



NATIONAL COMMITTEE
2018 ANNUAL REPORTS

The National Committee is comprised of Trustees and the following co-opted members:

Ms Tracey Byrne, *resigned September 2018*

Ms Claire Creese, *co-opted January 2018 (non-voting)*

Staff Members

Ms Claire Creese, Secretary (P/T)

Ms Eve West, Administrator (P/T)

Reports

Secretary

Task Forces:

Charities Aid Foundation, Membership

Strategic Planning

General Synod

Statistics

Transformations

Greenbelt

Communications

Laity

Chair's Reflections

REPORTS

Secretary

Claire Creese

I was co-opted to the committee in January 2018 and am based in the village of Noke, near Oxford. The Committee met four times this year in January (London), April (Oxford), June (Pershore, Worcestershire) and September (London). Meetings are day-long hosted by committee members. The June meeting, however, is a two-day residential with overnight stay at Holland House.

Other than supporting the Chair in planning meetings, I worked on the transition to the new CAF system (see next report) with committee members, but in particular with our Administrator, Eve West, who has been fielding the rubber-hits-the-road aspects of implementation.

Many thanks to committee members for their assistance during the year, and for taking the time to explain WATCH's history and ongoing role.

Charities Aid Foundation & Membership

Claire Creese & Esther Elliott

WATCH was granted charitable status in 2017. In the Spring of this year we began to implement the plan to transition to the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) database and donation system (CAF Donate Online), and bank. Our goal was to generate a new gift aided source of fundraising, and to simplify the administration involved in membership subscriptions and GDPR compliance. Alongside these changes the committee wanted to explore new ways of being able to contact and dialogue with WATCH members available through CAF services.

The new CAF bank account was opened in the Spring. A letter was sent out with the July distribution of Outlook magazine inviting members to re-join WATCH using CAF Donate online. Those receiving news about WATCH only, were invited to join as members. We anticipate that it will take up to two years to transition from the old to the new, gift aided, membership system.

In response to a number of requests, the committee decided in September to:

- a) confirm a concession rate for membership subscription of £15 (the new annual subscription is £25), and
- b) maintain an offline annual membership renewal process (paper form w/ cheques mailed by post). This is primarily intended for members without internet access.

We have had technical and other challenges in coordinating membership changes and are very grateful for your patience as glitches are discovered and addressed. A new FAQ section has been added to the Join section of the website and further tweaking to the online sign up process is anticipated. Members have been contacting Eve West, our Administrator with questions. If you have any queries about how to join, please contact Eve at admin@womenandthechurch.org, and she will gladly assist you.

Strategic Planning

Felicity Cooke

The WATCH National Committee met for the annual residential gathering in June 2018. The agenda for the meeting included preparation for a strategic planning exercise, which would follow from the change of the status of WATCH to a charity. This preparation developed as a creative process, which helped the Committee to assign priorities against values, and these in turn provided the foundation for a new strategic plan for WATCH.

The strategic plan takes into account the founding aims for WATCH together with the objectives agreed with the Charity Commission:

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

- A) The elimination of discrimination on grounds of gender

- B) Advancing education and raising awareness in gender equality and diversity
- C) Conducting or commissioning research on equality and diversity issues and publishing the result to the public, and
- D) Cultivating a sentiment in favour of gender equality and diversity

The Strategic Plan is based upon our Mission Statement, our Vision Statement and our Values Statement. There are five current strategies, and short-term goals have been agreed for each of these.

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 their 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 in all roles in the church
- An inclusive culture in the church which recognises and values women's gifts, experience and insight

VALUES STATEMENT

WATCH:

- Affirms the right of women to be treated equitably in the Church of England
- 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

Our values are underpinned by our Code of Behaviour.

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

WATCH Strategies

Our current strategies are:

1. To work for transparency and accountability in relation to gender in all areas of church life
2. To critique the Five Guiding Principles (5GPs), in order to understand how they do and don't work¹
3. To broaden our membership, both lay and ordained, through engagement and providing resource
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
5. To devise and implement a communications strategy

WATCH Short term goals for each strategy

1. Transparency and accountability
 - 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. Critique the 5GPs
 - 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. Broaden our membership
 - a. Complete the signing up by members to the new system
 - b. Survey of members about their needs and offerings
4. Development of liturgy, theology and general language of the church
 - a. Produce a guide to gender neutral language
 - b. Develop simple liturgies using explicitly female language and imagery

***The WATCH Action Plan, derived from the strategic plan,
will be available as a hand-out at the AGM.***

¹ The Five Guiding Principles (5GPs) were drawn up by the House of Bishops and presented to the July 2014 general synod as a way of holding together the differing positions relative to women's ordination and consecration. The 5GPs were not a product of debate, nor were they technically voted on. They are now meant to be clearly affirmed by all in ministry. Ordinands are required to assent to them. Embedded in these principles is the concept of mutual flourishing. The concern is whether the reasonable commitment to enable 'those who are unable to receive the ministry of women' to flourish, has come at the cost of the flourishing of others. Whereas appointments have been made specifically to cater for those 'unable to receive the ministry of women', little has been done to change appointment systems to enable women to flourish. See also, [The Five Guiding Principles: Whose Flourishing do they serve?](#) , WATCH News, 24th February 2017.

View the 5GPs at https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/the_five_guiding_principles.pdf

General Synod

Anne Stevens, Co-ordinator, WATCH GS Group

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

In February the GS WATCH group met over dinner in London, and discussed among other things the WATCH Report on the Developments in Women's Ministry 2017 and the follow up to the Independent Reviewer's Report on Sheffield.

In York in July, Emma Percy gave us an update on the work of the Implementation & Dialogue Group which is looking at the 5 Guiding Principles. There were a few admin points to address now that WATCH had become a charity; and there was a brief discussion about the plans for celebrating the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood in 2019.

Statistics

Comparative Statistics of stipendiary women clergy

Rosalind Rutherford

Since the Research and Statistics Department at Church House has started publishing annual ministry statistics again, WATCH has looked in more detail at the figures which impact most on our aims. This is following the work done from 2000 when the first Furlong Table was produced (by Miranda Threlfall –Holmes) which compared the position of women clergy in the different diocese and then ranked dioceses.

The table we have produced for the last three years gives the proportion of stipendiary women clergy in each diocese who are incumbents or who hold an incumbent status position (e.g., Team Vicar). It also gives a good indication of how supportive that diocese might be for women, though as proportions of parish clergy change slowly, a change of bishop or senior clergy may also have a significant impact on the well-being and encouragement of women clergy before this shows in the numbers. This is the group of clergy from whom clergy with more responsible and higher profile roles are likely to be drawn. Looking at these proportions is not about careerism, but the importance of the visibility of women in various roles in encouraging others to take a call to ministry, and senior roles in ministry, seriously.

We have published these figures in February, as part of an annual report on women in ministry, timed to coincide with the February meeting of General Synod. Church House now published figures for the previous year in late August or September, and this year we have published an article on the website which refers to the most recent figures.

As this report, and the Outlook article both pointed out, there remain other significant questions about the roles of ordained women in the C of E, and also the wider roles of women, including lay women who are diocesan officers or members of various synods, including Synod officials. Another question that statistics cannot fully illustrate, is the number of unpaid clergy and particularly women, who keep parish ministry going, particularly in rural benefices, by giving significant time as licensed SSM clergy. This includes those who are House of Duty and so working for at least 4 days a week with housing but no stipend, nor pension contribution. Central church statistics give the total number of SSM clergy in a diocese, but is not able to break this figure down any further.

Questions also remain about the number of young ordinands who are women, and the relatively older age of women starting training. The discrepancy continues to be of significant concern, and is perpetuating the imbalance between men and women in stipendiary roles.

I would also like to find ways of exploring how many dioceses regularly include women among the committees and groups who are responsible for major decision making in a diocese. We can see the number of women in “senior roles” in a diocese from the official statistics, but are aware that some dioceses ensure that women are included in strategic decision making; and also look at the numbers of senior lay women (eg, Chairs of diocesan synods). Other suggestions will be welcome, but it may not be possible to follow them all up!



Transformations Steering Group

Esther Elliott & Emma Percy

The Transformations Group is a meeting of representatives from a number of different networks across the Church of England set up to support the ministry of women. It functions as a discussion forum and as an advocate for issues and priorities within women’s ministry. It has a direct line of communication with the House of Bishops. 2018 has been another busy year. The main items on the agenda have been –

1. Maternity policies – there is no consistent agreement on maternity provision nationally. The discrepancies between family friendly policies across the dioceses and the gaps in provision through which women, particularly can fall is significant.
2. Larger churches – during 2017 a report commissioned by the Transformations group noted that there was a serious discrepancy between the proportional number of women leading larger churches and the proportional number of women who are Deans, Archdeacons and Bishops. During 2018 another report was commissioned which seeks to outline some clear ways forward. See <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Larger%20Churches%20TRIG%20report.pdf>
3. Harassment – in light of the work of the IICSA the Transformations group have noted that very few dioceses have bullying and harassment policies. They have been collating those which exist in order to produce a national document which gives examples of good practice.
4. The group has organised another Transformations Conference for 7th November 2019 at Lambeth Palace. The Archbishop will be present for part of the time.

Greenbelt

Rosalind Rutherford & Michael Smith

For the first time, WATCH partnered with two other organisations at Greenbelt, namely Inclusive Church and Modern Church. We have partnered in the past with Inclusive Church and have a long-standing relationship with them. This was, however, our first involvement with Modern Church. As a result of this tripartite relationship, we were able to secure a significant space in the Greenbelt 'Takeaway'. Thanks to members of WATCH, Inclusive Church and Modern Church, we were able to share the task of keeping have three people on the stall throughout the festival.

Taking Greenbelt's theme of 'Acts of the Imagination' we engaged with festival goers and asked them to 'Imagine.....', sharing their thoughts on our graffiti wall and on individual postcards which were displayed in the stand, and then gave them a sticker to take away to continue 'imagining'. Due to the success in 2017 of polaroid selfies, we used the same media again.

We were pleased with the overall engagement of the festival goers, with some enlightening and interesting conversations taking place. Greenbelt is a festival for all ages, so it is an excellent opportunity to communicate with younger people.

We are working with Inclusive Church and Modern Church in assessing the results of what people wrote on postcards.

Communications

Michael Smith, Lizzie Taylor (Twitter)

We continue to attract new followers via our Facebook presence and there has been much engagement via @WATCH_ACT. Most notably has been over the issue of transparency and churches within the Church of England with a position of male only leadership.

Facebook posts regularly hit engagement figures of over 1500 people, in particular, the annual release of the Ministry Statistics always has high engagement figures and the post 'Eva's Call' detailing the artwork of students at Ripon College, Cuddesdon reached almost 5,000 people and was shared over 30 times.

Twitter. Several members of the committee have tweeted from the WATCH account. Engagement with our tweets has been varied. Where we are tweeting congratulating, encouraging and posting other general tweets, engagement has generally been lower. In contrast to this, engagement has been surprisingly significant where tweets have raised areas of ongoing concern for clergy and lay women. What does this tell us? A conclusion is that there is a wide perception that there is work still to do, and a desire for it to be done.

The issue of website and email communications continues to be a challenging one. We are working hard to ensure that the website gets to a stage where we have a good and fit for purpose resources section and regular email news. It is a time-consuming process and a work in progress but we will get there! As always, many thanks to all the contributors.

Work for the future will be to continue our strong social media presence, to get the website to a place in order for it to provide a good bank of resources as well as news stories and articles. Finally, to provide regular, relevant, communications to our membership.

Laity

Lizzie Taylor

It would be fair to say that Lay members of WATCH are still fewer than they might be, for various reasons. These include:

- this year some of the active lay members have focused their efforts on trying to work - with our WATCH clergy colleagues and within the Church of England - to make progress on a few specific areas of great concern with the outworking of the 2014 Settlement. This means they have had less time to work on expanding WATCH's lay membership.
- lay members generally trust that clergy and church leaders will deal with the gender justice problems in our Church. However, we see that clergy on their own have not been able to achieve this. The laity needs to be educated on the decentralised and often archaic way in which the Church of England operates, and how their lay contribution is absolutely needed and equally valid.
- lay members of WATCH are generally very stretched working in lay contexts while also serving in their local churches. Relatively few have the time to be actively involved in this work. We need to work on time-efficient ways of engaging them, such as social media, which take account of this.

Recognising these challenges to lay membership, WATCH will work actively to recruit more lay members.

Chair's Reflections

Emma Percy will offer reflections at the AGM.

End of Annual Report