics with which he was born – his Jewish nationality, his age, his skin colour – so this should not be used as a means of excluding people from ordained ministry.

It has been said that gender is different, more fundamental. Even if this is the case, it is still less important that Jesus was a male, than that he was a human being – that he was of our flesh, our human flesh, not specifically male flesh. If too great importance is given to the male gender of Jesus then the suggestion may follow that women cannot be Christ-like – indeed cannot be “saved”. Even those opposed to women priests believe that Jesus saves us all, redeems us all, and that women can become Christ-like just as men can.

Some argue that the maleness of Jesus was essential and follows from the scriptures. He is to God his Father what Isaac was to Abraham. He is another Joseph, the Son of David and like Hosea, the bridegroom of the faithless bride. To claim this is to claim that what happens to be recorded in the Hebrew scriptures and the typology which has been built upon it, is necessary to salvation rather than useful in establishing the significance of Jesus for all people. It has also been claimed that the maleness of Jesus is integral to the narrative of the Gospels. It is claimed that it is impossible to rewrite that tale with a woman as the principle protagonist without altering its significance. In a sense this is true as the Jesus presented by the Gospel writers as the Jesus of faith was a person who had lived his life as a male human being. This does

not prove that the good news of God's redemption could never have been revealed in a woman nor does it prove that because the revelation came through a male human being, female human beings are excluded from that salvation. God's purpose and possibilities are way beyond our understanding of the Gospel story as we have it.

In our Bible and in our central acts of worship, we speak as a church of God's love for all people: none of whom has a special privilege in God's eyes, all of whom who stand in equal need of God's saving grace. In Paul's letter to the Galatians we are told "For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.

There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3: 27-28).

In the baptism service (ASB) we declare "We are members together of the body of Christ; we are children of the same heavenly Father, we are inheritors together of the same kingdom of God".

Men and women are saved in the Christ Jesus; men and women are "heirs of God's promise", the Body of Christ here on earth: men and women must share together in the work of Christ's body in the church today.

The priesthood of all believers

Women and men share in that priesthood through Baptism

In his first epistle Peter wrote, "Come to him, a living stone.....and let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light".

This royal priesthood with its commission to worship and spread the Gospel was open to all who were baptised –women as well as men.

The sacramental priesthood

Has it not always been confined to men? Is this not because Jesus chose twelve men as his apostles and they laid hands on others to take their place?

The twelve were indeed all men, but Jesus was surrounded by a much larger group of disciples, many of whom were women. Notable amongst these was Mary Magdalene who was the first witness of the resurrection and whom Augustine called the "apostle to the apostles". There were other women as well – Mary, Martha, Joanna, Susannah and many others.

Clearly men were much better placed in Jewish society at that time to spread the good news, but Jesus never turned women an way from him nor discouraged them from listening to his teaching. Rather Jesus' attitude to women was revolutionary for his day.

If we are to follow the direction in which the life and ministry of Jesus points us, we must show equal compassion and respect to the needs and gifts of women of our

own age. We must pay more attention to the radical new value that Jesus placed upon women in his own society and less to the fact that the twelve apostles happened to be male.

In the early church as we read in Acts of Apostles and the Epistles, the ministries of the church developed gradually and the first to emerge was the ministry of deacons. Women were deaconesses (Phoebe was actually described as a deacon), teachers of the Gospel, prophetesses and martyrs.

Although bishops, presbyters and deacons were found in some churches in the New Testament, the full ministry of bishops and priests developed after New Testament times. The concept of the sacramental priest owed much to Old Testament notions of priesthood. The position of bishop was influenced by the persons and roles of male secular rulers. Late in the second century the term “Hierus” which is only used in the New Testament for the priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of the whole people of God came to be applied to the bishop. As a result of this, and of the cultural background of the day, it is not surprising that the sacramental priesthood developed as a male order. For centuries women had to be content to exercise their ministry as nuns, mystics, visionaries and evangelists.

But as has often been remarked, there is nothing on the New Testament to suggest that things cannot be done for the first time. Christianity is an incarnate religion, and when the social circumstances became appropriate there is no Biblical reason why women cannot exercise a sacramental priestly ministry, just as from the earliest times women by baptism had entered into the priesthood of all believers.

Ordaining women to the priesthood is but another important stage in the development of the Christian ministry, helping to continue and perfect its traditions of service, in all its many forms. It is a relatively new development, but it is a development like others in the history of the Church inspired by the Holy Spirit speaking to us in a new age.

The role of the priest as the representative of Christ

Does this mean that the priest has to be male?

Some would argue that the Lord is present in the minister of the Eucharist, and this minister must be male as by that mode we are reminded of the incarnation itself and Christ was incarnate as a male human being. Yet when we say that the priest “represents” Christ who is himself our one High Priest, we mean that the priest speaks and acts in Christ’s name – as well as addressing God in our name. There is nothing here that requires the priest to be male. There is no need for that person to resemble Christ in their gender or their physical appearance, for the Church is not trying to cast them in the part of Christ in a film or a play of the Last Supper. A “representative” is not the same as a “representation”. Women, who are redeemed just as men are, have an equal possibility of being called to represent their Redeemer.

What about the “ikon” theory?

This is a refinement of the concept of representation. It is the concept that the priest is a visual symbol or “ikon” of Christ and that this symbol becomes ineffectual – it does not work – if the priest is a woman.

Taken to logical conclusion this symbol would not really work unless the priest were a bearded man of Jewish appearance in his early thirties.

Can a woman be an ikon of Christ?

- Yes, because Jesus was incarnate as a human being and women are human too.
- Yes, because women by their baptism are part of the priesthood of all believers.
- Yes, because the Holy Spirit descends on us all, male and female alike, to carry out God’s purpose in the world.
- Yes, because the world can see in a priesthood of both men and women the full humanity of Christ in the wholeness of the ordained priesthood rather than highlighting his maleness.
- Yes, because it is the resurrected and ascended Christ and not just a male incarnate being who redeems us all, who comes to us in the Eucharist.
- Yes, because when the traditionalists insist that a man must represent Christ, they are applying such a representation as though the resurrection had not occurred.
- Yes, because to suggest that the eternal “Son” is biologically male is theologically inaccurate. It is counter to a full understanding of the eternal existence of the second person of the Trinity.

What is our calling?

The priest is called to help all of us, women and men, to carry out our calling and to remind us of it: our calling to give to the world the good news that, through Jesus Christ, God’s love can be shed abroad in the hearts and lives of every one of us – male and female, old and young. A fully representative priesthood must include women and men if it is to be a holistic reminder to all people.

The priesthood serves and enables the body of Christ. It also points to Christ and through Christ to God. Within the being of God both the masculine and the feminine, the male and the female are contained and surpassed. Within humanity both men and women are made in God’s image.

Archive of the Movement for the Ordination of Women

See the full article by Fabiana Barticioti at

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsehistory/2016/12/01/archive-of-the-movement-for-the-ordination-of-women/>

The archive of the campaigning organisation the Movement for the Ordination of Women has been completely catalogued by archivist Fabiana Barticioti and it is now available for consultation at LSE Library.

The Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) operated from 1979 to 1994 and was the major organisation to campaign for women to become priests in the Church of England. The papers in the archives date from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s and cover the organisation’s running, offering a close insight into its campaigning strategy and the struggles encountered by its campaigners.

The Society / Forward in Faith stance

Forward in Faith booklet about process for vacancies

[https://www.forwardinfaith.com/uploads/vacancies in society parishes - FOR PRINTING.pdf](https://www.forwardinfaith.com/uploads/vacancies_in_society_parishes_-_FOR_PRINTING.pdf)

(36 page booklet)

Women Bishops and Women Priests: leaflet text

<https://www.forwardinfaith.com/WomenBishops.php>

<https://www.forwardinfaith.com/WomenBishopsText.php>

Women as Bishops and Priests – What’s the Problem?

Women have exercised ministry and leadership in the Church since the earliest times. They are among her foremost saints and teachers. They hold positions of authority: for example, they are churchwardens and PCC members, chair diocesan and national committees, and sit as judges in the church courts.

So why is there a problem with ordaining women as bishops and priests?

The reasons fall into three groups:

- reasons concerning the nature of the Church of England as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church
- reasons concerning the unity of the Church
- reasons concerning the nature of the episcopate and priesthood, and the roles of women and men

Part of the One Church?

The Church of England is ‘part of the one, holy catholic Church’.

She professes the faith set forth in the catholic creeds. These are the property of the whole Church. The Church of England is not at liberty to alter the Creeds unilaterally. To do so would be to behave as if she were the whole Church, and not merely one part. Things that concern the whole Church must be decided by the whole Church.

The threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons similarly belongs to the whole Church. The Church of England cannot claim the right to make a fundamental change to it unilaterally. Doing so goes against her nature as merely part of the one Church.

Ordaining women to the episcopate and priesthood lacks any precedent in the history of orthodox Christianity. It also lacks ‘catholic consent’ – the consent of the great majority of the universal Church with which the Church of England claims to share the threefold ministry. It is not a change that the Church of England is at liberty to make.

Contribution to Visible Unity or Visible Sign of Disunity?

The Church of England has committed itself to seek and promote the visible unity of Christ's Church, in obedience to his prayer 'that they may all be one... so that the world may believe...' (John 17.21).

The Church's disunity is contrary to Christ's will. Ordaining women to the episcopate and priesthood further entrenches disunity, when we should be doing all that we can to overcome it. (The Roman Catholic Church has repeatedly described it as placing a 'serious obstacle' in the way.) It also has grave consequences for the Church of England's own unity.

When a woman presides at the Eucharist, or a female bishop ordains, these can only be visible signs of the Church's disunity – signs that contradict the nature of the Eucharist as the sacrament of unity.

In saying this, we mean no disrespect to those who offer themselves for these ministries faithfully and obediently according to their own consciences.

Equal or Interchangeable?

Jesus did not shrink from challenging social convention. His disciples included women as well as men. Yet he chose only men as his Apostles. Only men were among the Twelve, representing in the Church (the new Israel) the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob. Bishops are the successors of the Apostles.

In the New Testament, Christ is the Bridegroom and the Church is his Bride. Priests represent Christ at the altar.

A bishop is a 'Father in God'. This role relates to the fatherhood of God. (Christ and the Scriptures teach us to call God our Father – never our Mother.)

Women and men are equal, but in the roles of father and mother, bride and bridegroom, and in Christian symbolism, they are not interchangeable.

Ordaining women as bishops and priests overturns the tradition of Christian symbolism that is rooted in the Old Testament, the teaching and example of Christ, and the message of the New Testament.

An Inclusive Ministry or a Ministry that Excludes?

Is allowing women to minister as bishops and priests really 'inclusive'?

It may 'include' women who have been ordained as bishops and priests. But it excludes from our church's worship far larger numbers of lay women and men who are unable, for reasons of theological conviction, to receive their ministry as priests or as bishops (either directly or by receiving the ministry of men and women whom female bishops ordain).

To be present when a woman presides at the Eucharist can be painful, because this visible mark of the Church's disunity conflicts with the nature of the Sacrament of unity.

To receive communion when a woman (or a man ordained by a woman) presides at the Eucharist is to condone and share in something that hinders the visible unity for which Our Lord prayed.

'Inclusion' at the altar excludes faithful women and men in the congregation.

Sacramental Assurance?

Many women and men are unable to receive communion when a woman, or a man ordained by a woman, presides at the Eucharist, because of a lack of 'sacramental assurance'.

In the fourth of the *Tracts for the Times* (the series of pamphlets that in 1833 initiated the Oxford Movement which grew into the Church of England's Catholic Movement), John Keble wrote of the need for 'security..., that in receiving this bread and wine, I verily receive [Christ's] Body and Blood'.

For many, this 'sacramental assurance' is lacking when the president at the Eucharist is someone whose ministry does not stand in visible continuity with that of the Church through the ages, but instead reflects a change in Holy Orders that lacks catholic consent.

The Society of the Sacred Cross

<http://www.sscholycross.com>

The Society of the Holy Cross – or SSC from the Latin Societas Sanctae Crucis - is a Congregation of priests in the Anglican Communion, who live and minister under a common Rule of Life.

There are currently over 630 members around the world in parishes, missions, chaplaincies, schools and other areas of pastoral ministry, committed to witnessing to the Cross of Christ by their lives and ministry.

The Society of the Holy Cross (SSC) was founded in London in 1855 by a small group of Anglo-Catholic priests led by Father Charles Lowder.

At a time when the Catholic Revival in the Church of England was threatened by persecution and misunderstanding, these priests came together for support, mutual prayer and encouragement. Fr Lowder spelled out the objects of SSC:

"To defend and strengthen the spiritual life of the clergy, to defend the faith of the Church, and to carry on and aid Mission work both at home and abroad".

The members of this society, meeting together as they did in prayer and conference, were deeply impressed with the evils existing in the Church, and saw also, in the remedies adopted by St Vincent de Paul, the hope of lessening them.

Priests of the Society live under a common Rule and meet together in their local SSC Chapters every month or two for prayer, Mass and some kind of study or conversation. Presiding over the Society worldwide is a Master-General who has a special responsibility to ensure an on-going fidelity among the Brethren to the spirit of the Society.

SSC is not a devotional guild, but takes its stance upon a shared vision of :
'a disciplined priestly life fashioned after a definite spiritual rule.'

It is this Rule of Life which unites the Brethren in their various priestly ministries and lives. They are required to:

'consider their obligation to the Society as a close spiritual bond...which takes precedence to that of any other voluntary society.'

This obligation includes a commitment to attend local SSC Chapter meetings and annual Regional and Provincial Synods. The life of the Society is experienced primarily through the local Chapter, and attendance at Chapter is of obligation unless prevented by genuine pastoral duties.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_the_Holy_Cross (extract)

As a Catholic society, SSC has taken a conservative line in the church controversies of the late 20th century, particularly over the interpretation of scripture and the ordination of women.

Bishop of Ebbsfleet

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_of_Ebbsfleet

The **Bishop of Ebbsfleet** is a [suffragan bishop](#) who fulfils the role of a [provincial episcopal visitor](#) (also known as a "flying bishop") for the western half of the [Province of Canterbury](#) in the [Church of England](#).^[1]

The see was erected under the [Suffragans Nomination Act 1888](#) by [Order in Council](#) dated 8 February 1994^[2] and licensed by the [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) as a "flying bishop" to provide episcopal oversight for parishes throughout the province which do not accept the sacramental ministry of bishops who have participated in the [ordination of women](#). The position is named after [Ebbsfleet](#) in [Thanet](#), [Kent](#). In the southern province, the bishops of Ebbsfleet and of Richborough each minister in 13 of the 40 dioceses. The Bishop of Ebbsfleet serves the western 13 dioceses ([Bath and Wells](#), [Birmingham](#), [Bristol](#), [Coventry](#), [Derby](#), [Exeter](#), [Gloucester](#), [Hereford](#), [Lichfield](#), [Oxford](#), [Salisbury](#), [Truro](#) and [Worcester](#)).^[3] Until the creation of the suffragan [See of Richborough](#) in 1995, the Bishop of Ebbsfleet served the entire area of the Province of Canterbury with the exceptions of the dioceses of London, Rochester and Southwark which came under the oversight of the [Bishop of Fulham](#).

[Jonathan Goodall](#) was announced as the fifth Bishop of Ebbsfleet on 2 August 2013.^[4] His episcopal consecration took place on 25 September 2013 at Westminster Abbey. He had been the chaplain and ecumenical secretary to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He was the fourth of the five bishops to be affiliated with the [Society of the Holy Cross](#). On 3 September 2021 he resigned his episcopacy in order to be received into the [Roman Catholic Church](#).^[5]

In June 2022, it was announced that, from January 2023, oversight of conservative Catholics in the west of Canterbury province (formerly the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's area) would be taken by a **new Bishop of Oswestry**, suffragan to the Bishop of Lichfield; while oversight of conservative Evangelicals would be taken by the next Bishop of Ebbsfleet; the See of Maidstone would be left vacant, available for other uses.^[6]

List of bishops

| Bishops of Ebbsfleet | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| From | Until | Incumbent | Notes |
| 29 April 1994 | 31 October 1998 | John Richards | |
| December 1998 | 18 December 1999 | Michael Houghton SSC | Died in office |
| 30 November 2000 | 31 December 2010 | Andrew Burnham SSC | Resigned to become a Roman Catholic ^[7] |
| 16 June 2011 | 13 February 2013 | Jonathan Baker SSC | Translated to Fulham |
| 25 September 2013 | 8 September 2021 | Jonathan Goodall SSC | Resigned to become a Roman Catholic ^[8] |
| 8 September 2021 | present | <i>vacant</i> | |

Theological Reasons against the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood and Episcopate (1975 article)

Edwin G. Wappler, Dean, Bloy Episcopal School of Theology in affiliation with the School of Theology at Claremont, Claremont, California

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<https://womenpriests.org/articles-books/wappler-theological-reasons-against-the-ordination-of-women-to-the-priesthood-and-episcopate/>

The task of our discussion group was to develop theological arguments against the ordination of women to the presbyterate and the episcopate. We tried to approach the task in an objective manner, not as polemicists, but as scholars concerned to state the negative case as strongly as possible. It would be less than candid to say that we came to the forum with our minds totally open on the hotly debated topic of women in the ordained ministry of the church. As a matter of fact, most of us tended to favor the ordination of women. However, we were not discussing the issue as partisans but as theologians concerned to deepen our understanding of the validity of the negative arguments frequently offered by those who object to women in the priesthood and episcopate. We hoped also to be able to discover new approaches which might support a negative judgment of the question.

It became obvious as we discussed the matter before us that there were at least two classes of theological reasons against the ordination of women of which we had to take account. One category of negative reasons could be referred to as prudential, practical, or pastoral considerations. The other category we denoted by the term dogmatic. Both of these classes of reasons seemed to us to possess a valid claim to be considered as theological since theology is concerned with a wide range of issues touching faith and life. Our task was to look at the question from a broad rather than a narrow theological perspective, and we proceeded to do so.

Very early in our discussion a proposal was made that the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood should be dealt with in a manner similar to the way the Church of England dealt with the question of non-episcopal ordination between World Wars I and II. When faced with the question of deciding on the ultimate theological issue of whether episcopal ordination was absolutely necessary to valid ministry, the church allowed theologians the privilege of challenging the rule in print while always adhering to it rigidly in practice. In other words, the question of the validity of non-episcopal ministries was left open to speculation but was never allowed to change ecclesiastical regulations or procedures at ordination time. From this point of view, the best negative response to the ordination of women would be to say that we should keep the *status quo* in force while tolerating or even encouraging speculative exploration of the possibility of women's ordination.

Several vigorous objections were immediately posed against that approach, however. The first concerned the fact of recent ordinations of women and the statements of bishops intending to ordain more in the future. The second was a more weighty plea

to look at the deeper bases of the church's present practice of refusing priestly ordination to women and asking what the theological and anthropological implications of that refusal might be. The group concluded that the time for the sort of Anglican compromise once thought applicable to the older ecumenical issue of episcopal versus non-episcopal ministry had passed and that the issue had now to be faced on dogmatic as well as practical grounds.

This consensus did not mean, however, that the discussants had decided to ignore the prudential side of the negative case. While they could not take refuge in a "reverent agnosticism" about the question of women's ordination, they did recognize that a responsible answer to the question would not emerge in a vacuum or an ivory tower. They thought that the first significant pastoral issue to be considered from the negative side was the lack of a Catholic consensus in favor of women's ordination. Neither Rome nor Orthodoxy has made any move comparable to the Episcopal Church's to bring the issue to the fore. Neither communion shows any signs of changing its policy of excluding women from the ministry, although there is some speculation and even a degree of ferment in Rome. Thus the first question to be answered is, Can the Episcopal Church take the unilateral step of ordaining women without seriously setting back ecumenical relations with these other branches of Catholic Christianity which embrace so many of the faithful throughout the world?

Coming closer to home, the group recognized secondly that a lack of consensus exists within Anglicanism as well on this issue. Already within our own ecclesiastical family in the United States and in other countries threats of schism are heard. No one can say how many of these threats will be finally carried out, but even if many are not driven to formal separation, will not the church suffer grievously from the defection and demoralization of so many whose faith has been undermined by such a departure from historical precedent as the ordination of women? The second major pastoral consideration, therefore, was the scandal which the ordination of women would cause to many within our own fellowship of faith.

Thirdly, the group recognized how intimately the church's pastoral practice had been tied to the symbol of the male priesthood and the bishop as father of the ecclesiastical family. Everyone agreed that the family in modern society was under great stress and that sexual roles, particularly among the young, were in confusion. The church must carefully consider the allegation that ordaining women to the priesthood and episcopate would add to the present confusion of sexual identity in modern society. There has been a very evident value to the masculine priesthood throughout the centuries of the church's life. Would this not be lost or compromised if women were ordained to this office?

Closely allied to the question of the sexual identity is, fourthly, the issue of co-worker sexual relationships between men and women in the ordained ministry. While this aspect is sometimes brushed aside as unworthy of serious consideration, the group felt that it needed to be faced. The Episcopal Church already has a number of problems relating to the inability of its ministers to work together, to trust one

another, and to provide mutual support. Would not the introduction of sexual tensions and temptations into the co-worker relationship produce even more difficulties, jealousies, animosities and scandals than we presently have with an all-male priesthood? Certainly our present tensions and disputes give us little reason for optimism that we could avoid further trouble along these lines.

Turning to the dogmatic side of the matter, the group agreed that a very strong *prima facie* case is found in Holy Scripture and Tradition against the ordination of women. Since the time of Richard Hooker, Anglicans have believed that the truth could be found by discerning the convergence of Scripture, Tradition and Reason. Scripture and Tradition, going back to the largely male imagery for the deity in the Old Testament through the example of our Lord in appointing an all-male apostolate and up to relatively recent times in ecclesiastical practice, give us little indication that women were intended to exercise the office of priest and bishop in the church of God.

The question, of course, remains of how we are to interpret Scripture and Tradition. As Anglicans we do not want to look for proof texts or take a literalist view of the sources of truth. We are bound to take account of the historical perspective which influenced Scripture and Tradition as we seek to interpret them, but we must do so with reverence for their witness. Thus, our group felt obliged to warn all those who seek to interpret basic sources of faith that they not historicize them away. We must listen carefully to the whole of Scripture and Tradition remembering that our outlook, too, is conditioned by the times in which we live. We need to be clear about our own normative principles when we approach the hermeneutical task. On what grounds do we affirm or reject the witness of Scripture and Tradition? Is it by the guidance of the Holy Spirit or by listening only to the spirit of the age in which we live?

In harmony with the witness of Scripture and Tradition has been a strong patriarchal consciousness in western society. This patriarchal social structure has also existed and does presently exist in most parts of the earth today. The group recognized that these facts bring into question the feminist tendencies of American society in recent years. Are we experiencing a new sense of liberation and mutual equality or are we rather manifesting an aspect of Spenglerian decline? Heretofore, Christians have regarded male leadership in the home and in society as a kind of human reflection of the divine order of creation. The church, as the paradigm of creation, held to a male ordained ministry because to do otherwise would have seemed to go against the order of creation. Now we are asked to set this judgment aside and proceed to affirm a new non-patriarchal relationship by ordaining women to all ministerial offices in the church. The risk involved in taking this step appears to be very great indeed for the good order of church and society.

Finally, the group thought that a significant negative argument could be built on the assertion that a difference of function does not imply superiority or inferiority. What this means is that we must take the witness of Scripture and Tradition seriously and

recognize that men and women have different functions in the economy of salvation. However, to affirm this difference of function is not to imply a hierarchy in which men are better than or superior to women. From this perspective our task is to understand the emergence of women in the church not from the point of view of including them in the presbyterate or episcopate but in helping to develop whatever new forms of ministry God is calling them to embrace in our time. To open the priesthood and episcopate to women is to subsume the unique and distinctive ministry of women under male categories. Such a step frustrates the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about a new thing, i.e. the true ministry of women. Therefore, what is represented as being a very progressive movement—the ordination of women—may be instead a counter-productive side-step on the pathway of history.

The above arguments against the ordination of women as priests or bishops have been presented in summary form only. They are not meant to be a complete statement of the negative case but rather an outline of the conclusions our group came to as we attempted to carry out our task of exploring the theological reasons why one might oppose any change in the Episcopal Church's present practice. We have not attempted to set down our personal points of reservation with regard to any of the negative arguments. What we hope we have accomplished is to offer to the church a reasonable statement of why a responsible Christian might oppose the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate at this time.