

College of Bishops, September 2012

Introduction to Presentation by Transformations Group

When Archbishop Rowan proposed that a conference reflecting on the experience of ordained women be hosted at Lambeth Palace, the major reason for holding such a gathering was to celebrate what women deacons and priests had brought to the Church of England. We hope as we make this presentation today that the theme of celebration will come through strongly, alongside some of the challenging things we also have to say.

I would like to start though by thanking Archbishop Rowan for his vision in calling this conference and for his desire that the church should celebrate women's ministry.

So often, and especially over these past years as the Church of England has been debating the proposal for women to be admitted to the Episcopate, women have been viewed as a problem! The group of women who were involved in planning the Transformations Conference, producing the report you have in front of you and speaking to you today, want to say to you as the College of Bishops, that we understand how tough it has been for the Bishops over this period; we do recognise that there is not an easy way forward and we don't in any way want you to feel that we are over critical of you as a body. However, we want you to try to imagine what it is like for women living with a big question mark above our heads and ask you not to view us as a problem but to see us as a gift!

Lucy Winkett when she addressed the conference with her usual energy and enthusiasm said that we should count ourselves privileged to be alive in this generation. And indeed we should! Over the last 25 years the Church of England has come an incredibly long way in terms of the integration of women into the ordained ministry. I'm sure that many of us who began our ministries as deaconesses would not have envisaged during our working lives seeing so many women in Holy Orders serving as Incumbents, Diocesan Officers, Chaplains, Canons, Archdeacons and Deans ~ and how fantastic it is that Viv Faull has recently been appointed as Dean of York.

I know I speak for many others when I say that serving as a female priest brings with it wonderful and rich experiences and we are aware that it is the most privileged role to have been called to. But there is still a long way to go in terms of integration, but this is hardly surprising, as in the great scheme of things, these are very early days.

Before I hand over to Daphne who will begin today's presentation with some interesting statistics, I would like to briefly remind you of the areas covered in our report and in particular of the Key Messages in the Executive Summary:

(Slide with Key Messages from Executive Summary of Transformations Conference)

1. Celebrate the presence of women as ordained ministers of the Church.
2. Engage institutional levers in Ministry Division & Synod to change the dominant male pattern and culture of ordained ministry.
3. Monitor and Encourage Research.
4. Pay attention to ways of increasing flexibility in patterns of stipendiary ministry and the needs of clergy couples.
5. Acknowledge & address theological incoherence that feeds discriminatory culture & practices.
6. Invite the Faith & Order Commission to work on a prophetic theology of gender.
7. Encourage the Liturgical Commission in the use of a broader & more inclusive range of metaphors for God in worship.
8. Prepare to welcome women to the House of Bishops & invite women bishops from other provinces to facilitate the House of Bishops meetings before the first consecrations here.)

I'm not going to read through these as you've no doubt read them before, but they need to be held in our minds as we reflect together this morning. In particular, as we note that first point, I ask you to celebrate with us the place of women in the Church and to work together to ensure that women and men, lay and ordained, are able to flourish and use to the full the gifts that God has given us.

Research and Statistics

See separate PowerPoint document for copies of slides.

As Jane has said, the Church of England has come a long way over the past 25 years in terms of the integration of women into its ordained ministry. I would like, very briefly in the next few minutes, to show you some of those areas which are encouraging in terms of women's ministry in the Church of England. Then, I will identify areas which are a cause of concern where further development work is needed. Finally, I would like to end by bringing to your attention those areas where we believe further research is badly needed.

What is encouraging?

There are a number of encouraging points about women's ordained ministry in the Church of England today.

Areas for concern

31% of clergy (full time and part time stipendiary and self-supporting and OLM) are women in 2011, compared to 16% in 2000.

- Overall growth in number of women being ordained (now over half of those being ordained).
- Nearly 40% of these are now ordained to stipendiary ministry.
- Doubling of number of women incumbents.
- Fourfold increase in number of women Deans, Archdeacons and senior Cathedral staff including the recent appointment of a woman Dean of York Minister.

The number of women ordained to stipendiary ministry has increased from 29% in 2000 to 39% in 2011.

There are more women in senior office in the Church with 4 women deans and 17 women archdeacons in 2011.

However, there are a number of areas of concern which I would like to bring to your attention.

Only 18% of incumbents are women (2010 figure). This raises questions as to why the figure is so low and whether there are factors which are preventing or discouraging women to apply for incumbency posts.

Although the figures have increased over the past ten years, women only account for only 39% of stipendiary ordinations (2010 figure).

This has implications for the development of women in the Church as self-supporting women clergy are unlikely to build up the experience needed to take on incumbency-level posts or senior office .

It also affects the image of the Church because there are less women in positions of responsibility.

- The numbers of young women aged 20-29 as percentage of those being accepted for ordained ministry have declined in past ten years.
- There is a similar trend amongst women aged 30-39.

- This is a worrying statistic as younger women are more likely to take on positions of responsibility in the Church and to build up the experience for potential senior office in the future.
- It also raise questions about why younger women are not putting themselves forward for selection and whether they are not being encouraged by their churches.

53% of Self Supporting Ministers are SSMs (2010 figure)

- A quarter put in more than 30 hours a week
- A further fifth contribute between 20-30 hours a week
- Only 15% spend less than 10 hours a week on their ministry

But:

- 46% have only held one post since ordination
- 41% report no change in their ministry during that time
- Only 13% have lead responsibility for their ministry in their parish or chaplaincy
- Almost a quarter have received no ministerial review.

(Source Teresa Morgan's Survey – 'Self Supporting Ministry in the Church of England and the Anglican Churches of Wales, Scotland and England 2010'.

There is a significant difference in the numbers of men and women training for ordained ministry in some of the colleges. Examples from the 2011/12 figures include:

Mirfield: 17 men/4 women

Oak Hill 46 men/1 woman

St Stephen's Oxford 13 men/1 woman

Wycliffe Hall 54 men/7 women

A far higher percentage of women are training for the ministry on courses than men. The 2012/12 figures for Sponsored Church of England Ordinands show 70% of women are studying on courses compared with 41% of men.

What are the implications of this on women's subsequent deployment and development in the Church?

The numbers of women in senior office are still very low – just 15% in 2010.

There is some difference between the number of women in senior office in the Northern and Southern Provinces, even taking account of the different sizes of

the two Provinces. Women currently make up 18% of the Archdeacons in the Canterbury Province compared with 10% in York Province.

20% of Deans in Canterbury Province are women whereas until the recent appointment of Viv Faull, there have been no Deans in the York Province.

- There have been a number of decanal vacancies since 2010.
- Of the 13 appointments made 3 (23%) were women
- These figures show that where women are applying for these posts, often as a result of the search process, a reasonable number are shortlisted and appointed.
- Key issue is to encourage women to apply.
- Need to provide mentoring, development opportunities and encouragement to women to apply for these appropriate posts

(Source – Archbishops Secretary for Appointments)

- What happens to women when they are ordained? (no statistics on career progression).
- Numbers leaving and the reasons for this? (only statistics currently available are on death or retirement. Every other reason is classified as 'other'..
- Statistics on what happens to SSMs and NSMs.
- Statistics on numbers of male and female Area and Rural Deans (no national figures currently available).
- Statistics on ordained clergy couples (no national figures available – as far as we are aware).
- Analysis of impact of College and Courses training
- respectively on women's consequent ministry in the Church.

The Factors that Shape the Statistics

All of these statistics represent the ministries of real women in your Dioceses. Together they build a complex picture of the ministry of ordained women, which - given the gaps that we have identified in the data - is inevitably partial. We'd like to add flesh to the bones by looking at some of the reasons behind the known statistics - and their implications - and hearing some qualitative evidence from delegates at the Transformations conference.

1. What is encouraging

'There has been much progress ... where people have seen competent women in ministry, observed women being appointed to some senior positions or taking on higher profile roles, and, to some extent, have simply got used to an unfamiliar idea.'

- i. Number of women as a percentage of those being ordained.
- ii. Percentage of woman now being ordained to **stipendiary** ministry.
- iii. Increasing numbers of women Archdeacons (and Deans).

The sheer numbers of ordained women now ministering means that in many places we are familiar, accepted and welcome figures. Where women and men, lay and ordained together are able to offer their diversity of experience and gifts, the Church is flourishing.

2. Areas for concern

'We are still in the habit of speaking of women's ministry as a problem rather than a blessing. We need to find ways of appreciating the gifts that women bring. Alongside this we need a theology of diversity and theology of leadership which celebrates gender differences rather than always problematising them.'

The statistics you have seen show that there are significant differences between the ways in which women and men exercise ordained ministry. Often this is not the result of individual choice. The feedback data from the Transformations conference points to a series of cultural and institutional assumptions that work against the full integration of women clergy.

Until these are addressed the Church cannot embrace the breadth of gifts and experience offered by its ordained ministers, and neither can the experience of lay women be fully reflected, explored or celebrated.

We now want to pick up the areas of concern identified in the statistics and connect them with those cultural and institutional assumptions.

- i. **Women are still in a minority in stipendiary ministry**

'I decided to become NSM but I feel like I was pushed into this because the long hours mean that I just won't see my boys grow up otherwise. I still want to be a full time priest but with a husband who works full time I can't see how we can do that. I feel disillusioned and fairly stuck ... I want to go back into full time ministry; I want to be challenged and intellectually stimulated. I want responsibility and to go as far as God wants me to go, but I also want a family life.'

Women with caring responsibilities may *rule themselves out* of stipendiary parish ministry.

There is often a perceived mismatch between the expectations of the church and what women with caring responsibilities can offer. Part-time stipendiary roles which would be the obvious solution for many are rare, and finding appropriate housing can be an added complication. In most places there is no provision of 'emergency cover' in the Church, leaving those with caring responsibilities vulnerable to practical crises where either the family or the institution will be let down.

The situation is not simply one of women opting out. The Transformations feedback suggests that there is also a tendency for women *to be ruled out* of stipendiary ministry – that there is an institutional bias towards SSM ministry for women. This is underpinned by a cultural prejudice that both priesthood and motherhood are all-consuming vocations and therefore mutually exclusive.

The "solution" to these complexities is frequently to offer women self-supporting roles. Many SSMs therefore feel undervalued and marginalised, whilst people wrongly assume they are self supporting by choice. They are often not fully included in chapter and Diocesan activities. This can affect their future development in ministry - particularly since women report that it is very hard to move from self-supporting to stipendiary ministry.

The Church keeps little data about the skills and deployment of SSMs. The disparity of numbers between men and women in this role demands serious examination of its causes and implications.

Ordained couples experience particular issues that can militate against both partners taking full time stipendiary roles, including the requirement for an incumbent to live in the parish and the question of stipend and pension provision. It is often the woman who is expected to take the SSM position in an ordained couple.

ii. Very few young women are offering themselves for ordination

‘There is still a lack of women clergy in incumbencies and other senior posts which means a lack of role models for envisioning young women for ministry.’

Some young women surmise that they can’t fit the models of ministry available if they are married with children or hope to be so at some point in the future. Lack of clarity around maternity leave provision reinforces this perception.

Potential vocations are also undermined by the fact that the episcopacy is currently closed to women. Young women take this to indicate ambivalence on the part of the Church about the validity and worth of women in holy orders.

In some churches preaching and biblical interpretation which privilege male perspectives and the use of predominantly or even exclusively male language in the liturgy underlines this sense of ambivalence. This diminishes the experience of lay women in the Church and discourages them from offering themselves for ministry.

iii. Low numbers of women in Evangelical and Anglo Catholic Colleges

‘Churches with a strong evangelical tradition in particular are calling out young men while not giving the same encouragement to young women’

Theologies around gender, leadership and priesthood in some Evangelical and Anglo Catholic churches militate against the nurturing of female vocations to ordained ministry.

iv. Bias towards Course rather than College training for women

‘Those part-timers who are self-supporting (more of these are women) suffer from low expectations of them (no-one is expecting future leaders to emerge from such a situation)...’

The majority of those who train on Courses take up self-supporting rather than stipendiary roles. There is anecdotal evidence that there is a negative impact on the ministerial development of those who train on Courses. This must be taken seriously when in some instances women are encouraged towards training on a Course rather than at College because it is assumed that this will best suit their domestic circumstances.

v. Low percentage of women in senior office

'I think we need a profound rethink about our models of leadership. Whilst most appointments intend to be open to women, the qualities they are looking for, are still Alpha Male.'

Many able female clergy have CVs which do not look like the 'typical' CV of a successful male candidate for a senior position. Those responsible for appointments do not always honour experience prior to ordination, parallel experience or that gained whilst in a non-stipendiary or self-supporting role. Those responsible for ministerial development need to be particularly alert to the available opportunities for women to gain relevant experience.

vi. Women experience appointments processes as problematic

'There is a workaholic streak in ministry which is difficult to counter without it being attributed to gender and being perceived as a weakness and an inability to cope.'

Parishes may say (and believe) that they are open to having a female incumbent for the first time, but unless the appointment process is 'gender blind' they will often subconsciously lean towards the familiar.

There is statistical evidence to suggest that women are more likely to underplay their gifts and skills and therefore not apply for an advertised role which they perceive to be beyond their competence. Encouragement by a bishop (or others) may be key to whether or not women apply.

A word on context:

Living with Theological Incoherence - an ambivalent culture for ordained women

'One of the reasons that I work in sector ministry is that they have to abide by anti-discrimination laws. During my time through selection, through training and as a curate, I was made to feel like a second-class citizen. I couldn't even imagine going back to parish life and having to deal with all the hassle'

'At the Oils Mass in Holy Week, women priests are asked to wear choir robes so that no-one will be able to tell which women are priests and which are not. They were also directed to do so for the ordinations...'

It is clear that there is still work to be done in integrating ordained women into the institutional life of the Church. In understanding this challenge it is important to remember that the institutional context in which women operate is still one of profound ambivalence.

The continuing negative impact of the Act of Synod for women was one of the themes that emerged strongly in the Conference feedback and Sarah Coakley's presentation focussed on the profound theological incoherence that exists over women's orders, that forms '*a deep and suppurating wound in the life of the church*'.

And of course the ontological gymnastics expected of ordained women – to be a priest and yet accept that on occasions one is not allowed to be a priest - is deeply de-humanising for ordained women. This culture of ambivalence communicates beyond the clergy to lay women and men and to many in the society we exist to serve.

As we move forward there is a need for there to be theological coherence at an institutional level - both for women and for the health of the Church

As one female priest put it recently, the Church:

*Must not give the impression, either deliberately or inadvertently, that there are two alternative views about the validity of women's ordination held simultaneously by the Church of England **as a Church**. It will...of course recognize that individual members of the Church of England will continue to hold differing views about the validity of this development.... But it must be clear that the Church of England **as a church** believes that women's ordination is valid.*

Until the contribution and experience of women is embraced at all levels in the Church, the institution will have an unconscious but inevitable tendency to assume male experience to be the norm. As we have already suggested, this is not simply an issue for clergy women but for lay women and the Church as a whole. Until the experience of women is seen as equally valid and normative the priesthood is less than fully humanised and the life of the entire Church is inevitably impoverished.

So what do we hope that you, as the College of Bishops, can do about these obstacles to the flourishing of the Church as a whole? We hand over to Jane again to suggest some conclusions and concrete action.

What do we want from the Bishops?

In the key messages in the Executive Summary of the report on the conference, there are some very specific requests to the House of Bishops. We are delighted that one of those has already been fulfilled as Sarah Coakley addressed you yesterday on theological incoherence.

There are five other things in particular which we want to ask of you today:

1. Create a culture of drawing out people's gifts

This is an area where some very practical things can be done and where we would encourage you to be pro-active in your dioceses; either by taking direct action yourselves or by delegating to an Archdeacon or Training Officer. We suggest that a number of steps can be taken:

- Identify women in your diocese who would benefit from mentoring or from shadowing a more senior priest ~ including in some cases, Archdeacons, Deans and Bishops.
- Make use of some of the excellent organisations who offer coaching, especially for clergy who are being interviewed for the first time or those who are applying for senior posts. There are those who report that such coaching can be extremely beneficial.
- Encourage people to apply for jobs. When I conducted my research in 2008 on women applying for senior posts 850 women out of the 1083 who completed my questionnaire said they would be willing to take up a senior post; but of those, 680 (80%) said they would only respond to a personal approach. Only 48 women (5.6%) indicated that they would respond to an open advertisement. So if you have women in your diocese who you think would make good incumbents in large parishes, or good senior chaplains, or good archdeacons or deans you need to tap them on the shoulder and actively encourage them to apply and also to support them through the process.
- At an earlier stage, please also encourage young women to think about their vocation and take positive steps in the larger evangelical churches in particular, to draw out young women to train for ordination.

2. Address the issue of flexibility in patterns of ministry

In order to make the best use of all our human resources we would ask that Bishops look seriously at the following areas:

- The policy in your diocese for maternity leave and cover. At present some dioceses provide very generously for women during maternity leave, while others provide only the minimum legal requirement. It would be helpful if the best practice could be adopted across the whole of the Church of England.

- For women with young families it would be helpful if more part time stipendiary posts were created, especially in parish ministry. At a time when stipendiary posts are being cut in many dioceses this would be a good moment to be extending the number of part time positions. It is also important though that there is flexibility so that women can return to full time positions as their family circumstances change.
- Continue to think about deployment of clergy couples. Like the issue of maternity leave this is an area where there are huge differences between dioceses with regard to policies, in particular around the issues of pay and housing. Again it would be helpful if bishops could work towards issuing guidelines on best practice to be adopted across the whole of the Church of England.
- It would be especially helpful to women clergy if there was more flexibility between stipendiary and self-supporting ministry. Our understanding is that people are now selected for training on the basis that they could either be stipendiary or self supporting priests. However, there is certainly a feeling amongst many women (and older women in particular) that it is difficult to transfer from self-supporting to stipendiary ministry.

3. As the College of Bishops re-visits clause 5 (1) c

As you look again at the Measure to admit women to the Episcopate our thoughts and prayers are with you!

We are all aware that there is a wide spectrum of opinion about the way forward and this is as true amongst women priests as amongst the rest of the church. However, could we ask you our bishops to bear in mind a number of factors as you discuss this tomorrow?

- In the report from the Transformation Conference, in the section headed “The Shape of the Church and Synodical Processes”, the message to the House of Bishops was, “Please do not amend the legislation further. This would completely undermine the Church of England’s theological and ecclesiological integrity”. That message came from the conference but it also came from many other quarters before your meeting in May and you are only too aware of the strong thoughts and feelings expressed about it since.
- As things now stand, there are some women priests and lay women who are saying that unless clause 5 (1) c is removed from the Measure they will not vote for it in November.
- However, following the publication of the Next Steps document from the Standing Committee, there are others who think that a revision of that clause rather than its removal might be an acceptable way forward.
- In the light of all this we would simply ask today that as you come to a decision about Clause 5 (1) c that you hold in your minds two points:

- 1) That you choose an option which removes any words that undermine the ordained ministry of women.
- 2) That you give particular regard to our previous calls to rely as much as possible on grace, generosity, co-operation, trust and a commitment to helping each other flourish, so that, as one woman priest has put it, we can put some joy back into this process for everyone!

4. Commission Research

We commend to you the research proposal paper which you received in advance of this meeting, much of which reiterates facts brought to your attention in today's presentation. Julian Hubbard will be referring to this when he addresses you later and we call upon this College to endorse the proposal to commission some specific research regarding women in the ordained ministry.

It is important to monitor what is happening to enable the effective development and integration of women in ordained ministry at every level in the Church.

5. Set up an implementation group

Conclusion

In my introduction to this morning's presentation I said that the Transformations Conference was set up with the particular intention of celebrating the ministry of women ~ and it certainly did that. But I hope you will have seen through all the things we have shared with you this morning and from reading the report that it was also about much more than that. As its title suggests, the conference was concerned with radical change ~ in the words of the Archbishop, it was about re-imagining ministry.

So although those present were concerned with the issue of integrated women into all three orders of ordained ministry they were even more concerned with re-thinking how women and men can flourish in ministry.

Several of the speakers talked about the importance of all of us being transformed into a new humanity and the Archbishop in his concluding remarks said, "If today is indeed a celebratory event ~ and I hope some of it at least has felt like that ~ I'd like to think it's celebratory because it celebrates a commitment to humanising the priesthood."

His final remark echoed this as he encouraged the steering group to take the days work forward. He said, "Above all try to hang on to that sense, that in arguing for and working for the full inclusion of women in the ordained ministry of the

church, what we're after is not simple justice, though that's not exactly insignificant, but we're after the humanising of the ordained ministry and all that might mean in terms of mission and the health of Christ's body."

Here then was a call to transform the whole church ~ men and women, lay and ordained.

So our final call to you today is to help us to take forward the work that has begun and to set up an Implementation Group which will work in consultation with the Ministry Division, with those conducting research and with some of the women from the Transformations group, so that this time next year you can assess if real progress has been made.

Thank you for your attention this morning and we look forward to being part of your discussion groups.