

Transformations Steering Group (TSG) – a brief introduction

In 2010, in response to the slow progress of the women bishops legislation through Synod, a group of women was invited by then Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, to discuss the situation. They were tasked with convening a conference, 'Transformations: Theology and Experience of Women's Ministry' at Lambeth Palace in September 2011 to celebrate and explore the experience of ordained women.

The conference was celebratory, but also acknowledged where the church is failing its women. Over 60 people – women and men, lay and ordained – met to explore a range of issues, including synodical processes, liturgical language, the deployment of women clergy and the interpretation of scripture. Each group was invited to feed back suggestions for action. A detailed report, including group feedback and recommendations to the House of Bishops, was written and circulated.

The conference planning group emerged as the 'Transformations Steering Group', to take forward this agenda. The TSG meets at Lambeth Palace three times a year, and is constituted of two members from each of the following groups:

- WATCH (Women and the Church), a national group working for the full inclusion of women (lay and ordained) at every level of the church;
- NADAWM (the National Association of Diocesan Advisors in Women's Ministry), who act as advocates for and representatives of women clergy in each diocese;
- DARC (Deans, Archdeacons and Residentiary Canons), the network of women in senior clergy posts in the Church of England; from 2015 this group, BDARC, includes bishops;
- AWESOME, a network of Evangelical women clergy in the Church of England;
- Black and Minority Ethnic representatives since 2014; formally from CMEAC from 2015;
- the Archbishop of York's researcher and chaplain, both to redress a geographical bias towards the south and to keep Bishopthorpe in touch with the work of the group.

The TSG regularly reports back to the College of Bishops. In September 2012, they focussed on statistics about women's ministry, highlighting both some significant differences between the typical vocational pathways of women and men, and the need to further research these differences and their causes. In September 2013, the TSG held a day event for the College of Bishops. Each Bishop was requested to invite a woman he works with in his diocese, resulting in a real critical mass of women meeting with the College as senior colleagues. Attendees were presented with initial research findings and explored ways to address some of the issues raised at a Diocesan level, including sharing best practice.

The Transformations agenda is largely being taken forward through sub-groups of TSG:

- The 2012 presentation highlighted the need for further research, which began within Ministry Division, and from 2014 by a half-time Transformations researcher. Work initially focused on vocations and larger church leadership. The HR department are taking on issues such as maternity leave and flexible working. This work is overseen by the **Transformations Research and Implementation Group (TRIG)**.
- A sub-group of the Development and Appointments Group (DAG), the **Senior Women Clergy Working Group**, was set up to work with those who were helping women to be ready to step into senior posts. After the initial work to help those women first appointed to the episcopate, the group now exists to ensure a flow of information to/from those making appointments to senior posts.
- Another area emerging from the original conference was gender in **liturgy**, and representatives are discussing this with the Liturgical Commission in terms of both language and inhabiting liturgical roles.
- A **Theological Working Group** has been established to explore theological issues surrounding the flourishing in ministry of ordained women. It is in discussion with the Faith and Order Commission.

It is envisaged that the TSG will exist for as long as it takes to see through progress in the Church on the areas identified in the 2011 conference. Further information can be found at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/clergy-office-holders/ministry/deployment/transformations.aspx>