

**Joint Submission regarding proposed legislation  
to permit the consecration of women as Bishops  
from the Councils of  
Church Society, Reform and the Fellowship of Word and Spirit.**

**1. Preamble**

- 1.1 We welcome the opportunity to make a further submission having previously made a joint response to the Guildford Group. Church Society and Reform had also made submissions to the Rochester Commission and we were also party to another submission following the Guildford Group along with The Third Province, Cost of Conscience and others.

This submission is an attempt to build on our previous joint submission and to incorporate the ideas from another submission by Bishop Wallace Benn, Professor Gerald Bray, Dr Roger Beckwith and Dr Mike Ovey.

- 1.2 We are loyal members of the Church of England and wish to remain so.

- 1.3 We desire to see oversight in the churches exercised by men, believing this to be required by Scripture (eg. 1 Tim 3.1-7, Titus 1.5-9, 1 Cor 14) and to be consonant with tradition and reason.

We would therefore be unable in conscience to accept women as bishops and believe that our three organizations represent many of those evangelicals who take such a view.

- 1.4 We ask that Article 6 is honoured; no-one can be required to accept something which cannot be proved from Scripture. Since Scripture undeniably teaches male leadership and since the Church recognised this for nearly two millennia it seems clear to us that this development cannot be proved from Scripture.

- 1.5 We note that the General Synod has indicated a willingness to ensure that proper provision is made for those unable to accept female oversight and that this accords with Resolution 3.2 of the Lambeth Conference 1998. We believe that this reflects a widespread view that legislation should not exclude those who cannot in conscience accept the consecration of women as Bishops.

- 1.6 We also note that the General Synod wished to explore further the proposals for Transferred Episcopal Arrangements (TEA) set out in The Guildford Report but that the House of Bishops seemed unwilling to pursue this. We responded positively to the TEA proposals believing that they formed a starting point for a workable solution.

- 1.7 We recognise the need to provide a solution which is acceptable to all in the Church. The best way to achieve this will be a flexible system which nevertheless provides the means of oversight being exercised by men for those who desire it. As has been recognised in the new Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure the Church of England now faces a missionary task and the rigid structures of the past will not best serve this.

## 2. Proposal

2.1 The churches which opt for this provision will need to know that their conscientious position is safeguarded. Therefore a Measure is essential rather than a Code of Practice.

2.2 We propose a system of **special personal oversight** (SPO) as the best way to provide genuine oversight without needing to create alternative structures.

We are not asking for the creation of new Dioceses, although some administrative facilities will be necessary.

The **oversight** would be **personal**, including such things as pastoral care, discipline, confirmation, selection for training, ordination, appointments, review, licensing and institution.

The legal basis would be the use of **special** jurisdictions which have good precedent and a long history in the Church of England.

2.3 Initially three regions would be designated, one covering the Province of York and two covering the Province of Canterbury.

In each region a panel of Bishops would be established who do not ordain women and who are clearly in agreement with those are seeking their special personal oversight.

We stated previously that such Bishops must be ‘credally and morally’ orthodox and we explained that by this we include that they;

- abide by Canon A5;
- accept such core doctrines as the virgin birth, bodily resurrection and uniqueness of salvation through Christ as straightforward truths, and;
- hold to traditional biblical teaching on moral issues, for example as set out in Lambeth 1998 Resolution 1.10 and the 1987 General Synod resolution on sexuality.

2.4 The Panel would consist of Diocesan Bishops, Suffragan Bishops and those specifically appointed to minister with SPO.

2.5 It is vital that the Panel represent fairly the different church traditions of those seeking SPO.

The Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure did not recognise that there were large numbers of evangelicals who could not accept women priests and this was reflected in the wording of the resolutions. The subsequent failure to appoint an evangelical as a ‘flying bishop’ and the persistent discrimination against conservative evangelicals in the appointment of Bishops has led to a sense of gross injustice.

2.6 Each region should be entitled to elect one of its Bishops to the House of Bishops, irrespective of whether there are existing Diocesan Bishops on the Panel.

2.7 A parish would petition the Panel for SPO. The Panel and parish would then agree together which of the Bishops on the panel would provide the SPO.

2.8 A clergyman would have the right to ask the Panel to provide pastoral care for him even if the parish had not opted for special personal oversight.

- 2.9 By agreement parishes would divert part of their current voluntary parish share to finance the administration and work of the regional panel and the training of clergy.
- 2.10 We see pastoral re-organization as a potential problem area. On the one hand adequate safeguards are needed for parishes under SPO but equally we do not wish parishes to opt for SPO in order to block necessary reorganization. We believe that a simple solution is a general provision by way of an amendment to the Pastoral Measure that a parish which is financially viable (some definition of which will be required) can have a power of veto over pastoral re-organization. This seems to us workable and just. In our experience viable parishes are very ready to work constructively to assist smaller and struggling parishes.

### **3. Legislation**

- 3.1 Legislation would be required to permit the creation of the Bishops with SPO who are not already Diocesan or Suffragan Bishops. These Bishops would in effect be suffragans to the Metropolitan, in the same way as Diocesan Bishops at present.
- 3.2 Legislation would be required to permit a PCC by due process and the passing of resolutions to petition for SPO and for a timescale and mechanism by which this would come into force. Legislation would need likewise to provide a means for rescinding this.
- 3.3 Legislation could be framed in one of two ways.
- Either specifying those places in law and canon where reference to the (Diocesan) Bishop should be considered as applying to the Bishop having SPO.
  - Or by making a blanket change and specifying those areas of legislation where reference is taken to mean the existing Diocesan Bishop.

The following legislation would specifically need to be included:

Clergy Discipline Measure  
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure  
Sections B, C, D and E of the Canons.

- 3.4 Other special provision:  
Canon C2(1) - the participation of the Archbishop shall not apply  
Canon C3(8) - reference to See shall mean the Region.
- 3.5 Section G of the Canons, the regions will require their own structure of ecclesiastical courts, though they may find it preferable to sub-contract this to existing Dioceses.
- 3.6 Patronage Benefices Measure - where patronage is held by a Diocesan, Suffragan or Area Bishop in their own Diocese or area then this should be exercised jointly with the Bishop having SPO of the parish.

For the purpose of this Measure the Metropolitan would be designated as the duly elected chairman of the Panel concerned.

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