

♀ OUTLOOK

Women and the Church

Affirming ♦ Challenging ♦ Transforming

Edition 37
Summer 2020



Rose Hudson-Wilkin becomes
Church's first female black bishop

From the Editor Cath Williamson



Welcome to this edition of *Outlook*, being published, as it is, in a strange and difficult time for many of us. The magazine the WATCH committee planned in January is very different to the one we have actually arrived at. Events have been cancelled and photographic opportunities disappeared. However, the work of WATCH has continued, albeit over Zoom and other remote media. In this issue, we present an update on our strategy and discuss the on-going work exploring and challenging the Five Guiding Principles. We outline the work of the Transformations Group, particularly the provision – finally - of a national maternity policy for clergy. We include photographs of priests who are women responding to the pandemic in various, creative ways. Whatever the wider circumstances, and who knows what the rest of the year will bring, we remain WATCHing to ensure that the Church of England is a fully inclusive place for women.

From the Chair Emma Percy



I am writing this report in the middle of lockdown in this very strange spring of 2020. We have not been allowed in our churches and we have had to learn new ways of worshipping. The Church Twittersphere has had heated debates about the place of our buildings, the sacraments and the role of clergy. Some of these debates have raised interesting questions about gender and space. Personally, I have missed the buildings and the music. I have found preaching into an iPad in my room a very different experience from engaging with real people. I have, however, been amazed at the dedication of so many in making worship possible. Let us hope that some of this creativity continues to shape our worship.

This last year for WATCH has been one of continuing to ensure that careful research enables us to challenge the Church on issues that particularly impact women. The November Transformations Day included research conducted by WATCH into the roles of Deans of Women’s Ministry carried out for us by Susy Brouhard. Amongst other issues, it highlighted the area of harassment and bullying and WATCH has begun to analyse diocesan provisions.

The Five Guiding Principles and the legislation around them continues to be a cause of concern for many women in the Church. I have been sitting on the central Implementation and Dialogue group which has just reported to the House of Bishops. I cannot comment any further at the moment except to say that the experience has, at times, been surreal. Here, again, there seems to be little experience of the current equality culture in the world beyond the Church. Lizzie Taylor, a member of the WATCH committee, has been working tirelessly for us in asking for Transparency. We accept that churches can discriminate against women for ‘theological’ reasons, but we do not understand why they are not upfront about the fact that they do.

On practical issues, we are still making changes to reflect that WATCH is a charity. We need to ensure that all our work connects to our objectives and that we make the best use of the income we have. We thank Mark Bennet for his work as treasurer over many years. At last, we have a new treasurer in John Briggs. Part of the change for WATCH has been moving our banking to CAF bank and we do need to move all our members over to this system. Many of you have made the change and we thank you for this. Others still need to make the move. The information you need is set out in this issue of *Outlook* and on the website.

WATCH is still needed as we work to challenge the Church to be a place where women flourish. Thank you for being part of that.



OUTLOOK
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Women And The Church

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Cath Williamson

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Front Cover: Front cover: The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover, at her consecration at St Paul’s Cathedral, London (Photo credit: Graham Lacdao / St Paul’s Cathedral). Other images used with permission



Bishop Rose preaches at her installation in Canterbury Cathedral
Photo credit: Canterbury Diocese

Bishop Rose responds with ‘yes’

By Cath Williamson

The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover, became the Church of England’s first black female bishop when she was consecrated in a service at St Paul’s Cathedral.

Bishop Rose said: “Beginning this new ministry, there is a sense of awe in it all. But also something refreshing about being open to the new things that God has in store, not just for me as a person taking on this new leadership role, but for our diocese as a whole. I’m excited: I’ve got lots of new people to meet, to get to know, and that fills me with joy.”

Bishop Rose was born and raised in Jamaica. She studied at Birmingham University and was commissioned as a Church Army evangelist in 1982. She was priested in 1994 and, after serving her title in Lichfield Diocese, worked as a priest in Hackney for sixteen years. In 2007, she was also appointed as a Chaplain to the Queen and from 2010 to 2019 she served as Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, the first woman appointed to the position. She was awarded an MBE in 2020 for ‘services to young people and to the Church’.

Welcoming Bishop Rose’s appointment, the Most Revd

Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, said: “When in October, Rose stepped down as Chaplain to the Speaker, the tributes from all sides showed her pastoral, prophetic and faith-sharing gifts. Even in times of division, she was a point of unity and hope, to those of any or no faith. Through much struggle and suffering in her life she has become one of the most exceptional of Christian leaders showing, in word and deed, confidence in Jesus Christ as life, liberty and love.”

At her installation sermon in Canterbury Cathedral, Bishop Rose said: “At the age of fourteen years, I felt God’s call on my life. At that time, there were no women in leadership roles behind the altar. We were there, though, as cleaners and tea makers and flower arrangers. But I knew I was being called and naturally responded with the kind of ‘yes’ that said: ‘I will be faithful to your call but will leave you to work out how it is going to happen. Four years later, I joined the Church Army (they had women) and sixteen years after that I was ordained as a deacon. I waited another three years for when women were first allowed to be priests. During that time there was always that hunger to share Christ with others.”

An update on the strategy for WATCH

The WATCH strategic plan has been in place for nearly two years and the various aims identified under the five overarching goals have moved forward at different paces. Some are marching on rapidly; others are following a slower and more tentative path.

By Felicity Cooke

The work on a handbook to the Five Guiding Principles (see article in this edition of *Outlook*) is throwing up some concerning issues, ranging from the way in which the principles themselves are interpreted by different groups within the Church to the behaviour meted out to ordained women by some of those who do not accept their ordination. Research on conservative evangelical churches in relation to the passing of Resolutions under the 2014 Settlement has confirmed some real issues of transparency and accountability, which are yet to be addressed. We continue to highlight issues in relation to gender balance and Church statistics. Reports and papers on these aspects of the strategic plan will be published over the coming months.

The WATCH national committee rest all our deliberations on these issues upon our Vision Statement which underpins the strategy. We remind ourselves that WATCH works to bring about the full representation of women at all levels and in all roles in the Church, and an inclusive culture in the Church which recognises and values women’s gifts, experience and insight. It is painfully clear from the strategic work undertaken over the last two years that WATCH’s vision of the Church of England ‘as a community of God’s people where, regardless of gender, justice and equality will prevail’ is far from the reality. Perhaps it is not surprising that the WATCH Values Statement remains aspirational. It is a disappointment, to put it mildly, that in 2020 we still have to affirm the right of women to be treated equitably in the Church, and to know that culture and practice in the Church is lacking in this respect. Although it is over 25 years since the first ordinations of women to the priesthood, we still have to call for the proper understanding of women’s place in the Church.

MISSION STATEMENT

WATCH exists to affirm women in the Church of England, both lay and ordained, to challenge the institution to create a culture in which women can flourish, and to transform the Church of England into a gender-just community so that women and men can work together to glorify God and God’s people.

VISION STATEMENT

WATCH has a vision of the Church of England as a community of God’s people where, regardless of gender, justice and equality prevail. WATCH believes that this vision is rooted in scripture and reflects God’s will for the whole world. WATCH works to bring about:

- The full representation of women at all levels and all roles in the Church;
- An inclusive culture in the Church which recognises and values women’s gifts, experience and insight.

It is sometimes said of the Church that it is ‘counter cultural’. What this means in practice is that the Church permits, or even affirms, attitudes and behaviours which would be condemned in the secular world. Indeed, they may be attitudes and behaviours which would be illegal because they are discriminatory.

We need to continue to ask whether such perspectives

The charitable objectives of WATCH are:

The promotion of gender equality and diversity within the Church of England as experienced by both lay and ordained people for the public benefit by:

- The elimination of discrimination on grounds of gender;
- Advancing education and raising awareness in gender equality and diversity;
- Conducting or commissioning research on equality and diversity issues and publishing the result to the public; and
- Cultivating a sentiment in favour of gender equality and diversity.

VALUES STATEMENT

WATCH

- Affirms the right of women to be treated equitably in the Church;
- Challenges the Church to develop a culture and practice in which women are treated equitably;
- Seeks to transform the understanding of women’s place in the Church.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

WATCH will:

- Act with compassion, even when angry;
- Act collaboratively, even when excluded;
- Use an evidence-based approach to pursue our goals.

are right or justified in any way. The exemptions from the 2010 Equality Act allowed by the Church are seemingly stretched almost to breaking point, in a number of areas, not least that of sex equality. This ought to be a matter of real concern to the Church. It certainly is to WATCH.

The ultimate success of an organisation like WATCH is that it no longer needs to exist. Sadly, that is not yet true,

and for as long as this is the case WATCH will pursue its strategic aims with energy, determination and faith.

Building upon these foundations there are five strategies for WATCH. The short-terms goals for each strategy are included below:

1

To work for transparency and accountability in relation to gender in all areas of Church life.

- a. Continue to publish statistics, and ensure publications are branded and acknowledged
- b. Contribute to the Faith in Research conference
- c. Draw together a small group to gather and analyse evidence of conservative evangelical activity which militates against transparency and accountability

2

To critique the Five Guiding Principles (5GPs), in order to understand how they do and do not work.

- a. Maintain membership of the Implementation and Dialogue Group
- b. Draw together a small group to gather and analyse material on the 5GPs, in order to develop a user-friendly guide based on the original purposes intended for the principles

3

To broaden our membership, both lay and ordained, through engagement and providing resource.

- a. Complete the signing up by members to the new system
- b. Survey members about their needs and offerings

4

To promote and encourage liturgy, theology and general language of the church which recognises and affirms that women are made in the image of God.

- a. Produce a guide to gender neutral language.
- b. Develop simple liturgies using explicitly female language and imagery

5

To devise and implement a communications strategy.

In 2019, the first anthology of sacred music by women composers was published. It was clear from the moment of its inception that this was not going to be an easy task.

By Louise Stewart

In 2017, my good friend, composer, and teacher Olivia Sparkhall and I discussed the possibility of organising a service to celebrate International Women's Day. We suggested that all of the texts and music within the service should be authored and composed by women. With the support and involvement of the Revd Wendy Cooper of St Thomas's Church, Salisbury, we began to research and create the shape and content of the service.

As experienced Church musicians and teachers, we looked to the usual channels to find suitable music resources composed by women. We scoured our own libraries of anthems and hymn books and those at our local churches to find suitable music in quantity from which to choose. But it was not there. We were not looking for tokenistic representation of women, but relevant, informed, serious works equal to the purpose, theme and value of the service. We could have found such resources composed by men within minutes, but where were the women? Where were the role models for the girls' choir which would lead the music of the service? Where was the music to represent the women in the pews, in the choir-stalls, among the clergy? Most of the standard anthologies used by choirs in our Anglican churches and cathedrals contained little, or no, music by women composers.

Olivia and I considered our own educations and teaching careers and the progress which had been made in recent years in the field of secular music. We realised that there was a gaping hole where women's sacred music compositions should be sitting on our choir shelves. Why had this not been addressed before now?

I began to talk with clergy and church musician friends around the country, but these conversations raised more questions than answers. Several clergy I spoke with, both men and women, had never questioned the identity of the composer of the works sung by their choirs. They assumed that their choirs were presenting a fair and equal representation of repertoire within worship. Some had considered the issue but had been assured by their directors of music that sacred music by women, on a par with men's music, did not exist. One clergyman was openly hostile and expressed his firm opinion that women could not compose as well as men. Some, like

the Revd Canon Jeremy Davies, the liturgical advisor on our Anthology team, were immediately enthusiastic, giving our work their blessing, support and, most importantly, their understanding. That understanding is shared by several bishops who have endorsed our work, including the Rt Revd Karen Gorham, Bishop of Sherborne, who preached for us at our International Women's Day service in 2019.

Directors of music gave me similarly wide answers. Some, like Richard Pinel of Jesus College, Cambridge, Andrew Nethsingha of St John's College, Cambridge, and Sarah MacDonald of Ely Cathedral and Selwyn College, Cambridge, were years ahead of us and had already commissioned and embedded wide-ranging repertoire by women composers within their services. Some were interested, but cautious: 'What if the congregation doesn't like music by women?' one director nervously replied. Many had never considered gender an issue for discussion.



The Choir of St Martin's, Epsom, using the women's anthology. Helen Williams, a composer included in the book, is pictured front row, left, nearest the altar.

It became very clear that the barrier to education and progress in this area was the lack of ready-access to resources. I approached various significant publishers with the idea of the Anthology. Several were intrigued, surprised and supportive, but none felt able to commit to the project. Having already approached and privately commissioned several women composers for our, by then, annual International Women's



Louise Stewart (left) and Olivia Sparkhall (composer and MoV team leader) with Volume 1

Day service, we broadened our own knowledge, using our own professional network and social media channels. The overwhelming response from the composers themselves was that it was possible. A few composers, such as Judith Bingham and Cecilia McDowall, had already found success in the professional circles of our cathedral and university college choirs. Others, including teachers composing mainly for their own pupils, had never considered the possibility of being published.

It was necessary to establish a formalised organisation and, to this end, I founded Multitude of Voyces (MOV), a registered, not-for-profit company, of which I am director. It was clear from the start that funding would be hard to come by and indeed it was. Sponsorship was generously given by those keen to support our initiative, but a significant private loan has been necessary to make the Anthology a reality. A combination of paid and voluntary hours by a committed team expert in church music and associated fields, has been essential to the development and success of the project. The modest price of the volumes, to make them affordable, is only possible because there are no staff wages to pay, and no business premises to rent or upkeep. Our small team began to research not just those names already known to us, but those who had no expectation of being published, those studying composition at university, and those historically overlooked both through accident and design.

These women would be presented together, in number, in a way which they had never been before. Beautiful

artwork was created by Caroline Grint to ensure that the books could sit confidently alongside those publications by our major publishing houses. To those who wish to interpret it in this way, the cover, when open, represents Mary, or any other woman, looking towards the cross. Our first volume, 'SATB Anthems', was published in November 2019 with the first print run of 1500 copies sold within weeks.

Our second volume, 'Upper Voices Anthems', was launched in April 2020 at a very difficult time for all involved in church and church music. We took great pride and delight in working with the National Youth Choir of Scotland, a secular organisation already dedicated to gender equality, and we look forward to the rescheduling of the launch concert in the future. A set of liturgical works, and a volume of Advent/Christmas/Epiphany music, are currently being prepared for publication before the end of 2020. Across these first four volumes, more than seventy women composers will be represented, spanning 1000 years of Christian music.

The inclusion of women writers and poets within our volumes continues to be a focus. Will 2021 be the year when women's music will be included in every service in our churches, colleges and cathedrals? It certainly could be!

Further information, including how to order the books, can be found at:
www.multitudeofvoyces.co.uk

The ongoing work of the Transformations Steering Group

By Emma Percy

In the late spring of 1996, a large picture of me appeared in the *Church Times* under the headline 'The Church Expectant'. I was about seven months pregnant with my second child. The article explored issues around maternity leave for clergy and the difficulties of finding clerical maternity wear. That child is now a twenty three year-old, earning his own living.

Clergy wear for women, including maternity wear, has come on leaps and bounds since I had my children. Appropriate maternity leave has been a much more complex issue. My children were born before Common Tenure, and I was the first person to utilise maternity policies in St. Alban's and Ely Dioceses. They were modelled on civil service policies and were generous. Over the last twenty three years, some clergy have had good experiences of maternity leave, while others have found that they have fallen through gaps in provision. As each diocese has been responsible for its own policy, it has been very hard for prospective clergy to understand what might be offered. Even where dioceses have good provisions, these have often been hard to find in advance for those wanting to consider their options without drawing attention to themselves.

Since the Transformations Steering Group first began to meet, the maternity issue has been on our agenda. Research has been carried out. There have been endless meetings at different levels of the Church and a constant determination to keep the topic on everyone's agenda. So it was with a real sense of triumph that we greeted the national guidelines on family friendly policies www.churchofengland.org/more/clergy-resources/

national-clergy-hr/family-friendly-policies. They provide minimum levels of support across the dioceses and in all circumstances. They address the gaps, i.e. ordinands coming to the end of their training. They also acknowledge that clergy women who have children are a positive asset to the Church and not a problem.

What we have learnt through this experience as the Transformations Steering Group, is that sometimes things take time but persistence and good clear presentation of the facts pay dividends. We hope to continue to utilise this way of working.

The Steering Group continues to work with Ministry Division through the Transformations Research and Implementation Group (TRIG). It is our role to raise issues that specifically impact on women clergy. Therefore, we ask for issues like clergy wellbeing, harassment and bullying policies and appointment processes to be looked at with a gendered lens. It has been good over the last year to have the Rt Revd Ruth Worsley, Bishop of Taunton, as the chair.

The Steering Group continues to focus on younger women coming into training and asking whether focused vocation events help to increase the numbers. We are also asking questions around women leading larger churches and whether implicit bias training is being used for all appointments. The day held in November at Lambeth (*Outlook* article) raised important questions about how best practice is shared between dioceses. It reminded us how far we have come and yet highlighted the work that is still needed to make it more likely that ordained women will flourish in all dioceses and at all levels of ministry.

The Transformations Steering Group was established in 2010 in response to the slow progress of women bishops' legislation through General Synod. The then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, invited a group of women to organise a conference exploring the issues. Since then, the steering group has continued to meet quarterly at Lambeth Palace to identify and address issues impacting on women clergy and to report back to the College of Bishops. The group includes representatives from the National Association of Diocesan Advisers in Women's Ministry, BDARC (Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons and Residentiary Canons) and AWESOME, a network of evangelical women clergy. Key areas of work include: a national maternity leave policy and more flexible working, young women and vocations and the roll out of unconscious bias training. Sub groups include a research group and one for vocational ministerial pathways.

It's one thing to change the law, it's another to change the culture

By Cath Williamson

A consultation day looking at the experience of clergy women twenty five years after the first ordinations to the priesthood was held at Lambeth Palace in November. The event was organised by the Transformations Steering Group and was attended by about a hundred people, among them Deans of Women's Ministry from around the country and about thirty bishops. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Most Revd Justin Welby, attended for part of the day and presided at the eucharist. The day aimed both to understand current experience and to identify priorities, moving forwards.

The day began with Emma Percy, Chair of WATCH, discussing September 2019 Church statistics which reveal that less than a third of clergy are women (29%) and less than a quarter are in stipendiary roles. Current projections predict the total figure rising to only 36% in the next ten years. The distribution of women at incumbent level varies significantly between dioceses. Ely is the highest at 41%, and it is telling that the diocese is one of the few dioceses to have a strategy to recruit more women clergy. Archbishop Welby said that purposeful approaches for all dioceses were key to redress the balance.

Emma urged that the Church needed to understand these figures and to implement strategies for increasing the proportion of clergy who are women. She said that there was a strong missional need for this with figures in the UK and the US revealing a significant fall in women under the age of forty now attending church. Recent research* in the US shows that girls and women benefit from female religious role models. Women in congregations with female leaders or equal numbers of male and female leaders have significantly increased religious involvement, self esteem and spirituality. Men have similar levels regardless of the gender of the church leaders. Therefore, the best for both women and men is a church with a mix of male and female lay and ordained leaders and a pulpit open to both.

In the afternoon, participants were invited to attend one of four discussion workshops on the themes of: Ministerial Pathways, the Five Guiding Principles, Mainstreaming and Harassment. I facilitated the 'Mainstreaming' workshop which discussed how we balance that women in ministry is 'normal' whilst still addressing the very real issues of inequality. There was a deep feeling amongst some women that their ministry is still not seen as 'normal'. They spoke powerfully of the pain of the day-in, day-out experience of having to defend their vocation. A participant said that the first question from many women applying for a senior post in her diocese had been how

accepting that diocese was of women's ministry. Some said that no senior clergy in their diocese were women and it was not unusual for others to be the only ordained woman at deanery and other events. Key points made were that the Church has a male culture that clergy who are women are expected to fit into. Participants felt that it was key to first acknowledge this male culture and then to look at changing it to make the Church a better place for all clergy, men and women.

Unsurprisingly, the most popular workshop was that discussing the Five Guiding Principles and their working - or not working - in practice. The discussion group felt that the Principles were being used in ways that were not originally intended and it was crucial to 'call out' misogyny where it could exist under a layer of theology. Some felt that the term 'mutual flourishing' had become a weaponised phrase and the aim should, rather, be for the highest possible level of communion. It was recognised that the Principles are under review but that this work was taking time.

All the women clergy attending the Harassment Workshop had experienced bullying and sexual harassment from fellow clergy and from parishioners. Shockingly, the feeling was that such harassment was ubiquitous within the Church but that very few dioceses have adequate policies or formal strategies to address it. Rather than leading an as exemplar, the Church is way behind secular public institutions in this regard. As discussed in a further article in *Outlook*, this is an issue that Transformations is seeking to explore.

Despite the often painful experiences discussed, the day was a very positive and open one and there was a real desire to name and to address issues. It was heartening that so many bishops were in attendance and able to speak openly about the situation in their dioceses. The themes from the day will be compiled in a report to the College of Bishops and will also serve to give further focus and impetus to the work of the Transformations Group.

* **She Preached the Word, Knoll and Bolin, Oxford University Press 2018**



The Transformations Steering Group is evaluating Church guidelines for addressing bullying and harassment

By Cath Williamson

A new workstream for the Transformations Steering Group is a review of diocesan and national guidelines on bullying and harassment. As reported in this issue of *Outlook*, bullying and harassment of women clergy from peers and parishioners is far from uncommon. Indeed, some attendees at the Lambeth Transformations event felt that such harassment was ubiquitous within the Church but that very few dioceses have adequate policies or formal strategies to address it. Clearly, this is an issue requiring fuller evidence and exploration. However, it does seem that the Church is behind secular public institutions in terms of its culture and policies in this regard.

WATCH has completed a survey of dioceses to inform the review. The main findings are:

The majority of dioceses rely on the 2008 Dignity at Work document. Some use it in its entirety, others as the basis for their own policy. This guidance was compiled by the Deployment, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee. It states that bullying and harassment in the Church is rare, but offers advice to deal with any cases that occur. It includes a model Dignity at Work Policy which dioceses can either adopt or use as the basis for developing their own procedures. However, since 2008, equality legislation has changed. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. Thus, Church policy needs to be updated to take account of the changed legal position.

It can be unclear who one turns to if experiencing bullying and harassment: The Dignity at Work document recommended that dioceses train 'harassment

advisers' who would be available to any member of the clergy or laity to offer advice and information. These advisers would also be able to channel complaints and, if suitably trained, be able to negotiate or mediate between the parties concerned. The WATCH survey found that only eight dioceses of those who responded had harassment advisers, or similar. Often, the first point of contact is recommended as an archdeacon. Transformations considers that a national network of harassment officers, in combination with harassment training, is, therefore, still needed. This would also, hopefully, serve to inform the actual culture of each diocese in relation to bullying and harassment.

Dioceses' bullying and harassment policies tend to focus on the informal ways that complainants can seek redress. There are often few clear procedures for people to be able to apply the policy, particularly at the formal stage.

Worryingly, **some dioceses address bullying and harassment under safeguarding**, when these issues should be treated very distinctly. In the case of women, they are not 'vulnerable' adults unless there are other, specific, factors involved.

There are examples of good practice. Norwich, for example, has a Dignity in Ministry policy (2016) written in reference to the Equality Act (2010). It includes detailed discussion on power and the abuse of power, generally and in the Church. It includes information on the manifestation and effects of bullying and harassment, and offers detailed procedures, formal and informal, for the victims.

The review is being taken forwards by a sub group of Transformations, the Research and Implementation Group (TRIG).

The Revd Kat Campion-Spall, Associate Vicar of St Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol, had a sabbatical earlier this year, experiencing the Church in New Zealand. She reflects on the experience:

Earlier this year, I was privileged to spend three months in New Zealand with my family, based mainly at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Auckland. The hope for our time there was to experience everyday life somewhere different but that was similar enough to settle in fairly quickly.

This was the first time I had been to New Zealand. I had long admired the snippets of the New Zealand Prayer Book that I had seen, often held up as a model of inclusive liturgy. And, of course, the province was among the first in the Anglican Communion to ordain women as priests and the first to elect a woman as a diocesan bishop. I was looking forward to experiencing ministry in a country which had a much longer and more affirming history of women's ordination than the Church of England.

In my time in Auckland, I worked closely with two women clergy: the dean and the curate at the cathedral. Three out of eight deans in New Zealand are women, and the current Dean of Auckland, the Very Revd Anne Mills, is the second woman to be dean there (her predecessor, Jo Kelly-Moore, is now Archdeacon of Canterbury in the UK).

Since the first woman bishop was elected in New Zealand in 1989, there has been at least one female bishop most of the time, although the overlaps where there have been two have been fairly short. With a small College of Bishops (about ten in tikanga Pakeha, the European heritage strand of the church), one person makes up a much bigger proportion than it would in the Church of England. But one woman in the room is still only one woman in the room, and I sensed from people whom I spoke to that it is yet to feel like there is a critical mass of women in the episcopate. Bishops are elected by diocesan synods (which are bigger than here, with representatives from every parish) and so there are a huge number of competing priorities, expectations and perspectives. There are no legal provisions for alternative episcopal oversight in New Zealand and all three orders of ministry were opened to women at the same time. However, I was told that there are still pockets of conservatism and definitely areas where women clergy feel more welcome and supported than others. I was probably more disappointed than surprised to learn that a lot of the discrimination faced by women in the New Zealand Church is just the same as in England.

However, there is a deep and structural commitment to cultural diversity in the Church, and my sense was of an institution that acknowledged historic injustices and was committed to healing and to reconciliation. The bilingual liturgy is very powerful, and the structure of the church is fascinating. The tikanga Maori (Maori cultural strand) elected its first woman bishop last year which is cause for huge celebration. My experience was of a Church

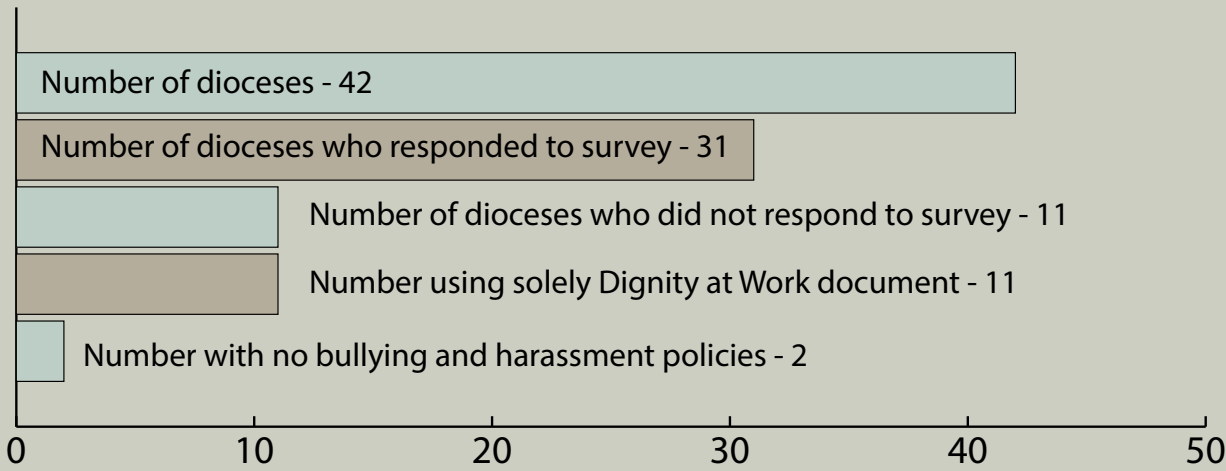
committed to taking the time and energy to foster and celebrate diversity and to make space for being together in ways that honoured each other. Although I was not there long enough to explore this, I would like to hope that the practice and attitude of fostering cultural diversity has an impact on how other kinds of difference are nurtured.

I found the bilingual liturgy refreshing, gently liberating and spacious. A non-gendered trinitarian blessing is a standard option in the prayer book. The language for God is far more expansive and creative than Common Worship, and collects are a perfect example. Almost all of the Common Worship collects seem to start 'Almighty God...' whereas a quick skim through the 'A New Zealand Prayer Book' collects give us: 'God of mercy,' 'God of peace,' 'God, you are the first light,' 'Eternal God,' 'Living God,' 'Holy God,' 'Trinity of love,' 'God our friend'. Little things have a big impact, and I had not expected to be so affected by small differences in familiar responses that avoid referring to God as 'him'.

A joyful memory to finish with. The custom on Ash Wednesday is to have ecumenical services of ashing. This year, the Anglican Bishop and cathedral clergy were invited to the Roman Catholic cathedral to share in leading the service. I was welcomed as one of the cathedral clergy and as an overseas guest with an enthusiastic round of applause. All the clergy were invited to impose ashes, and I was placed with the Revd Sarah West, cathedral curate. As we stood there, as a pair, with a long line of people snaking towards us to receive their ashes, it struck me that as two women in our priestly vestments in the Roman Catholic cathedral, we must have made quite an impression. But what most made an impression on me was the joy with which we were approached by many, particularly women, for whom we must have been a sign of hope in what God can make possible.



Main themes



The Revd Anne Stevens, Coordinator of the WATCH General Synod Group, offers her reflections:

This has been a relatively quiet year for WATCH members on General Synod as much of WATCH's contribution to the national Church continues to be made behind the scenes through the work of the Transformations Group.

In both York (July 2019) and London (February 2020), the discussion at our General Synod WATCH meetings centred around the work of the Implementation and Dialogue Group (IDG) on the 5 Guiding Principles. Following this, a number of WATCH members attended the fringe meetings organised by the IDG and spoke about their experiences.

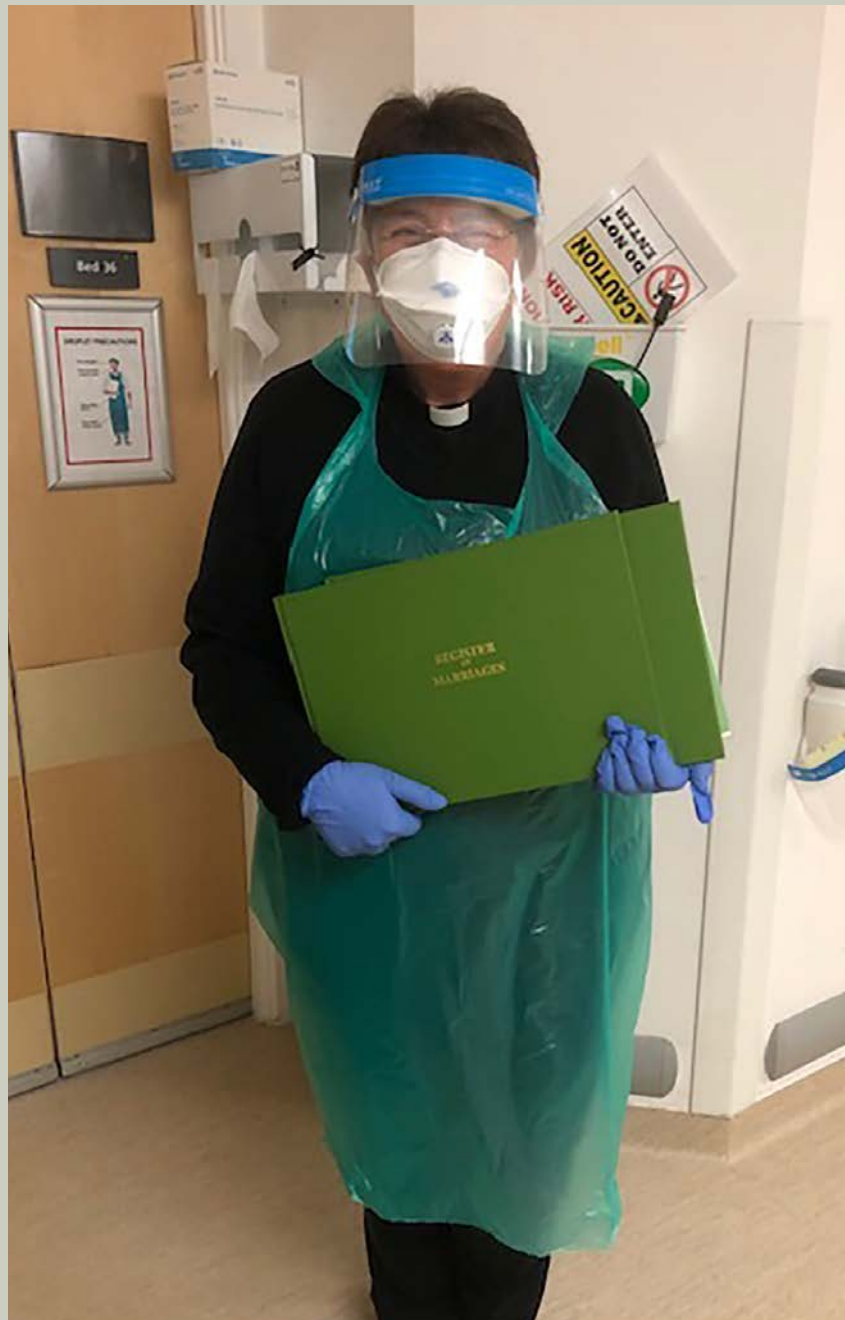
Our annual report on the Developments in Women's Ministry continues to be warmly received by Synod members in all three houses.

WATCH members submitted a number of written questions about matters relating to women in the Church:

- As part of the annual ministry statistics exercise, can dioceses be asked to supply data on how many women and how many men are leading new worshipping communities?
- Why was the Society of St Wilfrid & St Hilda awarded £140,100 of Strategic Capacity Funding in October 2019 when such awards are usually reserved for dioceses?
- When will the Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure be included in the laws of Jersey and Guernsey?
- What steps is the Ministry Division taking to address the shortfall of women staff (especially at the most senior level) in the Church of England's Theological Education Institutions?

During lockdown, Anne Stevens, Vicar of St Pancras, conducted a marriage at University College Hospital in London.

She explained: "This was an emergency marriage on medical grounds as the groom only had a few days to live. In cases like this, a Special Licence can be granted very quickly. I took the service as UCH is in our parish and the hospital chaplain is a lay minister. Unlike most marriages, this was about closure rather than new beginnings, as the couple had originally married each other 35 years ago and later divorced. After a while, the awkwardness of the protective equipment faded away. What I'll remember most is the love and commitment that was there in the room, not only in the couple and their daughter, but in the nurses who came to celebrate with them."



WATCH has continued to highlight concern about the lack of transparency over the exclusion of women from leadership positions in conservative evangelical churches. Hannah Fytche outlines her personal experience and the effects of this lack of openness:



In 2016, six months into my first year of university, I was in a conversation with a friend. We had just listened

to a male guest speaker at a church event explain his view of the 'equal but different' roles of men and women. I was a little frustrated but not surprised. I knew before I joined this church that its leadership held this position, and I had chosen to worship there whilst respectfully disagreeing with their theological position on gender roles. My friend, however, had never heard that the church's leadership endorsed and implemented this theology. With no small hint of sorrow, she said: "I will have to learn to be quiet in church". She felt silenced.

The difference between my friend and I lay in the knowledge to which we each had access. I knew the content of this church's particular theology. I was thus able to position myself within the community in a way that allowed both respectful disagreement and commitment to joyful belonging. I felt confident and safe, both in distancing myself when needed and in conversing with church leaders about this issue when fruitful. I knew what I thought and I knew what the church thought. Between us there was transparency.

My friend did not have the benefit of transparency. Our church had not actively communicated its leadership's theology regarding gender and gender roles to the students committing themselves to belonging and serving there. Many of them only became aware of it eight months into attending, through a sermon preached on 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

Moreover, in that first year, the church did not explain (aside from on one, not clearly signposted, webpage) that their leadership's theology of gender had led them to request the extended episcopal oversight of the Rt Revd Rod Thomas, Bishop of Maidstone. The passing of a Resolution by the PCC to signify a theological commitment to male headship is a governance decision of which all church members should be aware.

Meanwhile, the church continued to offer discipleship and teaching to its members based on their leadership's theology of gender. Towards the end of my time there, male students received an email to offer them training on how to preach. Simultaneously, as I remember it, female students received an offer of training in how to run children's and schools' groups.

Is it fair to guide people's personal faith and development of their God-given gifts in accordance with a theological commitment and governance of which they may have no knowledge, and with which, given knowledge of it, they may disagree? It is unfair, and people can feel silenced or unsafe, when opacity rather than transparency prevails.

In the summer of 2018, Lizzie Taylor, in an article in this magazine, urged churches to work towards this essential transparency. In an article in the *Church Times* in January 2019, Bishop Rod stated that parishes in his care might consider including on their websites that their PCC had 'sent in a letter of request for arrangements to be made under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the ministry of Bishops and Priests'. In March 2020, the Cambridge Churches Women's Equality Network (CCWEN) undertook a study of the websites of the 144 churches listed by Bishop Rod as having passed a Resolution. This research found that of these, only eight had made clear that their leadership had passed a Resolution and/or that women's roles in church ministry and leadership were limited because of it.

In the summer of 2020, how can it be the case that many churches are still opaque on this issue? Transparency fosters safe spaces for discussion and mutual flourishing, including the discernment and development of gifts and vocation. Transparency allows understanding to be cultivated and provides space for rigorous, constructive theological discussions to happen.

We need transparency so that every person can have a voice in the conversation and can be empowered to use their strengths to build up the Church. Let us keep striving for a unified Church within which those who disagree can disagree openly, safely and respectfully, and so grow mutually to flourish in Christ.

The Five Guiding Principles: a source of healing or a wound?

By Rosalind Rutherford

The ‘Five Guiding Principles’ became part of the structure and culture of the Church of England in July 2014. They are claimed as the way in which the Church is able to bridge unbridgeable gaps in theology and practice. Ordinands and others have to ‘affirm’ them but, six years on, where the Principles came from and what their original purpose was, is unknown by most of those who come across them. It is not uncommon to hear: ‘you have to act like this because of the Five Guiding Principles’, although, if pushed, there is usually no clear link between the expectation and what the five statements say.

WATCH is currently writing a guide which will include information on how the principles came about, highlight the points of contradiction within them, explore how different groups have interpreted them and consider what the experience of women is since they became part of legislation. It will also suggest ways that discussion might be focused in order to achieve the greatest degree of communion rather than just security for those who still do not accept ordained women. The guide will also attempt to clarify what the Declaration does and does not say. In the process of writing the booklet, WATCH has discovered how many layers there are in the theology and practice of the Principles. So much so, that the planned short leaflet is rapidly becoming a booklet. In particular, WATCH wants to remind all those who wish to see a Church and ministry fully open to all, that the aspiration to work for ‘the highest possible degree of communion’ should be how the application of the Five Guiding principles is tested.

The History of the Five Guiding Principles

The history of the Principles began in November 2012, following the collapse of the legislation to enable women to become bishops and the chorus of anguish and anger within the Church and wider society that followed. The Archbishop of Canterbury asked David Porter, who worked as part of the Ministry of Reconciliation Team at Coventry Cathedral, to find a way of enabling the divided General Synod members to find a way forward.

The Principles were created by a small working group between February and May 2013, as a starting point for developing legislation that would have a chance of being passed by General Synod. This inevitably led to contradictions because the principles needed to both affirm that the Church had made a clear decision that women could be priests and bishops, but to also enable those not able to accept the ruling to continue to minister formally.

The other innovation at General Synod in July 2013 was the use of small groups led by trained facilitators, which enabled everyone to speak of their feelings, their hopes and their hurts. This led to more emphasis on relationships

and new ways of working with each based on trust, respect and transparency. Synod members were relieved that they had moved on from the impasse of the previous year. They valued the atmosphere of mutual respect which had started to develop and the Principles were seen as part of this change.

Partly in response to this, the five statements became embedded in the legislation itself as a reminder of the spirit in which the Declaration was drawn up. It is worth noting that the bulk of the drafting, debate and time went into protecting those who did not believe that women could be ordained priests. There was nothing that stated how women might develop fully in their ministry or to ensuring that congregations who wanted a woman as a priest were given any means of challenging a decision preventing this.

Although the outcome, as expressed in Guiding Principle 5, is “the greatest degree of communion possible”, there was nothing discussed on how this might be achieved. Nor was there the opportunity to challenge unthinking perspective, when many people continued to speak and think of women as a pressure group in the Church whose views needed to be balanced by the views of organisations such as Forward in Faith and Reform.

WATCH’s Response

WATCH and others who had been campaigning to enable women to be appointed as bishops saw that the Declaration and Five Guiding Principles were contradictory and could still lead to discrimination. We also recognised that if everyone was committed to finding new ways of working together, it was important to find ways of creating new relationships in the Church. In an article in *Outlook* in 2015, Hilary Cotton, the then Chair, said that:

“What is the task of WATCH supporters at this point? To imagine what a church in which women fully flourished would look and feel like, and to convey that to those involved in discussions where the Principles are invoked.”

Hilary predicted that:

“.... women will be diminished by a generosity that comes from a requirement to compromise rather than by offering a gift to those who hold opposing views. What will follow from such a lack of authenticity is a Church that is diminished, and a Church that has preserved a form of unity that is sick at its heart.”

Six years on, although the House of Bishops’ Declaration offers processes for parishes that wish to avoid the ministry of ordained women, the sad reality is, the Five Guiding Principles have not led to deeper relationship between those who fundamentally disagree.

The Five Guiding Principles

1. The Church of England is fully and unequivocally committed to all orders of ministry being open equally to all, without reference to gender, and holds that those whom it has duly ordained and appointed to office are true and lawful holders of the office which they occupy and thus deserve due respect and canonical obedience;
2. Anyone who ministers within the Church of England must be prepared to acknowledge that the Church of England has reached a clear decision on the matter;
3. The Church of England acknowledges that its own clear decision on ministry and gender is set within a broader process of discernment within the Anglican Communion and the whole Church of God;
4. Since those within the Church of England who, on grounds of theological conviction, are unable to receive the ministry of women bishops or priests continue to be within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican Communion, the Church of England remains committed to enabling them to flourish within its life and structures; and
5. Pastoral and sacramental provision for the minority within the Church of England will be made without specifying a limit of time and in a way that maintains the highest possible degree of communion and contributes to mutual flourishing across the whole Church of England.

Bishop Philip North

The nomination of Bishop Philip North to the See of Sheffield in 2017 put renewed focus on the inadequacy of the Five Guiding Principles. The questions that this appointment provoked, and Bishop Philip’s resignation a few weeks later, demonstrated that the Principles could not, by their mere existence, resolve the deep contradictions. Following the resignation of Bishop Philip, the House of Bishops appointed a small, balanced group to look at the implementation of the Five Guiding principles in more depth, which has just reported to the House of Bishops.

Increasing concerns

WATCH became aware that there was a continuing, or even growing, undercurrent of unease, frustration, pain and anger, particularly among ordained women, whenever the Five Guiding Principles or the phrase ‘mutual flourishing’ was invoked. However, in common with so many examples of discrimination and harassment, these feelings remained suppressed. Many women feel that it is their fault for not being gracious enough, and it’s their responsibility to put up with these feelings, understanding this as how the Five Guiding Principles says they should behave. Research by Dr Gabrielle Thomas¹, published in 2019, based on conversations with women from different denominations, named ‘mutual flourishing’ as a live wound in the Church of England.

WATCH also began to be contacted by parishes where a significant majority of church members wanted to be able to welcome ordained women, but either senior staff in the diocese or small groups on the PCC prevented them, including passing Resolutions to achieve this. Ordained women continue to be put down in a variety of ways in some areas, from refusals to invite them to robe at the licensing of some clergy, or conspicuously refusing to acknowledge them at a meeting or social gathering. We are aware of a training institution, considered supportive of women, which used material produced by Forward in Faith as its only resource when teaching on gender in the Church of England.

Resources

Last year, a set of resources called Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together was created as part of the ‘Living in Love and Faith’ project. These principles define six ‘pervading evils’: prejudice, silence, ignorance, fear, hypocrisy and power. It might be helpful to use the questions and suggestions in these resources to address some of the continuing pain that surrounds the ways the Five Guiding Principles are sometimes used.

As discussed, WATCH is also in the process of producing a guide to the Five Principles. Once it is published, we would be very interested to hear from others how useful it is (or not) and how the resource we offer could be improved or made more helpful. We hope that it will make it possible to better ask questions about whether the Five Guiding Principles are being used to enable the greatest degree of communion possible or for something else entirely.

¹ ‘Mutual Flourishing’ in the Church of England: Learning from St Thomas Aquinas Gabrielle Thomas Ecclesiology 15 (2019) 302-321

The latest Church statistics reveal a continuing mixed picture in terms of women’s ministry equality

By Rosalind Rutherford

In 2000, WATCH published the first of the Furlong Tables comparing the visibility and role of women in different dioceses. WATCH has been collecting data on women in ministry in the Church of England since then. From 2012, the research department of the Church of England has included gender in all its data. WATCH has published its own analysis of these figures and has then used the results to highlight the questions we think are important for showing how far the Church is (or is not) moving towards gender parity amongst its clergy.

Our most recent report was published in February 2020. It can be found on the website here: [womenandthechurch.org/resources/a-report-on-the-developments-in-womens-ministry-in-2019/](https://www.womenandthechurch.org/resources/a-report-on-the-developments-in-womens-ministry-in-2019/)

The good news is that the figures show an increase in numbers of women among senior clergy and in the proportion of stipendiary parish clergy across the Church of England. At the moment, only 14 dioceses (including Europe and Sodor and Man) have no women among their bishops, although there are still only five diocesan bishops who are female, and no woman has been appointed as a diocesan bishop since December 2018 (the Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover, appointed in 2019, is ex-officio a member of the House of Bishops). Only five dioceses have no women among ex-officio senior staff (bishops, archdeacons and cathedral deans).

For parishes, the news is still mixed. Ely is still the diocese with the highest proportion of stipendiary clergy who are female, although the proportion (between 41% and 43%) has remained static since 2012. At the other end of the table, no mainland diocese has under 15% of stipendiary parish clergy who are women (Blackburn and Chichester both had this proportion at the end of 2018). Although this is still a very low figure, it is an improvement on the 6% in Chichester in 2012. Whilst the average proportion of stipendiary clergy who are women is increasing, it is more of a concern that, in some dioceses, the figure has remained much the same since 2012, for example, Rochester, Carlisle and Exeter. Others, such as Southwark, have made only limited increases in the proportion of stipendiary women clergy in parish ministry.

One important question to ask is whether bishops and diocesan senior staff are using this data as part of any auditing of how open their diocese is, in practice, for women, and if they are developing strategies to increase the number of women appointed to stipendiary roles. Data is only as valuable as the way it is used. There are several other significant questions which cannot be answered from the data published by the research and statistics department.

One of these questions is the way in which the age and

gender of ordinands correlates with how they are trained and the sort of roles that candidates are selected for at BAPs. A press release from Church House last summer stated that half of new ordinands were women (true). What was not said, was that 60% of those ordinands were over the age of 40. They would, thus, find it harder to access residential training, if this was what would work best for them, and more of them are likely to be ordained into an SSM title post. This issue was discussed in greater depth in an article posted on the WATCH website in March.

[womenandthechurch.org/features/women-in-ministry-the-church-of-england-and-statistics-a-closer-look/](https://www.womenandthechurch.org/features/women-in-ministry-the-church-of-england-and-statistics-a-closer-look/)

Linked to this issue, is a need for more detailed information about how many licensed SSM clergy are House for Duty, or are parish clergy with a commitment to offering a similar number of hours as a House for Duty minister. The statistics we have on the age and gender of ordained clergy support what we know anecdotally: that more women are SSM clergy from ordination onwards, often because they are ordained later in life, and so the Church does not consider them for stipendiary ministry. The data we have also indicates that more women are working in rural ministry, where it is more common for SSM clergy to maintain the ministry in many small parishes.

Differences between dioceses also raise the question of whether some dioceses are still working with a culture

Ordained women in senior leadership roles in dioceses

By December 2019, 22 dioceses had at least one woman among their bishops. Only two dioceses had more than one woman among their bishops. Some 27% of suffragan bishops and 12.5% of diocesan bishops are women.

There are still 16 dioceses without women among their archdeacons, although at least three of these currently have a vacancy for an archdeacon. Five dioceses have no women at all among their “ex officio” senior clergy: bishops, archdeacons and cathedral dean.

that assumes ordained women do not want to take on stipendiary ministry, or that family circumstances will prevent this, without asking or testing this assumption. Central data is based on the payroll and so data on SSM clergy does not provide this information. Dioceses will have the figures, even if not collected, and synod members, Advisers (or Deans) for Women’s Ministry and others might decide that getting access to this

information would help in challenging any diocesan culture that seems to undervalue women’s ministry.

Another area which is significant when considering the development of clergy, but where there is lack of useful information, is the number of women who are Team Rectors or leaders of large churches. Central statistics of stipendiary clergy give the numbers of incumbents, and the numbers of incumbent-status clergy, but nothing beyond this. In the group of incumbents, only two dioceses have more women than men and in many there are significantly fewer women. Encouraging women to take this sort of responsibility is something we would expect to see dioceses actively planning for. However, the lack of data indicates that it is another area of ministry in which the effect of gender is overlooked.

Linked to this is the lack of any recorded data on the gender of training incumbents, whose role in training

Readers/LLMs.

The majority of Readers/LLMs are licensed after the age of 40. In this, they follow the pattern of ordained women. It is noticeable that between the ages of 40 and 70, the proportion of women LLMs is higher than that of men – a pattern similar to that of female SSMs.

curates is significant. Besides the relationship between training incumbent and curate, the role model of including women as an equal proportion of training incumbents is important in creating a culture of a Church where men and women share equally in ministry of all kinds.

This is all data that dioceses need to collect as there is no means for the central research department being able to do this without the information coming from dioceses. It is quite possible that some dioceses do collect, and even report on this data, but it would be more useful if such data could be published for the whole Church. This would indicate which dioceses are being more successful in encouraging women. This could then lead to the sharing good practice.

Another area where more data is needed is that of black, Asian and minority ethnic clergy (BAME) and, in particular, the gender of these clergy. The research department now publishes data on the number of BAME clergy, but this data is not separated into male and female. It is essential to have this information to ensure that someone who is black and female is not suffering double discrimination.

One of the reasons for this lack of consistent useful and comparative data is that the dioceses are the bodies responsible for decisions on strategy and medium term objectives (which could include actions to increase gender equality and the visibility and flourishing of women). However, few seem to have consistent plans, some are not actively concerned about gender equality and many do not collect this data in usable forms or in

ways which can be used to compare one diocese with another to see what sorts of actions have an effect. For many dioceses, improving the visibility and range of roles held by women in a diocese is not something senior staff seem to be very aware of or are currently considering. One bishop, when asked why his diocese was so far down the list of proportions of women clergy explained that this was because the diocese had been concentrating on BAME clergy. While this is an important aim, it should not prevent similar effort going into increasing the numbers of women and, in particular, looking at the numbers of BAME clergy who are also women.

Last year, seven new suffragan bishops were women. Whilst this is good news, there seems to be an assumption by too many in the Church of England that now women can be bishops, there is no longer significant gender discrimination in the church. Questions which might reveal continuing inequality are not asked by Church leaders and seem not to occur to those who make strategic decisions. This may, partly, be because of the workings of unconscious bias, which sees differences in the pattern of ministry for men and women as a given, rather than a pattern which could be changed with the will to do so.

Statistics do not, in themselves, change anything, but those with responsibility for making decisions about the appointment of clergy, the selection of incumbents and senior staff and the vocational support and selection process for those with a call to ordination, can use them both to create strategies to move further towards the goal of gender justice and audit the effectiveness of such strategies. WATCH (and others, we hope) will continue to use this data to hold the Church to account in the journey towards creating a more just Church for women and men.

Proportion of stipendiary incumbents/incumbent status clergy who are women

In 2013 half of dioceses had 23% of parish clergy who were women; in 2018 the median figure was 27%

In 2013 only seven dioceses had 30% or more (stipendiary) parish clergy who were women

In 2018 14 dioceses had 30% or over parish clergy who were women (15 dioceses in 2017)

We note some dioceses with the lowest proportions of women continuing to increase this proportion (eg Chichester, London)

We note other dioceses with no significant change in the proportion of women eg Rochester, Chester

Ely continues to have the highest proportion of stipendiary women incumbents. It is one of the only dioceses with a conscious strategy to encourage and support women, particularly young women, in stipendiary ministry.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of churches has led to new and creative ways of worshipping online. Some have embraced this and others have found it a more difficult experience, varying over the period of the lockdown.



Revd Dr Mary Kells, Assistant Curate of St Faith's, Lee-on-the-Solent, and member of the WATCH committee:

"This was my first time presiding at home. The amount of time required to choose a spot, set up, get on top of the tech on your own, is quite incredible. It certainly makes you appreciate having a church most of the time, where everything is laid out and ready to go. The key difficulty, though, was not this, it was missing my congregation. Once I got into the flow of the liturgy, however, the spirit took over and it became something greater than the sum of the challenging/missing parts. The feedback afterwards is what nourishes the priest in such circumstances - knowing you have provided nourishment despite all that militates against it. God is greater than all that impedes and hinders."



The Revd Caitlin Thomson, Assistant Curate, St Mark's, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield, presides on Maundy Thursday

The Revd Sue Hammersley, Vicar of St Mark's, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield:



"Presiding at the Eucharist is an experience which constantly reminds me to get out of the way. In church, my role as president has always felt tentative and yet profound. This is the case whether I am holding the small 8 a.m. service from the Book of Common Prayer; the parish

Eucharist, with a church full of different age groups; or one of the various, more informal, communion services which together form the fabric of our worshipping community. It was the director of my pre-ordination retreat who taught me that our duty as clergy is to enable the faithful to come close to God and then to 'get out of the way'. I have remembered this advice whether I have felt inadequate or self-satisfied: this is all about God and not about me.

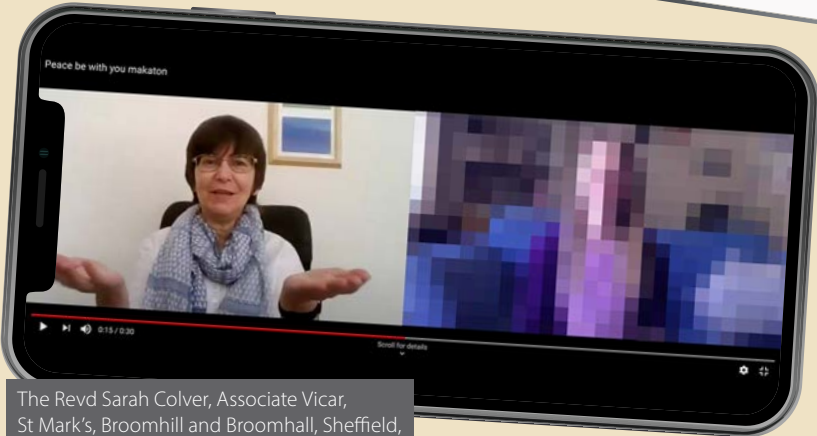
But then our church buildings were locked and we had to find different ways of encouraging the faithful on their journey with God. We gather, on Zoom, to share the sacred space of worship. My church comes into my home and I go into theirs. We invite everyone to gather the elements of a symbolic meal to share together. For some this is bread and wine, for others it may be a drink and a biscuit. As I offer the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving I have, on more than one occasion, been overcome by the intimacy: whereas usually I stand at a distance, now I can see people's faces and share the awe of this sacred mystery. As I eat the bread and drink the wine, I know that, as their priest, it is time for me to 'get out of the way'. What my congregation believe about the nature of the sacrament is between them and their God but I am in no doubt that this is a sacred space, just as sacred as when we gather in church. It is my privilege to serve them with as a faithful servant of the increasingly faithful servants of God.



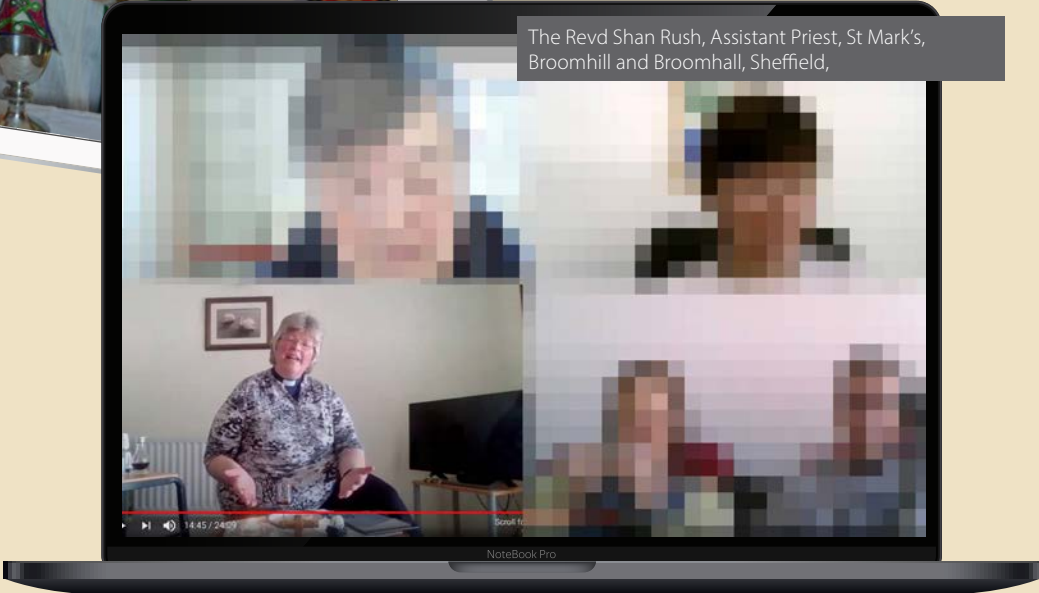
The Revd Rachel Noel, Priest-in-Charge St Mark's Church, Pennington



The Revd Rachel Hartland, Associate Priest of Eversley and Darby Green in Winchester diocese, leads communion in May. The location in her garden proved too close to the road for some listeners.



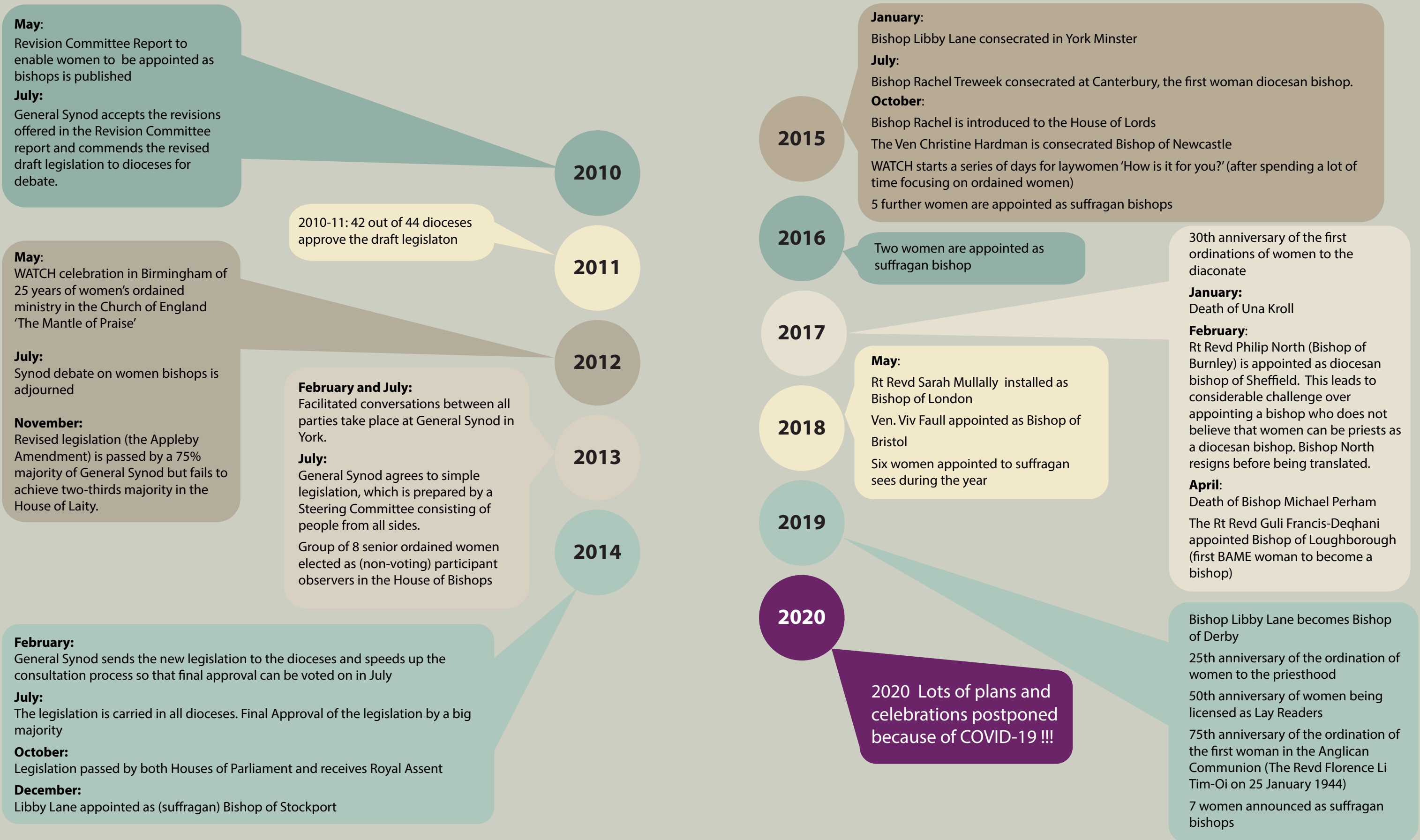
The Revd Sarah Colver, Associate Vicar, St Mark's, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield, passes the peace



The Revd Shan Rush, Assistant Priest, St Mark's, Broomhill and Broomhall, Sheffield,

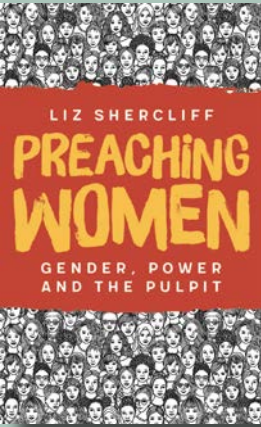
DECADE REVIEW

The WATCH Committee on the key events of the last ten years.



Book Reviews

Preaching Women: Gender, Power and the Pulpit by Liz Shercliff (SCM, 2020)



I first encountered Liz Shercliff when she asked me to speak at the third annual ‘Women’s Voices’ conference. The conference was a revelation, as we gathered for a day to discuss and tease out how we, as women, can read and preach the Bible with authenticity. Shercliff founded these conferences after she wrote an article about this subject for The Preacher and was inundated with feedback – both positive, from women, and negative, from men. She now convenes these conferences annually, and they have been heavily over-subscribed. In this book, she gathers together much of that learning and reflection for a wider audience, and it is powerful stuff.

The foreword is provided by Bishop Libby Lane and I found it fascinating to see her reflect on her own journey, having found herself the first woman bishop, to a new understanding and acceptance of the relevance of her

gender to her ministry. Throughout the book, Shercliff considers issues of embodiment, and how we are received differently as women because our sermons come from a woman’s body. She considers patriarchy, as the air which we breathe, and how we can navigate within it and challenge it whilst still being constrained by it. She also considers and takes seriously our different range of female (and, indeed, trans) experiences and how these can inform our preaching and our reading of the Bible. She illustrates this with short case studies on Bible women and sample sermons.

Shercliff is a teacher of homiletics, and this is much more than simply a book on being a woman preacher. It is also in parts a very accessible textbook on preaching itself. Shercliff provides a wonderfully sharp and to-the-point survey of the literature on preaching and feminist biblical hermeneutics, as well as a toolkit and guidelines for beginning to approach the task of sermon preparation with the embodied and experiential approach that she teaches.

The book is easy to read and is also well referenced for those who want to go deeper. It is illustrated throughout with sermons and sermon snippets, and occasional exercises and reflective questions.

Miranda Threlfall-Holmes

12 Rules for Christian Activists: A Toolkit for Massive Change by Ellen Loudon (Canterbury Press, 2020)



We all want to make a difference, and we all know that being an activist, particularly in a Church which so often seems designed to resist change, can be deeply dispiriting. In this book, Loudon draws on her career as both a minister and a community activist to give us twelve ‘rules’, or principles, which she identifies as underlying effective and sustainable Christian activism.

If you don’t want spoilers, look away now. The twelve rules are: people before programmes; be useful; collaborate; think big, start small; find your level; identify the good things and give the good things away; diversify; make it count; remember where you came from; take risks; travel light; and tell stories. For each of these, Loudon provides a nuanced and thought-provoking Biblical reflection. A collaborator (rule 3 – collaborate!) writes a short chapter telling the story (rule 12) of one of their own experiences of activism and how it illustrates the principle. Finally, Loudon reflects on this ‘rule’ in conversation with the previous contributor, and with the riches of Christian

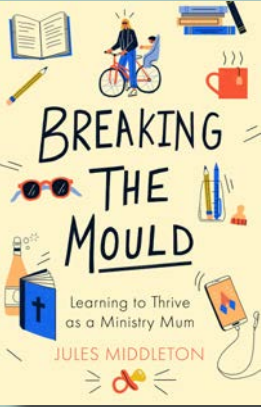
theology, and gives ‘tools for the toolkit’ drawn from her own experience and that of her interlocutors.

It is one of the many strengths of this book that such a wide range of people and types of activism are included as conversation partners. It is unusual for so many lay women to have their skills celebrated and taken seriously in such a book, and this should make it of particular interest and value to members of WATCH. These women make an impressive list. Annie Merry is CEO of an environmental charity, Faiths4Change (incidentally, I work closely with Annie at the moment on a project to regenerate a run down inner city church and grounds in Liverpool, and it’s great to see her here). Jenny Sinclair is founder director of Together for the Common Good; Nadine Daniel is an ex-barrister and the National Refugee Welcome Co-ordinator for the Church of England; Jane Corbett is a local activist and city councillor; Naomi Maynard is a Senior Qualitative Researcher at the Church Army; Heather Buckingham is Head of Church Engagement at the Trussell Trust; Jessamin Birdsall Saunders is Head of Research and Evaluation at the Church Urban Fund, and Ann Morisy is an independent community theologian.

With women like this working together to change the world, we really can make a massive difference. Read this book to be inspired and energised if your activism is feeling exhausting, to be encouraged when the change we want seems daunting, and to be given small, practical steps and tools when you are unsure where to begin.

Miranda Threlfall-Holmes

Breaking the Mould by Jules Middleton (SPCK, 2020)



As a mum of four children and an ordinand, I opened Jules’ book with a sense of hope that not only had someone written a book that was pertinent to my experiences, but that I also might find it life giving. I have found combining ministry and motherhood extremely hard, for a variety of reasons. If you have also struggled to marry up these twin and all-encompassing callings, then this book will be balm to your weary soul.

Written in a style that is warm and wise, honest and humble, reading it is like settling down for a chat with an old friend. Its tone is patient and authoritative and, as a busy mum and minister, Jules is well equipped to know well of what she writes. Her candid and vulnerable telling is comforting to those of us who are travelling this path as well.

Weaving together the stories of other ministry mums and her own experiences with sound biblical application, Jules challenges some of the preconceptions of what it means to

be a mum in ministry and also, crucially, what it means to be a priest. She explores a variety of ministerial obstacles, from challenging the moulds of leadership stereotypes and expectations, to discussing what formation can look like if you are a mum, and how this transformation is rooted in our family life.

As someone who has struggled to combine my calling as a mother with my calling to the priesthood, I found the section on sacrifice particularly affirming. Jules understands what the priorities of mothers are. She does not speak glibly about the sacrificial nature of ministry without uplifting the centrality of family life too. In a world which still does not have full gender equality, our sacrifices are rarely the same as those of our brother priests. Jules’ distinction between an enforced sacrifice and one which is sustainable and beautiful, is an empowering one for mothers in ministry.

Training for ordination in a man-made Church can often feel like being squashed into a hole simply not designed for the dimensions of my ministry. Breaking the Mould is a successful attempt to not only change the shape of that hole, but to dispense with it altogether. Without the restriction of a pre-existing mould, mothers in ministry can live out our calling unhindered by a male ministry model and, in Jules’ words, we can embody the ministry we were made for.

Jayne Manfredi

WATCH AGM Save the date Saturday 17 October 2020

We are looking forward to welcoming Linda Woodhead, Professor of Religion at Lancaster University, to our Annual General Meeting. Linda has researched and written extensively from the perspective of sociology about religious beliefs, values and change in the UK since the 1980s. Her presence amongst us could not be more timely. These times together are always a mixture of encouragement and challenge as we think about what we have done during this extraordinary past year and what we are hoping and praying for to come.

St Pancras Church, London NW1 2BA*

10.30 for 11am – 4pm

*The AGM is planned to take place at St Pancras Church, London, because our regular venue, St John’s, Waterloo, will be undergoing renovations.

At the time of publication, however, it is not clear how (whether in person or virtual) or when the AGM can take place. Please save the date. We will keep you informed of any changes.

joinwatch.org

As this edition testifies, WATCH members are engaged in diverse projects promoting gender equality in the Church of England. Your personal efforts and commitment on the ground, countering the forces of inertia, let alone opposition, make **the** critical difference.

Tell your friends about WATCH.

In particular, tell younger folk in their 20s and 30s who, typically, may not be aware of the relatively recent history/herstory of the women's movement in the Church. Yet this generation still experiences invisible doors closing their pathway to full participation in Christian community life.

They wonder: 'How can that be in 2020?' They wonder where to turn to for support.

Membership

Dues are £25 per individual (£15 Concessions)

We are very grateful if you are in a position to offer a higher amount.

The most effective way to support WATCH's aims in terms of membership dues is to pay through CAF Online (Charities Aid Foundation), choosing the Yearly or Quarterly Direct Debit option.

Go to: joinwatch.org

Why? Because:

- CAF calculates and pays the Gift Aid to WATCH automatically
- Annual payments minimise the need for time-consuming manual checking.

If you are still paying by standing order or by cheque, please consider making the switch as soon as you can.

Our Membership Administrator, Eve West, can help you find out about your current membership arrangements and, if necessary, advise you on changing this. Contact: admin@womenandthechurch.org or call Graham Stacey 01865 590515 for a phone number referral.



www.womenandthechurch.org