



NATIONAL COMMITTEE 2019 ANNUAL REPORTS

The National Committee is comprised of:

Trustees: Revd Dr Emma Percy (Chair), Dr Felicity Cooke (Vice-Chair), Dr Esther Elliott (Vice-Chair), Revd Yvonne Clarke, Jenny Humphreys, Michèle Kitto, Revd Rosalind Rutherford, Revd Michael Smith, Revd Anne Stevens, Revd Jody Sowell, Lizzie Taylor, Revd Dr Miranda Threlfall-Holmes.

Co-opted members: Revd Mark Bennet (Treasurer), Claire Creese (Secretary.)

WATCH Staff

Claire Creese (Secretary p/t), Eve West (Administrator p/t)

Summary of Reports (*in order of AGM agenda*)

- Accounts CIO 2019 - *separate document*
 - Secretary
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-

REPORTS

Secretary

Claire Creese

The Committee met four times this year, in September (London, Rectory St Pancras), January (Oxford Deanery), April (London, St Pancras), June (Pershore, Worcestershire). In November the committee convenes at St Mark's, Sheffield. Meetings are day-long, hosted by committee members. The June meeting, however, is a two-day overnight residential allowing the committee and guests to take stock of the strategic plan and action.

Mark Bennet, stepped down as trustee Treasurer at the 2018 AGM, but generously agreed to be co-opted back onto the committee as Treasurer whilst his replacement is sought*. Felicity Cooke stepped into one of the Vice-Chair positions. Miranda Threlfall-Holmes was welcomed back onto the committee. WATCH benefits from the continuity and attention to detail provided by Eve West, Membership Administrator; this year Eve joined the committee for a portion of the June residential. We are grateful to Georgiana Bell who forwards all of WATCH post from St John's to Eve.

I worked with the Chair to prepare committee meetings, generate AGM materials, oversee bookings (AGM, Annual Residential) and other non-membership related administration.

Archives – In May, Jenny Standage and I met at the Women's Library (in the library of the London School of Economics) which houses the MOW archives. Jenny is MOW and WATCH's long-standing past Secretary and past Outlook editor. This was an opportunity for me to learn more about MOW and also to plan for the ongoing preservation of WATCH archives. The immediate task was for Jenny to review the sealed papers of Stanley Booth-Clibborn, Bishop of Manchester and MOW's first moderator (1979-1982) to see if they may be unsealed in 2020. This was Jenny's recommendation to the Library. The papers include his MOW correspondence from October 1971-January 1992).

Having researched other options, Jenny has arranged for WATCH's archives to be housed at the Women's Library where she plans to transfer Minutes this year.

Many thanks to committee members for their assistance, guidance and warm hospitality during the year; to Graham Stacey at O&B; and to Eve for her ever thorough support.

****Could you please assist us in looking for a Treasurer? The Treasurer Role Description is posted on the website (<https://womenandthechurch.org/role-description-for-treasurer/>); a number of tasks can be delegated to a paid individual. Might you post the Role Description on your Diocesan website, or other network? For more information please contact Revd Mark Bennet markbennet@btinternet.com***

Administrator Membership

Eve West

At time of writing July 2019] there are 774 members on the WATCH database. This is a constantly fluctuating figure as people can join, leave or renew at any time during the year.

Outlook 2018 launched WATCH's association with the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) to enable WATCH, as a registered charity, to claim 25% Gift Aid on donations made by tax-paying members. After an initial flurry of CAF subscriptions last summer, members have been invited, as their annual membership comes up for renewal, to cancel their existing HSBC standing order or PayPal recurring payment and renew via CAF - a simple click-through link from the WATCH website or renewal email. Currently (late July 2019) 40% of the membership has set up a CAF subscription, whilst 60% remain with their former (non-tax effective) payment method. Of those who have set up a new subscription within CAF, a significant number have not cancelled their original payment set-up as advised and so are making 2 or more payments to WATCH. These members are being contacted to make them aware of duplicate donations.

A number of members have taken the move as a prompt to reconsider their support (there were 855 members on the database 1.8.18). Those who have resigned their membership have predominantly cited old-age and/or reduced finances as their reason, or a feeling that the work of WATCH has been achieved with the ordination of women bishops. Others have simply stopped their existing payment with no explicit resignation, and these members are contacted with reminders before being removed from the database after a 6-month period, according to the terms of the Constitution. On the other hand, there continue to be new members joining WATCH, on average 2 or 3 a month.

Communication lessons have been learned since the initial launch of the CAF partnership and there is now a page of frequently asked questions (FAQS) on the membership page of the website. Direct debit is being encouraged over one-off payments which require encouragement to renew each year – and extra administrative time. There is still a small number of 'offline' members who can't or would rather not set up payment or receive communications online. These members can still support WATCH via an annual cheque payment, and a separate administrative process to claim any Gift Aid.

Running two membership systems - with different membership categories - takes time to manage and cross-reference, as does making sure that new contact details provided in CAF are updated in the WATCH database. If all members move to paying via CAF, as hoped, this will not only significantly reduce administration time and cost, but more importantly make a huge difference to the funds available to WATCH for its on-going work: nearly 80% of the subscriptions made through CAF are 'tax effective' so worth an extra 25p for every £1 donated.

Members who are in any doubt about what or how they give, how WATCH contacts them, or who have any further questions, are encouraged to get in touch at admin@womenandthechurch.org.

General Synod

Jenny Humphreys & Anne Stevens (Coordinator)

WATCH Fringe meetings were held in both February and July and we have continued to ask questions relating to women's ministry. We raised the issue of statistics on Self Supporting Ministry and House for Duty posts in February, and about the Women in the Episcopate legislation in Jersey and Guernsey in July. We also raised the question about policies on internships, which although isn't only about women does have safety and safeguarding implications for young people. We asked a question in July about the under-representation of women at senior staff level in the church's theological courses and colleges

WATCH members (a) in January spoke in favour of ending the secret ballot on the CNC, but sadly Synod voted for its retention; and (b) in July attended and spoke in a consultation meeting run by the Implementation and Dialogue Group about the 5 Guiding Principles.



Transformations Steering Group

Emma Percy & Cath Williamson

The transformation steering group continues to meet three times a year at Lambeth focusing on the experience of women in Ministry. Two WATCH members sit on the committee, currently Emma Percy and Cath Williamson. The group has continued to focus on a number of key issues:

Maternity provision – After many years of pushing for a coherent policy across the church Transformations have this last year had a member who can speak and observe on this issue on the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (RACS). There is currently a new policy being put forward which addresses many of the concerns we have raised. This sets out a best practice for diocese to follow and covers the anomalies where women find themselves pregnant at the end of training or other transitional points in their ministry. We hope this will be passed and clarity will be available.

Young Vocations – There does seem to be an increase in the numbers of young women coming forward for ordination. We would like to do some research to see if the targeted vocations day have helped with this increase.

Transformation Research and Implementation Group (TRIG) – This group is meant to link the Transformation agenda with Ministry Division. After a period where this did not seem to be very productive there is a new impetus to work together under the Chair Bishop Ruth Worsley. The group will look at new areas of research and the implementation of early research around women leading larger churches.

Transformations Day – A day is planned at Lambeth in November for Diocesan Bishops and Deans of Women's Ministry to reflect on how far we have come and discuss areas to focus on for the future. We are aware that women in ministry continue to be concerned about flexible jobs, the 5 GPs, harassment and bullying. We hope this event will help to set the Transformation agenda for the next 5 years.

Lambeth 2020 – Transformations are planning a Fringe event for the women who are Bishops attending Lambeth. This will be the first Lambeth where spouses will attend all the sessions so there will be many women in the room but only a small percentage there as Bishops.

Language and Liturgy – This continues to be on the Agenda but hard to get on to the wider Church agenda.

We were pleased to be involved in the service held at Lambeth to mark 25 years of women's priestly ministry.

Chair's Reflections

Emma Percy will offer reflections at the AGM

Strategic Planning

Felicity Cooke

We reported at last year's AGM on the new strategy for WATCH. At that moment we were stepping out into a changed landscape in both the Church and the secular world. Four years on from the legislation approving the consecration of women as bishops, and 24 from the first ordinations of women as priests, WATCH was taking stock on a Church which in many ways is out of step with the secular world. Attitudes and behaviours that are known to be unacceptable outside the Church were, and are, apparently acceptable inside the Church. In the Church it is, it would seem, possible to display misogynistic behaviour, to overtly discriminate against women and to covertly restrict and confine both lay and ordained women. In such a situation what was WATCH to do? How to behave and respond? How, too, to engage with honesty in the mutual flourishing demanded of all in the Five Guiding Principles?

In developing a strategy for continuing its work WATCH agreed a code of behaviour: to act with compassion, even when angry, to act collaboratively, even with excluded, and to use an evidence-based approach to pursue our goals. Each of these elements tells us something very important about the world in which we operate because of the explicit acknowledgement that we are sometimes (often maybe) angry, that we are excluded, and that it is important always to rely on evidence in countering the exclusion and exercising the compassion which we demand of ourselves.

A year on where have we got to and what have we achieved? At the WATCH national committee annual residential meeting in June we examined the action plan that we had begun to develop last year. The plan is intended to move forward the five strategies agreed in 2018, which cover transparency and accountability, critique of the Five Guiding Principles (5GPs) broadening of membership, the development of liturgy, and our own communications. We were able to celebrate the development of our presentation and analysis of statistics and evidence. We could mark progress, though it felt slow, with the development of liturgy and a communications strategy (not least the use of social media). We felt hesitant about progress on membership, as we continue to deal with the complications of transferring membership dues to CAF. We had thought long and hard about the 5GPs, had made considerable progress in developing a critique, but were still reflecting on exactly what our final output might be. Much more detailed reports of our work on statistics, transparency, the 5GPs and communications can be found elsewhere in this report.

Several conclusions can be drawn from our first year of work under the new strategy. Firstly, we are more committed than ever to our vision statement. This underpins our strategy as we work for the full representation of women at all levels and all roles in the Church, and for an inclusive culture in which the Church recognises and values women's gifts, experience and insight. We have been able to acknowledge very explicitly our frustration and anger at the often-inexcusable behaviour demonstrated to women by a minority of others in the Church. In a very positive way, we have taken from this the energy and commitment to driving forward change. At the same time, we acknowledge the limits on our capacity as a small, volunteer organisation, and the need to be kind to ourselves when we cannot achieve all we want to in the time we would like.

The WATCH national committee is the very small tip of the gathering that is the WATCH membership. We act on your behalf and in your name. As we take our strategy forward we hope that you will support our work in whatever way you are able, not least by talking about

WATCH, encouraging others to join, and contributing what you can by way of experience and resource in the journey to achieving true gender justice in the Church.

The following are reports from the Strategic Working Groups.

Transparency & Accountability

- **Statistics – Rosalind Rutherford**

In February 2019, WATCH published a report looking at the position of women in the church based (mainly) on the statistics published by Church House's Research and Statistics department, as it has done in previous years. We time the publication of this report to coincide with the General Synod meeting in February, which enables us to ensure that a copy is given to each member of GS, including all diocesan bishops. It also enables GS members to discuss it at any WATCH fringe meeting if there are questions. At the same time, the full report is published on the WATCH website.

<https://womenandthechurch.org/resources/a-report-on-the-developments-in-womens-ministry-in-2018/>

The problem in this timing is that the statistics can be 18 months out of date by publication of our report. The tables are now published by Church House in late August/ September, and refer to the year ending the previous September. The WATCH report is nearly 6 months later. The result of this time lag is that this year, the report published in Feb 2019 was based on data for the year ending December 2017. This makes little difference for one of the most used tables, the proportion of stipendiary incumbents in a diocese who are women, where what is significant is the trend, but when we consider smaller groups, such as senior diocesan clergy, numbers can easily be out of date. This year we were able to update statistics referring to bishops and archdeacons to December 2018 by using diocesan websites. It would be helpful to hear any views on whether this time lag matters.

We know that these tables are valued, particularly by those in a diocese who want to ask questions of appointments, how "woman friendly" a diocese might be etc. In the last year, the Bishop of London has referred to the place of her diocese at the bottom of the table, as has the Bishop of Bristol, and set her diocese the challenge of changing this. We also find that the publication of this report often leads to questions querying figures, or why we have not included other groups after publication, which is a positive sign that people are engaging with them.

One figure we included for the first time this year was the percentage of Area Deans in a diocese who are women. This table showed huge discrepancies, from 4% in Norwich to 60% in Leicester. There was little correlation between the proportion of incumbent status clergy who are women and the proportion of female Area Deans. If your diocese is low in this table, this could be a question for a Diocesan Synod, or for senior staff. However, we were unable to include a similar table for Lay Chairs of Deanery Synods as we did not have access to a consistently reliable source for this information.

One area where WATCH continues to have concerns is the proportion of women who are ordained to SSM title posts, and whose ministry is SSM. The concern is not over those who feel genuinely called to an SSM ministry, either in a particular place, or because they see a workplace as being where their vocation is located. However, there is a strong suspicion that women are still too often seen as not needing a stipend, or should not "take a place" away from a man. The average age of ordination for women is also higher, so more women are ordained too late for a stipendiary role. In February 2019, a WATCH member asked a question in General Synod about ages and genders of House for Duty licenses, and was told that the request to provide this information would be passed to Research and Statistics. We

await results! A similar concern is the low proportion of young ordinands who are women. Published statistics give the ages of ordinands and the gender, but in separate tables, so it is not easy to correlate these accurately and monitor trends.

This data is valued by many people so we shall continue to publish this report. Other suggestions of what data would be useful would be welcomed, though we are only able to use data that has been published as we do not currently have the resources for our own research.

- **Call for Clarity – Lizzie Taylor**

At WATCH's 2018 AGM, in its Outlook magazine 2018 and 2019, and via social media (primarily Twitter: @WATCH_ACT), WATCH lay members reported on a big concern for lay and clergy members of the Church of England over the outworking of the 2014 Settlement. This is the ongoing lack of transparency in the majority of conservative evangelical churches, and some traditionalist Anglo Catholic churches, about their theology and practice relating to women.

Transparency is important because without it there is effectively silent and invisible exclusion of women from certain roles and opportunities, including some paths into ministry. Legally, all orders of ministry are now open to all, without reference to gender. So, churchgoers must be able to choose what kind of church to attend, and what kind of ministry they wish to receive. They must not be kept in the dark if their contribution will be managed and limited within a specific church. They may wish to lead, preach, or explore a vocation to priesthood. For those women who may wish to pursue this, their vocational path must not be impeded by any ill-considered or overlooked practice in the Church of England.

Concern focuses on what amounts to clergy deciding not actively to inform churchgoers about their position and the resulting consequences for church life, or deciding only to inform them after a significant period of church membership. A number of the clergy concerned have given themselves permission to decide what that significant period will be (sometimes nine months or a year of church attendance) before letting churchgoers know. It is not hard to see where this could lead in terms of concerns about control.

Churchgoers finding out for themselves about this practice, often after months or years of commitment, service and financial support of their church, lose trust and respect for their clergy, and feel they have been treated in an underhand way, with all that flows from that. This is damaging for the health and mission of the Church of England.

A year after the first call for transparency in the 2018 edition of WATCH's Outlook magazine, distributed to all members of General Synod and others, there is little evidence of progress. The information is still not being made easily and generally available to congregations, parishes and the wider community, whether on websites or in written communications.

In response to the Outlook article, the Bishop of Maidstone who has been appointed specifically to oversee conservative evangelical churches, 'suggested' that they respond to the call for transparency, but proposed they use brief website wording which actually seemed more likely to obscure than communicate what is going on:

'Might I suggest that ...without giving greater prominence to the issue than is appropriate, your websites might find space to mention that your PCC...has sent in a letter of request for arrangements to be made under the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.'

Of course, the average churchgoer would not be aware that this refers to a policy of actively managing and limiting the role of women in the church.

Six months after his suggestion we surveyed 55 of the churches under his oversight and only three had openly communicative website statements. So overall, the request has simply been ignored by the churches concerned.

Bishops and other church leaders can resolve this, using both soft and hard levers, to end the practice which is damaging the integrity of the church and its mission. If they do not act, it will suggest they do not care about lay women, and do not wish to respond to this legitimate request.

Falling church attendance is the big issue we face, and it is not unconnected to people's prior experience of church. Large numbers of young adults, especially in university and commuter towns, are having a bad experience of church in this area, losing their trust and respect for their clergy, and finding the Church of England lacking in will and governance to ensure Godly standards of probity. The Church of England can resolve this, and it should be done as soon as possible.

Five Guiding Principles

- **Implementation & Dialogue Group – Emma Percy**

As chair of WATCH I sit on this fixed term committee which is looking at the outworking of the House of Bishops Declaration and Five Guiding Principles 2014.

The committee is due to have an interim report later in the year.

Alongside looking at material produced by various groups on the issue the committee is receiving reports from targeted interviews in a number of dioceses. These will help us create a picture of how the declaration is being utilised.

We have met with the Archbishop's appointments Secretary to look at questions of senior appointments.

There has been a theological 48hrs to look at the Theology of Mutual Flourishing.

A Fringe event was held at General Synod in July to gather input from a range of people.

- **5GPs Working Group – Jody Stowell**

The team has met twice. Initially to talk through what the issues are with the 5GPs, both in terms of their internal incongruities and the outworking on the ground, in particular for women clergy. We decided that we would both gather stories about the outworking on the ground through various networks and Felicity Cooke was asked to draft a working document highlighting the 'pinch points' with the 5GPs themselves, and how these were being interpreted across the theological traditions.

At our second meeting we reviewed this document and our anecdotal evidence. It was decided that the best way forward is to write a 'guide to the 5GPs' which would be an easy to

read 'go to' booklet touching on the theological, practical and anecdotal issues, with perhaps some suggestions as to how we work with them moving ahead.

Felicity drafted some chapter headings with suggested content that was reviewed by the full committee at our annual residential.

We will meet in September to agree the drafting of the chapters of this booklet.

Communications – Michael Smith

As we've celebrated this year the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Church of England, thanks to the efforts of committee member, Rosalind Rutherford, we have been able to post a series of articles and personal reflections from those celebrating the 25th anniversary of their own ordination to the priesthood on the WATCH website which have also been posted to our social media pages (Facebook: [facebook.com/WomenAndTheChurch](https://www.facebook.com/WomenAndTheChurch) and Twitter @WATCH_ACT). This has sparked a very positive response and reaction with the readership in the hundreds, if not thousands.

This year has seen the continuation of the migration to a new membership system operated through the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Bank. It has been a challenging time as it has meant that our membership database has been through significant change and as a result, we've not been able to communicate via email as we have done previously. The Committee resolved to no longer include non-members in our email news so we have a smaller database but one of purely members – there was previously confusion from those receiving email communications over whether they were actually members or not. We hope to be recommencing regular e-news again within the next 12 months and we recognize the importance of sharing news in this way.

Over the course of the past year, there has been much activity on our Twitter feed (@WATCH_ACT) and we continue to have a growing number of followers (as at June over 5,100 followers). One particular area of focus on Twitter has been over the issue of transparency in conservative evangelical parishes and we continue to challenge churches that exclude women from ministry to be transparent about the fact that they do, and the reasons for it. Our Facebook presence continues to tick over with regular posting of events, articles of interest and announcements.

Whilst we've not been as active as we might have wished on our website, we have been able to post a number of insightful articles which have proved very popular and sparked comment and dialogue through our Facebook page.

A revisiting of our Communications Strategy is a work in progress. With the shift to our Gift Aided membership subscription having stabilized, we have resumed our Newsletters. These are planned for Easter, Summer, post AGM and Christmas. Thank you for bearing with us.

Greenbelt

At the time of writing, ahead of Greenbelt 2019, we are in the final throes of planning our stand in the Greenbelt Takeaway area in partnership with Inclusive church. As we have done in previous years, we are using the Greenbelt theme to underpin the theme of our stand. This year it is 'Wit and Wisdom'. Relying, as always, on a dedicated group of volunteers to staff the stand we hope to engage with festival goers, talk about the work of WATCH and Inclusive Church. Our attendance at Greenbelt continues to be an important fixture in the WATCH calendar.

- **Twitter – Lizzie Taylor**

Over the course of the past year there has been much activity on the Twitter feed (@WATCH_ACT), with both lay and clergy members tweeting. Our following grows: we now have just under 6000 followers. When Tweeting this year, we have continued to work for a balance between positive celebration of progress and challenging those areas where there's less progress and ongoing problems.

One challenge has been how best to use Twitter to raise awareness and shine a light on the lack of transparency about the exclusion of women from ministry and lay leadership in male headship and male priesthood-led churches, and the effect of this on the laity, on the reputation of the Church and on the vocations of its women. When we tweet on this issue of transparency our engagement figures continue to spike: this is a hot topic. As well as being a live issue it's one which is developing and not static, as the number of PCCs being encouraged to pass Resolutions is steadily rising.

In general, where there's a societal or institutional problem which has not been addressed in response requests through traditional channels, Twitter can inform, nudge and prod for change. For us, having to resort to social media to get the wider Church's attention on this matter is unfortunate, and begs further questions about governance and oversight.

This year we have also taken the decision to Tweet in support of other organisations working for gender equality globally, by congratulating on areas of progress where we see them.

Liturgy, Theology, Language

At the time of producing the Annual Report, it is anticipated that a booklet or other format of poems, prayers and liturgies will be compiled in celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in the Church of England.

End of Annual Report