

Andrews University Seminary Studies, Vol. 51, No. 2, 219-265.
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FLYING BISHOPS, WOMEN CLERGY, AND THE PROCESSES OF CHANGE IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

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Introduction

The Anglican Church has grappled with the role of women in ministry in an intensive and focused way since the early twentieth century. The processes of change began with a focus on women as deacons in the United Kingdom, followed by a local case of ordaining a woman in Hong Kong under wartime exigencies. Petitions for wider experiments with the ordination of women were, at first, rejected. The issue of women's ordination led to pastoral and theological studies, resulting in a conclusion in 1968 by the Lambeth Conference that the evidence from Scripture and tradition was inconclusive on the matter. Further study was urged at regional and national levels, with feedback to the Consultative Council of the church. In 1971, Hong Kong and other Southeast Asian churches were advised that the ordination of women could be countenanced at the provincial level if there was full support from the dioceses within the province. The practice was soon introduced by other provinces of the church, including the United States, New Zealand, and Canada. Resistance and controversy ignited extended discussion and debate, but the practice of ordaining women to ministry continued to spread widely. In 1988, the Lambeth Conference resolved that every province should be free to ordain women to all orders of the ordained ministry. Recognition for the appointment of women as bishops has followed a similar trajectory. In 1992, at a general synod in London, legislation was eventually approved for the Church of England to move legally in the same direction as the rest of the communion. The change was radical and required careful pastoral management, of which one partial solution was the appointment of itinerate bishops, known as flying bishops, who would minister to those clergy, laity, and parishes opposed to women clergy.

This article briefly reviews Anglican church polity and theology on the issue of women's ordination to ministry and then explores how the processes of conflict and change were and are being managed within the church. To accomplish this task, this article explores four questions: (1) How does the Anglican Communion organize itself? (2) What changes took place in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century perspectives on the role of women in society that laid the foundation for the ordination of women ministers in the church? (3) What are the significant stages of development, particularly in the

Church of England, that brought women into priestly and leadership roles?
(4) What are some of the intentional conflict-management strategies adopted by Anglican church leadership?

*Background to the Problem of
Women's Ordination*

Anglicans consider themselves to be a part of the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church, celebrating the Eucharist, and continuing the ministry of the historic episcopal succession. So even though the English church removed itself from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome during the Reformation period, it nevertheless continues to understand itself as part of a continuing catholic community, closely linked in ritual and core sacramental theology with the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions. As fellow sojourners on this religious pathway, Anglicans trace their history back to early Christian military families from Rome who settled near London at the end of the first century and later to the work of Augustine and others. As Dame Mary Tanner points out, this historical context is fundamental for understanding the process leading to the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Church of England and in the worldwide Anglican Communion.¹ On one side of this core tradition is a high-church strand that is close to Roman Catholicism in practice, while on the other side is a low-church strand with a strongly evangelical emphasis—both extremes advocate the maintenance of male headship. But through the pain and in spite of the threats of possible irreparable damage to its valued links with its ancient ecumenical brethren, the Anglican Communion nevertheless has slowly embraced the ordination of women to the priesthood and their consecration to the episcopate even as Rome has continued to argue that the Christian church has no authority to adopt such practices.²

The Anglican Communion early recognized that the issue of women's ordination would be fraught with difficulty. Leadership knew that both sides had strongly held convictions and that the question had the potential for catastrophic schism. Therefore, the journey was not undertaken lightly. A long list of analyses, studies, and reports by impressive commissions began to accumulate over the years, clearly at considerable expense, as the issue was debated throughout the church. For example, in 1986, as a consensus in the

¹Mary Tanner, "The Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod in Context," in *Seeking the Truth of Change in the Church: Reception, Communion and the Ordination of Women*, ed. Paul Avis (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 58. Tanner is from the Anglo-Catholic tradition and currently serves as President of the World Council of Churches. She notes that the Vatican has, in fact, hardened its stand on the issue in recent years.

²Sara Butler, "The Ordination of Women: A New Obstacle to the Recognition of Anglican Orders," *AThR* 78 (Winter 1996): 96-113.

Church of England was building in favor of women's ordination, a specially appointed task force was asked to undertake a "what-if scenario"—what if the church's two home provinces decided to split as a result of a decisive vote one way or the other? The task force compiled a range of five possible outcomes, ranking them from the most to the least favorable, thereby enabling church leaders to stare into the abyss.³ The detailed analysis of what might result in the worst possible outcome was sobering: a possible scenario pointed to a complete separation of resources, with two separate churches emerging, differentiated only by the single issue of women in ministry. The report was so stark, realistic, and sufficiently dire that church leaders resolved that it was an option too horrible to contemplate. Instead, the community determined that every possible effort must be called upon to insure continuity of as full a communion as possible.⁴

Reality has been much kinder than the task force's most feared outcome. While there has been much disruption and pain, with small groups splintering off in some of the national church provinces, to a remarkable degree the worldwide Anglican Communion has remained largely intact. As Paul Avis notes, the ordination of women in the Church of England has been welcomed in the vast majority of parishes, where it causes barely a ripple of dissent.⁵ That is also true of the wider Anglican Communion. While the journey is ongoing for different parts of the communion, the process is recognized as a significant success. What factors have helped achieve this?

In order to answer this question, it is important to understand how the change from an all-male priesthood to one that includes women occurred, how the associated conflicts that have emerged from this change have been managed, and what might be learned from them. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the historical background that led first to the ordination of women ministers and then to the continuing work of commissioning them to the episcopate. Together these two issues represent one of the most radical challenges the Church of England has faced since Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1538.

In order for the discussion to be meaningful, it will be helpful to begin by briefly surveying Anglican church polity.

³*The McClean Report*, General Synod, (738), 1986.

⁴Tanner, 64.

⁵Paul Avis, ed., *Seeking the Truth of Change in the Church: Reception, Communion and the Ordination of Women* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), ix. Avis is Director of the Centre for the Study of the Christian Church and Editor in Chief of the journal *Ecclesiology*. The more recent problem of how to relate to the issue of sexual orientation in the ministry is proving to be more sharply divisive with a much more visible rent in the fabric of the community.

*Governance Structures of the
Anglican Communion*

The Church of England has an acute sense of its history, tracing its origins back to early Christian settlements in England about 200 A.D. The Anglican Communion, expanding from its roots in England to the wider world, has a long history of relating to evolving political and social frameworks. At times these have required complex arrangements such as the Elizabethan settlement in England that involved the resolution of complex communal issues, which, in turn, helped to develop an appreciation for the art of compromise on nonessentials, the importance of the *via media*, and a concern for respecting minority points of view.⁶

The worldwide “Anglican Communion” is a recent development. The term was first used in its modern sense in 1847. However, structural expression of the concept was not achieved until twenty years later with the holding of the first Lambeth Conference in 1867. At this conference, bishops of the United Church of England and Ireland, together with those of the American and Scottish Episcopal Churches, were invited to confer together. The term now refers to a worldwide communion of churches that (1) is united through a common pattern of liturgical life rooted in the tradition of the Book of Common Prayer, (2) has been shaped by an emphasis on the continual public reading of Scripture, and (3) is linked in history with the archbishop of Canterbury. Provinces in the communion mutually recognize one another in the full communion of faith through the offices of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The four instruments of unity are the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Anglican Consultative Council; Meetings of the Primates, that is, heads of national churches; and the Lambeth Conference. The Lambeth Conference, which is the most important of the four instruments of unity, convenes once every ten years for the purpose of doctrinal study.⁷ As Colin Podmore notes, the very identity of the Anglican Communion is “inextricably linked with the Lambeth Conferences.”⁸ Thus, Lambeth is the most visible “coming together” of the whole communion. During the latter half of the twentieth century, it played a key role in facilitating the embracing of women in ministry.

⁶Paul A. Welsby provides a brief but helpful overview of how the history of the Church of England has shaped its ethos and its polity in *How the Church of England Works* (London: Church House Publishing, 1985).

⁷The Anglican Consultative Council is a three-yearly meeting of church leaders and lay officials who convene between sessions of the Lambeth Conference. Primates also meet on a three-yearly basis, but do not include laity. Colin Podmore, *The Governance of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion*, General Synod Report (910) (London: Church House, 2009), 11.

⁸Ibid.

The Anglican Communion is comprised of more than 85 million members worldwide. Two million people in the United States and 40 percent of the population of the United Kingdom identify with the church.⁹ Having no central government, it is organized as a community comprised of 38 provinces and six extraprovincial church areas. Provinces may be national, multinational, or regional, and are autonomous, legally separate entities administered by an archbishop. A twofold feature of governance, instituted in 1922, is that provinces respect geographical boundaries and are not to interfere in each other's territories. The two home provinces in the United Kingdom are York and Canterbury.

Provinces are comprised of three layers of organizational structure (see **Appendix 1**), with all provinces following similar patterns. Parish churches are cared for by a member of the clergy (e.g., vicar, parish priest, rector), with administrative matters addressed by a parish council. A cluster of parish churches in a localized geographical area form a deanery synod, chaired by a senior clergyperson of the area. Meetings of this synod are usually held annually, but can be convened as necessary to deal with local issues. Membership is comprised of clergy and lay representatives from the parishes, while voting is segregated in designated "houses," as in the House of Clergy or the House of Laity. Majorities are needed in both to secure passage of a resolution.

Several deanery synods in a geographical area comprise a diocese, administered by a bishop. Diocesan representatives meet together in a diocesan synod twice a year to deal with issues of mission and church life. When voting is required, it is done within houses. Synods do not function as executive bodies for administrative or commercial matters. These concerns are delegated to boards of finance and administration, which are appointed by the synod and delegated with statutory authority.

In Anglican ecclesiology, the diocese is regarded as the core organizational unit of the church and is led by a bishop, who, according to canon law, is regarded as the chief pastor. Conceptually, a diocese represents a part of the whole people of God gathered around the pastor, but it is separated into numerous parish churches that are cared for by local clergy. The bishop is vested with significant governing powers and is advised by a synod. Although the synod does not have executive authority, its decisions are, in most cases, implemented by the bishop.¹⁰

⁹<www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats.aspx>. Approximately one million attend Anglican services each week in England and up to three million at Christmas and Easter.

¹⁰In the Episcopalian Church in North America and in some other national churches more democratic and egalitarian traditions qualify the authority of the bishop (Podmore, 11).

Within the boundaries of a province, representatives from the synods meet together on an agreed-upon basis (usually twice annually) as a provincial general synod or, as it is known in the United States, a conference. This synodical form of governance in the Anglican Communion, begun in 1970, is a recent development and is intended to secure wider lay involvement in church governance.¹¹ At both diocesan- and general-synod levels, membership is structured on a tricameral basis, that is, it is comprised of three “houses”: bishops, clergy, and laity. This allows for a significant voice for laity in the governance process. Most issues are decided on a majority vote of 50 percent, which must be achieved in each of the houses. More serious issues of doctrinal or canon law, such as the matter of the ordination of women, are resolved by a two-thirds majority vote across all three houses. For example, on 11 November 1992, when the Church of England’s general synod approved the ordination of women to the priesthood, there were 553 votes of which 45 percent (or 249 members) were laity, but as a House of Laity, the votes comprised only one third of the voting power.¹²

Another distinctive feature of synodical governance structure, at least for the Church of England, is that lay representation on both the diocesan and the general synods is elected by the local laity, who themselves were elected as members of local deanery synods (see **Appendix I**). This electoral mechanism gives Anglican laity a stronger voice in church affairs at the grass-roots level.¹³ Lay participation in the decision-making process is also insured by provisions that require any issues of doctrinal or canon law proposed by the general synod be considered first by all deanery synods, which then consult with local parish councils, and before being approved by a majority of diocesan synods. Only then can an issue be voted on by a general synod and become general church policy. This is a lengthy and cumbersome process,

¹¹Ibid., 5.

¹²C. Raymond Holmes, in his 1987 review of the ordination of women in the Anglican Communion, critiqued the role of laity, complaining that the decision on women’s ordination did “not speak very highly of the Biblical literacy among Anglican laity” (“The Ordination of Women and the Anglican-Episcopal Experience: The Road to Schism” [unpublished case study prepared for the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1987], 14).

¹³The present structure for the participation of laity in Anglican governance is not without its problems. Because it is based on parish participation through the deanery synod, it tends to give a larger voice to the smaller parishes at the expense of larger urban parishes. In rural areas, it is also subject to the problem that participation may be based simply on whoever is available and willing to participate. In 2012, observers noted with regard to the general synod voting on the appointment of women as bishops in the Church of England that the election of lay delegates from small parishes had also become rather politicized (David Trim to G. M. Valentine, email November, 2012).

but as a conflict-and-change management strategy it insures that the church's entities move forward together and that an internal educational process is involved. In the case of the change to canon law and the framing of legislation for the ordination of women to the priesthood in 1992, a majority of 38 of 44 diocesan synods gave their approval by majority votes in both the diocesan Houses of Clergy and Laity.

Social and Historical Background

The historical and social background of the advancement of women to the priesthood and the episcopate in the Anglican Communion is, of course, related to far-reaching changes in the general role of women in society that have occurred in the past 200 or more years.

As Sean Gill notes, the understanding of women and their roles slowly began to change toward the end of the seventeenth century. The dominant seventeenth-century societal image of women compared them to the biblical Eve, imagining them to be seductive, wayward temptresses who were both dangerous and intellectually inferior to men. By the eighteenth-century, however, this view metamorphosed to a view of women as paragons and models of virtue, best suited for training and nurturing moral values in the home.¹⁴ From there, the reasoning went, if women were indeed the best placed and best equipped for the moral training of their own children, then surely other children could also benefit. Thus, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, women began to play a more public role in both charity and Sunday schools and in other charitable and philanthropic organizations. The effect was to enhance what Gill calls the "socially regenerative power of female religiosity," which led to calls for the further education of women, particularly for teaching the Bible and catechism in Sunday school. Teaching became the doorway to a wider ministry in the church and in society. It was believed that there was not a great deal of difference between teaching and managing a school, visiting children and their parents, and doing actual pastoral visitation.¹⁵

The emergence of the Methodist movement in the late eighteenth century, with its emphasis on Bible-study classes, became a significant challenge to Anglicanism. In these meetings, women were encouraged to speak and many became teachers and leaders. In this respect, Methodist Bible-study classes were a recovery of the house-church model of the earliest

¹⁴Sean Gill, *Women and the Church of England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (London: SPCK, 1994), 26-27.

¹⁵Gill has a helpful discussion of these developments. Though the Charity Schools in England operated on a small scale compared to Sunday Schools, their influence was extensive (*ibid.*, 26-27, 39, 51; see also Ian Jones, *Women and Priesthood in the Church of England: Ten Years On* [London: Church House Publishing, 2004], 18).

period of the Christian church. As early as 1787, John Wesley authorized a woman to preach.¹⁶

While Methodism certainly influenced the role of women in the Anglican Church, it was, however, the expansion of Anglican missionary societies and overseas missions during the Victorian era that began to make real room for women within its ranks. As Gill notes, to a large extent the overseas mission program depended on the contribution made by pastoral wives, which necessitated accepting a more public role for women in ministry. It also created an expanded role for single women. For example, in 1830, the Church Missionary Society had only a few sisters in mission-field appointments, but by 1909 the society supported 438 single women in overseas mission work as deaconesses or sisters. This was more than the 414 male clergy employed as overseas missionaries that year. Other missionary societies experienced the same pattern. It is important to note that it was the call to mission that drove this expansion of women in ministry, not a grudging response to any feminist movement.¹⁷

The extensive involvement of women in religious life and mission was further nurtured by the development of the Tractarian or Oxford movement with its emphasis on catholic spirituality and the devotional life in the mid-nineteenth century. This movement, in an attempt to recover catholic traditions, focused the attention of the church on providing room for women within its own Anglican structures.¹⁸ There was resistance at first to the rising influence of Anglo-Catholicism and the renewal of religious communities (religious orders had not existed since the dissolution of the monasteries in the period of 1536-1541). Gradually, however, following the establishment of the first order of Anglican sisterhoods in 1845, others began to appear, thereby providing a way for women to be involved in full-time religious life and in social-welfare causes under the umbrella of the Church of England.

¹⁶Women played a prominent part in first-century house churches. See, e.g., Karen Torjeson, "The Early Controversies over Female Leadership" *Christian History* 17 (1988): 20-24; see also idem, *When Women were Priests* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 33.

¹⁷Gill, 174-175. A debate occurred in the 1870s and 1880s about the suitability of calling women into mission service. It was argued by proponents, women were needed as missionaries to reach Hindu and Muslim women in their homes, where male clergy were unable to go and thus they were singularly ineffective.

¹⁸Jones, 17-18. See also Gill, 159-160, who argues that the sisterhoods were significant out of all proportion to their numbers. The Anglican form of sisterhood did not allow for irreversible vows of celibacy, but they still upheld the ideal of voluntary celibacy and the highest ideals linked with charitable endeavor. The sisterhood drew recruits largely from the upper classes.

By 1861, there were 86 sisters. By 1900, the number had increased to between 2,000 and 3,000.¹⁹

The increased scope of women's public role both at home and abroad was accompanied by an ethos of expanding social and legislative emancipation, embracing freedoms such as the right to choose one's own husband, to own property in one's own name, and to write one's own will, even though married. This was followed by the right to sue for divorce and the right to the protection of the law in a difficult marriage. Further rights and freedoms followed as the nineteenth century wore on, with women gaining the right to participate in higher education and in the professions of teaching, medicine, law, pharmacy, and dentistry.²⁰ This involvement in public life was expanded further with the success of the women's suffragist movement in many countries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²¹

The suffragist movement created tensions in the Church of England, particularly over its approach to campaigning. Evangelical churchmen opposed the movement on the basis of Scripture, which they understood to teach male headship and the subordination of women in civic affairs. The church found itself unable to respond with an internal ratification of the vote on universal suffrage until a full year after parliamentary approval. The so-called headship passages of Scripture were used repeatedly to argue against the expansion of rights to women across the whole range of developments.²²

The Church of England found itself needing to adjust to the changing roles of women by modifying some of its practices as defined by canon law on marriage and divorce. The church was also under pressure to change due to a greater participation of women in church services—there were two females to every male in attendance at weekly worship services. Participation in church affairs also began to increase. In 1920, only 6 percent of the 646

¹⁹There has been much debate about whether the rise of the sisterhoods was an early form of feminism and the emancipation of women because in their own way they involved discipline and subordination. But the movement undoubtedly contributed strongly to an emerging new feminine spirituality and gave it space to grow.

²⁰In 1870, the University of Michigan became the first state university in the United States to admit a woman into the study of medicine. It was not until 1884 that Oxford University voted to admit women to examinations, but they could not be granted a degree. The Church of England opposed the move. Strong bishops argued the Aristotelian view that women's brains were not made for learning; women were intellectually inferior and their place was the home (Gill 19-20, 116-117).

²¹Success was achieved in New Zealand in 1893, South Australia in 1894, Finland in 1907, Denmark in 1915, Russia and Canada in 1917, Germany, Hungary and England in 1918, and the United States in 1920.

²²Gill, 78-80, 94-95, 208-209. Gill observes that the Anglo-Catholic wing of the church responded to the issues by articulating their vision of chastity, devotion, and advocating the muted asceticism and misogyny of the early church fathers.

members of the Anglican National Assembly (forerunner of the general synod) were women. By 1975, however, 32 percent of the delegates to the general synod were women. There were also larger numbers of women employed on a full-time basis in the church. For example, in 1966, there were 3,500 full-time working women, including deaconesses, Church Army Sisters, and church social workers. Of these, 2,688 were participating in sisterhoods. The increasing involvement of women in the life of the church and in its governance assisted in the democratization of the church and their voices would eventually help bring a more favorable response to women in the priesthood.²³ Such pressures gave rise to questions about whether the church was simply responding and accommodating itself to secular culture.

The Anglican Church, along with other religious groups, resisted changes in women's roles on the basis of male headship, which was derived from the Genesis 3 narrative and certain Pauline texts. In this resistance, there is a paradox. The Christian gospel, with its seminal truths of the equal value of every human being, the unique giftedness of each individual, and the seeking of restoration and recovery of the original Edenic ideal in the life of the church, has had profound effects on society. The seeding of the ideology of equality in the soil of society slowly germinated and flowered into a broadening emancipation for all those who were oppressed. Yet, the same Scriptures that taught the gospel have been used to slow and impede the flowering process, seeing it as a threat to traditional order. As Gill observes, an incarnational paradigm for the relationship of church to society helps explain how the church both informs society and is informed by society. It also explains how the Anglican Communion responded to the changes in the role of women in society by both resisting and embracing them.²⁴

Stages in Development

Women began to be more involved in charitable and philanthropic organizations in the nineteenth century as the social and physical needs of impoverished Industrial Revolution-era communities grew ever more desperate in Europe and America. In England, these pressures led to the establishment of deaconess communities, the first being the Community of St. Andrew founded in 1860 in Notting Hill, London. This soon led to the re-creation of the order of deaconess in Anglicanism. Elizabeth Ferard, the first to be appointed a deaconess, was set apart by Archbishop Tait in 1861. Soon thereafter an independent college for the training of deaconesses was established at Mildmay Park in London. The school, which placed a strong emphasis on education, home nursing, and social care, was modeled on the Lutheran deaconess training college in Kaiserwerth, Germany. Other

²³Ibid, 209, 216.

²⁴Ibid.

institutions soon followed in one diocese after another until by 1875 there were 18 sisterhoods working in 95 centers. By 1884, Mildmay had 200 deaconesses in training and there were 1,500 associate deaconesses in the churches.²⁵

Deacon or Deaconess?

Under the threefold order of ministry, the deacon was regarded as a member of the clergy, leading to an initial confusion over how to regard the role of deaconess. Women accepted into the order wore a distinctive style of clerical dress, but were they really clergy? Appointment involved the laying on of hands and the role provided formal avenues for social outreach and pastoral visitation in a parish or a diocese, mostly under the supervision of a parish priest. Whether the office was clerical or just how far it was clerical was not at all clear, even to those who had reintroduced the order. The role of deaconess had been added without any formal description of the authority or scope of the office. But the role clearly filled a need.

The role of deacon, on the other hand, was clearly defined in canon law. Men ordained as full-time deacons were full members of the clergy. Although they could assist with the celebration of the Eucharist, they were not permitted to preside, to absolve sins, or to bless people. Nevertheless, they were on a track to be ordained as priests after two or three years in the office of deacon unless they chose to remain as permanent “vocational” deacons.²⁶

In the 1880s and 1890s, the office of deaconess with its lack of clarity was also adopted in the Episcopal Church in America and canon law was modified accordingly. Various training programs were initiated, but confusion continued to reign about the enigmatic role. The issue came to a head in the United States in 1919 when the Episcopal Pension Fund refused to pay deaconesses a pension because they were technically not clergy. The following year the Archbishop of Canterbury, in an effort to clarify matters, concluded the Lambeth Conference of fellow archbishops by ordaining a deaconess and conferring Holy Orders upon her. He declared that she could preach and lead prayers in worship, but noted that “the office was in no way comparable

²⁵Margaret Webster, *A New Strength, A New Song: The Journey to Women's Priesthood* (London: Mowbray, 1994), 12. Webster's account is a vibrant telling of the story from the perspective of one who was closely involved as the Executive Secretary of the largest women's advocacy group, Movement for the Ordination of Women. She was involved in coordinating the campaign that was instrumental in changing the minds of the Church of England over the issue of women priests.

²⁶Canon law regarding the office of deacon also provided for the option of men to be appointed to the role while continuing in their private employment or vocation and assuming the duties of deacon on a voluntary basis.

to that of the all male diaconate.²⁷ Two years later, in 1922, the permission to lead prayers was withdrawn by the archbishop. Then, in 1930, an even more restrictive view of the status of the role was imposed, although now the deaconess was allowed to baptize infants and to “church” women coming into the faith.

In the meantime, as a result of the confusion surrounding the enigmatic office of deaconess, the Lambeth Conferences were beginning to wrestle more seriously with how to understand the overall role of women in ministry. In 1917, as many more women had become involved in work outside the home in response to wartime exigencies, the Lambeth Conference was asked why there were still sanctions and restrictions on the role of women in the church. The archbishop established a commission to report on the question. In 1919, the study group reported that while there were no strong arguments that would prevent women from becoming priests, neither were there any strong theological justifications to depart from the present male-only tradition. This was the first time the idea of women as priests appears in any official Anglican church report or discussion paper.

In 1930, Lambeth was asked again about why it was impossible to ordain women as priests, but this time it was found that there were theological principles which would constitute an insuperable difficulty. This conference rescinded the former permission for deaconesses to lead prayers in worship. The question resurfaced in 1935. This time the response took a more neutral stance, finding that while there is no overwhelming theological support either to ordain or not to ordain women, the all-male ministry seemed to be what Scripture mandated “for the church today.” This commission was comprised of five bishops, the dean of St Paul’s, three senior clergy, one layman, three laywomen, and the head deaconess. The panel, meeting for 24 days in the form of a parliamentary commission, heard a great number of witnesses including many deaconesses and women from the religious orders and considered a large number of submissions. The report of the group was substantial and settled many employment-related issues,²⁸ indicating that the Church of England was becoming more seriously concerned over the issue of women in ministry. The report confirmed that the status of deaconess did indeed have the “permanence of holy orders.” Although it did not parallel the other three orders of ministry for males, nevertheless a deaconess did rank among the clergy. Deaconesses could not only now preach and baptize, but they could lead in prayers and have a liturgical function in worship, even in some instances assisting the priest in administering the chalice. But the panel also concluded that progress to the priesthood was not an option. The order

²⁷Gill, 219.

²⁸*The Ministry of Women: Report of the Archbishop’s Commission* (London: Church House, 1935).

of deaconess “was the one Holy Order at present open to women in the Church.” The fear of upsetting other catholic faith traditions was too strong. Thus, a foundation was laid for a largely negative view of the prospects for the ordination of women that persisted in the Church of England for the next forty years.²⁹

The 1935 report, despite its negativity, nevertheless achieved an important precedent in that it also included a strong theological defense for women’s admission to the priesthood. W. R. Mathews, the highly respected dean of St Paul’s in London, refused to endorse the part of the report that dealt with the priesthood issue. Instead, he wrote a dissenting note strongly supporting the ordination of women to ministry, although he did not feel that it was expedient to do so at the present.³⁰ According to Margaret Webster, executive secretary of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, the report set a pattern of prevarication and delay that lasted for several decades. Even requests to allow laywomen to be readers in worship services were repeatedly shelved during the ensuing decades. But the issue would not go away and, as Webster notes, history soon intervened and irregularities began to appear. The sad episode of the ordination of the deaconess Florence Li Tim-Oi of China to the priesthood just a few years later in 1944 eventually became a *cause célèbre*. It lit a slow-burning fuse that would later flare into a bright flame that could not be extinguished.³¹

The First Woman Anglican Priest

History intervened in China in 1943. Following the occupation of Hong Kong and South China by Japanese forces during the Second World War, Anglican communicants in the interior of South China became isolated and were not able to be served by regular clergy. Ronald O. Hall, the bishop of Hong Kong and South China, faced a dilemma. Although he came from the Anglo-Catholic side of the community, he considered it more “irregular” for communion to be celebrated by someone who did not have priestly orders than for him to ordain a woman to do it, although that was also “irregular.” Hall was deeply concerned that the sacraments be regularly administered. Florence Li had been to theological college and received the same training as her male colleagues. She had been in charge of a church for four years and had been a successful pastor, functioning fully as a priest in all but name. Furthermore, her local Chinese supervisor, Bishop Mok, had, under the challenge of war-time circumstances, authorized her to celebrate communion, a practice Hall wanted to regularize. He notified his brother bishops in the region and resolved that if he could possibly meet with Li he would do

²⁹Ibid. See also Webster, 19.

³⁰Webster, 20.

³¹Ibid., 24.

so. And he did. In January 1944, under difficult circumstances involving a dangerous week's journey across mountains on foot by Li and a risky five-day journey by foot and boat for Hall from his temporary base in Chungking, the two met in Xing-Xing. After two days of examination and praying together, Hall ordained Li in a small Anglican church. As Hall related to two clergy friends in England shortly thereafter, he was sure that Li "had amply proved (like Cornelius) that she had the pastoral charisma."³² He did not feel he was challenging the church. He was dealing with an urgent pastoral need.

Li functioned fully as a priest for eighteen months before word trickled out to the outside world and pressure was then put on Archbishop Temple by the Anglo-Catholic *Church Times* editor, who asked publicly what the archbishop was going to do about this highly irregular act.³³ The editor argued that such an action could shatter the Anglican Communion and endanger the ecumenical movement—"the Orthodox would not stand for it." Temple, who personally could not see "any shadow of theological ground for the non-ordination of women," found himself having to discipline Hall in his official capacity, although it seems that he did not sign the official letter of reprimand that others apparently wrote for him just before his death.³⁴ Hall was pressured to rescind Li's ordination or resign as bishop, both of which he refused to do. In the end, Li, herself under pressure and not wishing to have her bishop's position threatened, quit functioning as a priest, although she never resigned her orders. The Chinese House of Bishops, comprised mostly of Westerners, squeezed a meager majority to "admonish" Hall. The Synod of the Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau, however, later issued a strongly worded statement that they "found the attitude of the Church in the West impossible to understand." For them, Li's ordination was "natural and inevitable," and they believed that God was using "China's age-long respect for women, and traditional confidence in women's gifts for administration and counsel, to open a new chapter in the history of the church." The synod believed that the discrimination against Li was unjust and unscriptural.³⁵

The hierarchy of the Anglican Communion eventually agreed that Hong Kong was correct on both matters, but it took two decades for them to make this admission. In the meantime, the diocese petitioned the General Assembly

³²Letter, R. O. Hall to William Greer and Tissington Tatlow, 27 January 1944, cited in Webster, 68. At the same time, Hall informed William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, of his actions.

³³The news first appeared as an inspirational story on the children's page of a New Zealand missionary magazine, *The Gleaner* (Webster, 69).

³⁴Edward Carpenter gives an account of the censuring of Bishop Hall in *Archbishop Fisher, His Life and Times* (London: Canterbury Press, 1991), 134-138.

³⁵Cited in David Paton, 'R. O.': *The Life and Times of Bishop Hall of Hong Kong* (Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau, 1985), 132; see also Webster, 70.

in London for consideration of the ordination of women—the first official formal motion on record for such a request. No action was taken, but the 1948 Lambeth Conference had been asked to consider it and the request was part of the official record. The Lambeth response to the proposal, even as an experiment, was negative.³⁶

In the decade following the 1948 request, pressure continued to build in the church as more women were confronted with “a fantastic explosion in the opportunities” of the secular world. The church, however, still equivocated on women’s ministerial contributions. Leadership, aware of positive developments in the wider society, began to study the question again and to review continuing problems within the deaconess order. The *Gender and Ministry* report prepared for the Church’s general assembly that year noted the difficulties encountered in deploying parish workers and deaconesses and urged a wider and more imaginative use of their services.³⁷ This report was followed in 1966 with *Women in Holy Orders*, which had been commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury three years earlier. Debated in the general assembly in 1967, this report stated that it could find “no conclusive reasoning against ordaining women,” but that all sorts of other pragmatic reasons seemed to be given for not advancing the issue. The general assembly did not know what to do with the report, leaving it for further consideration. Later in 1967, the report was brought back for discussion and again the church dithered. However, it was at the 1967 sessions that a formal motion was first put to the assembly that women should be ordained to ministry on exactly the same terms as men.³⁸ The resolution was debated with “wit, passion, erudition and sometimes a curious illogic,” according to journalist Patricia de Joux, but it did not pass.³⁹

Finally, in 1968, as they continued to wrestle unsuccessfully with the issue of women in ministry, the assembly was compelled by forceful arguments from a respected lay divinity teacher, Christian Howard, to recognize that the whole idea of “women’s ministry could not be resolved until the Church of England made a decision with the larger issue of the ordination of women to ‘holy orders.’”⁴⁰ Three years later, in 1971, after further dithering and uncertainty, Howard, with her long experience of church governance and of women’s ministry, was asked by the general synod to prepare “a survey of the present state of opinion about the ordination of women.” The report she prepared and published in 1972 was magisterial in its scope, providing

³⁶Webster, 67-71.

³⁷*Gender and Ministry: Report from the Central Advisory Council for the Ministry* (CIO, 1962); see also Webster, 27.

³⁸Jones, 19; see also Webster, 26-27.

³⁹*The Times*, 20 June 1967.

⁴⁰*Women and Holy Orders: Report of the Archbishop’s Commission* (CIO, 1966).

the contextual background and foundation for preparing the general synod to request authorization for the admission of women to the priesthood.⁴¹ This report was followed later by two others in 1978 and 1984 that were also prepared by Howard.⁴² While the Church of England inched forward, dragging its feet, the Anglican Communion elsewhere moved steadily forward.

From Hong Kong to the Wider Anglican Communion

Following its 1948 request, Hong Kong again raised the issue of women's ordination with the Lambeth Conference in 1960. In 1965, the Episcopal Church in America's House of Bishops commissioned a report on women's ordination, which was submitted to the conference the following year. It noted that the matter was being discussed not only throughout the worldwide Anglican Communion, but also by others, including Presbyterians, Methodists, and Lutherans. The report affirmed the ordination of women and urged the bishops to be aware that the matter was gathering some urgency. The House of Bishops responded to the report by requesting the 1968 Lambeth Conference to consider the question of women's ordination.⁴³

The reason requests for women's ordination were made to the Lambeth Conference was because provinces were autonomous on such matters; however, questions about ministry had never been seen as a matter for any one individual province to decide. There might be legal freedom to do so, but neither Hong Kong nor the other provinces wished to act unilaterally if they could avoid it. Nor did they want to wait forever for some response. Hong Kong had already been waiting a long time. It was crucial for the Anglican provinces to remain in communion with other provinces and with the mother church. Unilateral action had been talked of, but there was a willingness to wait for the synodical process. As the Bishop of Stafford, Christopher Hill, observed, however, "in a divided church there is sometimes no way of change other than unilaterally," noting that church history is littered with examples of individual churches making changes in advance of others on matters of faith

⁴¹Christian Howard, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: Consultative Document for the General Synod* (GS104) (CIO, 1972). Webster, 27, notes that this comprehensive report dealing with biblical evidence, tradition, theological questions, social considerations, and ecumenical implications found its way throughout the church and into the hands of men and women serving on parish councils, boards, and committees throughout the church.

⁴²*The Independent*, 26 April 1999.

⁴³*The Proper Place of Women in the Ministry of the Church House of Bishops* (ECUSA, 1966). The report can be found in Emily C. Hewitt and Suzanne R. Hiatt, *Women Priests: Yes or No?* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 109-104.

and order and not being expelled from the communion. The same view was held by provincial archbishops.⁴⁴

The 1968 Lambeth Conference marked a historic shift. After extensive debate, it concluded by a large majority that “there was no valid theological objection to the ordination of women.” The conference also defined the meaning of the diaconate and agreed that deaconesses were fully within its order. This promptly raised the question of why the office of deaconess was maintained as a separate order and whether it should be continued thus. Because Lambeth had no juridical authority to implement its newly achieved consensus, it requested the national and regional churches to study the question of ordination and report back to the newly established Anglican Consultative Council, which had been commissioned as a standing committee to address unresolved Lambeth Conference issues between sessions. The first meeting of the committee was scheduled to meet in Limuru, Kenya, in February 1971. One of its first deliberations required urgency. Gilbert Baker, the Bishop of Hong Kong, and his synod had already reached a studied conclusion on the issue of women’s ordination and had approved in principle the ordination of women to the priesthood. He had two deaconesses ready to ordain as priests.

The urgency of the situation and the need to maintain harmony was reinforced on the Anglican Consultative Council by an awareness of the rapidly changing tide of opinion in the church. Also mindful of the earlier 1968 Lambeth Conference consensus that the arguments against ordination were inconclusive, the February 1971 Anglican Consultative Council first determined that all churches of the Anglican Communion must give consideration to the ordination question by 1973. The Anglican Consultative Council approved a landmark resolution that proved to be of immense strategic value in keeping the communion together. The landmark sentence read:

ACC advises the Bishop of Hong Kong, acting with the approval of his Synod, and any other Bishop of the Anglican Communion acting with the approval of the Province, that if he decides to ordain women to the priesthood, his action will be acceptable to this Council.⁴⁵

Eight months later, Baker ordained Jane Hwang and Joyce Bennett in Hong Kong and took the special initiative of recognizing Li’s orders, even though she was absent. Li’s church had been closed by the communists and she was serving time in hard labor under the Cultural Revolution. Three months later, in January 1972, the Burmese Synod, following Hong Kong, also approved women for ordination. It was a significant breakthrough. The Hong Kong event was

⁴⁴Christopher Hill, “Reception and the Act of Synod,” in *Seeking the Truth of Change in the Church*, ed. Paul Avis (London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 114; see also Tanner, 59.

⁴⁵Gill, 250. *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: A Consultative Document Presented by the Advisory Council for the Church’s Ministry* (London: Church Information Office, 1972), 3, 55-56.

celebrated in London with a service of thanksgiving conducted by the Bishop of Ely, Ted Roberts, in the Chapel of Church House at the Anglican Church headquarters in Central London. Roberts, who had served as the chairman of the Anglican Group for the Ordination of Women, proposed that “the example of Hong Kong should give the Anglican Church new impetus.” He hoped that Hong Kong “would continue to jolt us out of our complacency.”⁴⁶

Other provinces soon followed the lead of the Hong Kong diocese. Most controversial and conflicted were the steps taken by the Episcopal Church in America when the general convention of 1973 rejected a proposal for the ordination of women. The strategy of voting a simple approval/nonapproval clause as an approach to resolving the issue did not work well. Rather it prompted threats of division and left unconvinced members feeling isolated and disenfranchised. Thus, the outcome of this vote caused significant widespread distress and led to irregular ordinations on the part of dissenting bishops in 1974 with the ordination of the “Philadelphia eleven.” The irregularities also led to ecclesiastical charges laid against bishops, lawsuits, resignations, and general confusion and division. Not until September 1976 was some semblance of harmony restored when the General Convention again debated the issue and finally approved the step. But by 1977 the unresolved tensions experienced by the unconvinced minority who opposed the ordination of women were further complicated by the adoption of a new Book of Common Prayer, which led to the formation of a breakaway church, the Anglican Catholic Church, which, in turn, soon disintegrated into yet smaller groupings.⁴⁷

At its 1975 general synod, the Church of England also voted to approve the ordination of women, seeing no theological foundation for not doing so. But the same synod failed to pass a resolution dealing with the need to prepare legislation to enact and make legal any ordinations. There was a clear sense that the church needed to develop a broader consensus and to develop a more nuanced and pastoral approach for implementing actions to insure that the minority did not suddenly feel unchurched. There were some members who clearly were not ready to embrace women’s ordination and the Church of England certainly did not want to fall into the kind of upheaval and turbulence that the American church was then experiencing.

In other provinces, the radical change went more smoothly. In 1976, Canada approved the change after having moved through the involved synodical consultation process with little disruptive controversy. The lack

⁴⁶Webster, 29.

⁴⁷<http://www.anglicancatholic.org>. There has been further splintering of the group that broke away, numbering approximately 100,000 in 900 congregations. The breakaway groups affiliate together as the Continuing Anglican Movement, but in recent years they have been more active in reuniting with Roman Catholicism (http://www.acahome.org/about_aca).

of controversy was attributed to the strong pastoral role of a long-serving, highly respected archbishop and to a long national tradition of women who played an important part in pioneering the Western prairies. No parishes left the church and only seven priests resigned in protest.⁴⁸

New Zealand followed a year later without controversy. Kenya made the step in 1983 and Uganda in 1984, with both countries first granting unofficial ordinations, followed later by general synod approvals. Australia took the step in 1986 with some anguish though no schism. By 1988, general synods in Brazil, Rwanda, Zaire, Spain, and the Sudan all decided to move in the same direction, with Ireland welcoming women into the priesthood in 1990. Clearly, the wider communion was moving faster and with more ease on the issue than the two home provinces of Canterbury and York in England.

The 1978 Lambeth Conference was seen as a “minor watershed.” First, the diversity of practice allowed within the Anglican Communion by the 1968 Lambeth Conference’s decision was reaffirmed in 1978 in the conference’s Resolution 21, which declared its acceptance of member churches that decided to ordain women; the resolution urged respect for churches that had not. Second, the conference was the first in which women bishops were in attendance from the four ordaining and consecrating provinces—Hong Kong, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. This fact alone seemed to convey a sense of confirmation.⁴⁹ Worldwide communion would be maintained through what some called a “Co-Existence Project,” even though the correctness of the decision to ordain women was not yet settled beyond any shadow of doubt until the practice had been received by the whole church. Those provinces adopting the practice were understood to be asking the other provinces for a process of wider discernment, reception, and reflection. This attitude of openness by the four provinces became a fundamentally important change-management concept. By the time of the 1988 Lambeth Conference, the discussion had moved from the ordination of women priests to the consecration of women bishops. Again, the ideas of coexistence in communion and of accepting the process of open reception were seen as ways to maintain the highest degree of communion possible, while allowing the various branches of the church to move at different rates of development according to readiness and need.

From the Wider Communion to the Church of England

For the Church of England, the process was much more difficult and complex because the church for important historical reasons was an established or state church. Its approval processes did not just mean the amending of canon law which with due process, its councils were able to authorize. But in England

⁴⁸Webster, 57.

⁴⁹Ibid., 82.

a major change to the order of ministry such as the ordination of women also required the preparing of legislation for approval of parliament and the endorsement of the sovereign. Layers of complexity were also added to the process by the requirements that at each stage of approval the specific consent of a two-thirds majority of each of the 44 dioceses and also the lower-level deanery synods had to be obtained by recorded vote in each of the houses involved in the tripartite voting system. It was a slow measured process. But, on the other hand, it also insured an extensive education process, thorough debate, and the development of a clear and informed consensus.

Because of the Church of England's unique relationship with the state, additional tensions and dilemmas were experienced, arising from the diversity developing in the wider communion. Women clergy ordained abroad under the approval of Lambeth could preach and participate in the liturgy when invited to visit England, but they could not celebrate the Eucharist, at least not in any church or university chapel that had been consecrated or dedicated and recorded as such under the law. That applied to almost all places of worship. Opponents of women's ordination, particularly from the more strident strand of the Anglo-Catholic wing, insisted on the scrupulous observance of this requirement and many of them saw it as a way of preventing the change. Women clergy from abroad who were invited to minister in England could celebrate communion in private chapels, at homes, and in parking lots adjacent to registered church buildings—all of which they sometimes did, with the press particularly invited to the parking lot occasions. The restriction, however, increased tensions in the church and was viewed as an insult to women, further highlighting the issue of discrimination.

It took seven years for the Church of England to implement the process of study requested by Lambeth in 1968. The general synod of 1972 formally voted that the diocesan synods should be consulted and that part of the process took three years. In July 1975, the study and consultation had been completed, with 33 of the synods reporting that they agreed with the change. Responding to this mandate, the general synod of 1975 agreed, with a two-thirds majority in all three houses voting for the historic decision of approving the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Church of England.

But this voted approval was not so simple to carry out. On that same day, the same general synod found it was unable to take the next necessary step of approving the resolution that would begin removing legal barriers for the change to be implemented. This "not yet" stance represented a consensus that the church needed more time to feel comfortable with the change. Only fifteen of the 44 diocesan synods agreed on the second step of implementing the needed action. There was not yet a majority in favor of ordaining women priests and there was, therefore, a need to wait.

Three years later, in 1978, the proposal to initiate the second step of amending legislation was defeated again in the general synod. This time the

failure to secure enough numbers occurred only in the House of Clergy. There was deep frustration for many, particularly the waiting deaconesses, for whom the vote was a bitter defeat, encapsulated in the spontaneous anguished cry from one in the observer's gallery at the conclusion of the debate: "We asked for bread, and you gave us a stone." The gallery crier was Una Kroll, a longtime and highly respected voice in the church. Her anguish and frustration reverberated throughout the press and around England. The continuing resistance energized those who felt that movement on the issue would happen only if there was wider debate and discussion in the church. But who would help to educate the church on this issue?

The failure of 1978 gave rise a year later to the formation of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, a powerful activist group comprised of respected professional church- and laywomen and supported by well-known bishops and clergy. Other smaller activist groups, some more radical than others, also became more vocal at this time, as did opposition groups such as the Church Union and the Cost of Conscience group representing Anglo-Catholic opinion. The rise of such groups helped to create an increased polarization. But, for the most part, the disagreements were respectful and civil. Church leaders actively fostered a culture of openness, insisting not only that the conversation be respectful, but modeled it themselves thereby enabling the church members to cope with such disagreements even when holding strong convictions.

The wider debate of the issues pertaining to women's ordination in the church and in the community served a helpful educational purpose. Eventually when the proposal was reintroduced in the general synod in 1984, permission was finally granted for the ordination of women. But again, to the frustration of the waiting deaconesses, it would take another eight long years for the general synod to agree on the legislation to be approved. Nevertheless, hope for the long journey toward women's ordination was stirred the following year when the general synod agreed that the order of deaconesses was indeed an anomalous and enigmatic order and that deaconesses should be admitted to the diaconate on the same basis as men and regarded as clergy in the same way. This action, too, needed parliamentary approval. But it was a historic moment for women. Webster observes that the Movement for the Ordination of Women saw the final passage of the Deacons' Measure in parliament the following year as "one of the most crucial votes in a decade of debate." The order of deaconess was closed the following year, 125 years after its institution. These developments suggested to women and their advocates that the progress to priesthood might also become a reality.⁵⁰

The preparation of the proposals for voting involved a complicated and time-consuming sequence of actions. First, the general synod needed

⁵⁰Ibid., 121.

to approve the broad scope of the legislation, which passed in 1986. Then a work group prepared drafts of the legislation, which was completed in 1987. The drafts were received, debated, and sent back for revision in 1988. Approval of the drafts, together with an accompanying code of practice for the implementation process and protection provisions, came in 1989. Church and lay legal experts, as well as the Anglo-Catholic activist groups such as Cost of Conscience and the Movement for the Ordination of Women were consulted extensively in the drafting and revision process. However, the documents were still only drafts. Under synod regulations, the completed draft legislation then had to be referred to the diocesan synods in 1990, which were obliged to consult with the local-level deanery synods. It was a long and arduous process.

It was not until 1992 that word came back from the diocesan synods that 38 out of 44 had given assent. Even then, however, it was not certain whether there would be enough of a consensus in all three houses of the general synod for the proposed measures to pass. Tensions ran high. There were hundreds of women deacons now, many of whom had been in ministry and parish leadership for decades and whose future would be affected by the decision.⁵¹ The portentous decision day at Church House in London was scheduled for Wednesday, 11 November 1992. The observation and press galleries were full with reporters from around the world who were taking a keen interest in the proceedings. The synod protocol called for a formal day-long debate with two opening speeches, one to propose and one to oppose, then open discussion followed by a formal opposing speech and a concluding supportive speech. A verbatim record was kept and the level of discourse was impressive, representing deep theological reflection and pastoral concern. When the vote was called for at about 5:00 p.m., the Ordination of Women measure was passed by a two-thirds majority in all three houses (Bishops, 75%; Clergy, 70.4%; and Laity, 67.3%) to the complete surprise of the opponents, who, according to observers, were to some degree in a state of denial. They simply did not think it could or would happen.⁵²

For church leadership, the historic vote was both surprising and yet not surprising. No one really knew in advance how the numbers would fall or how effective the final day of debating might be in changing people's minds.⁵³

⁵¹Jones, 21, reports on the range of options that women deacons were considering should the vote not go through. He suggests that the departure of women from ministry, either by resignation or by service overseas, could have been greater than the number of men who resigned over the issue or converted to Rome. Almost 2,000 women entered the priesthood in the decade following the vote.

⁵²*The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: The Synod Debate*, 11 November 1992 (London: Church House, 1993), 90. Webster, 156-188, gives a more detailed and moving personal account of these events from the perspective of an active participant.

⁵³As it turned out, it seems that several general synod members of evangelical

But whether the vote succeeded or failed the bishops knew there would be significant upheaval. As Monica Furlong recalls, many bishops had prepared themselves to be available to counsel distraught, disappointed women on their staff. They were not, however, prepared for the deep anger of those who had believed the vote would not pass in favor of women's ordination. The level of hostility to the success of the vote, largely on the part of the Anglo-Catholic right wing, took church leaders by surprise.⁵⁴

The Church of England's Enabling Legislation of 1992

The strength of hostility from the minority group took church leaders by surprise. The synod had, in fact, closely consulted with minority groups throughout the development of the draft legislation it sent to parliament for approval. From a change-and-conflict-management perspective, the bishops and other church leaders appeared to have prepared the ground well for a positive vote for women's ordination. They had gone to great lengths to insure that the legislation included adequate, appropriate, and agreed-upon safeguard clauses to protect the minority. Minority groups had been consulted closely in the shaping of the legislation.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the positive vote in favor of women's ordination came as an uncomfortable shock to those who could not accept the change. In the lead-up to the vote, the bishops, as Ian Jones explains, "had become increasingly convinced that the diversity of opinion had to be embraced rather than ignored or eradicated." This could be achieved best by adopting an ecclesiastical model focused on communion rather than by creating separate structural entities that would institutionalize division. On a pragmatic level, however, they were greatly concerned to "avoid a repetition of the sharp divisions and legal wrangles" experienced in the Episcopal Church in America, where the issue of women priests had been dealt with by a single-clause measure.⁵⁶ Thus careful preparation and a wide consultative process had been involved in drafting the legislation, thereby ensuring that important safeguards and guarantees had been built in to the measures to protect the interests of the minority and to provide pastoral care for both individuals and parishes. This careful planning led to the framing of two legislative measures.

Provisions in the first measure permitted women to be ordained, but allowed for parish churches, by a formal resolution of the parish council, to

persuasion were persuaded to change their stance by the strength of argument made on the floor.

⁵⁴Monica Furlong, ed., *Act of Synod—Act of Folly?* (London, SCM Press, 1998), 2.

⁵⁵The "Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993," with its attached schedules is a ten-page document (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/all?title=Ordination%20of%20Women>) (accessed 11/08/12).

⁵⁶Jones, 22.

opt out of having a woman priest assigned to their congregation. Additionally, bishops who were in office at the time of the change could choose not to ordain women priests or to permit a woman in their diocese to be granted a license to function as a priest. The second legislative measure provided for financial compensation for those priests who felt they had to resign from their employment with the church because of the change. It was anticipated that up to 3,000 priests might do so and an amount of £30,000 per person was determined for such clergy. As it turned out, however, only 383 priests actually chose the compensation and left the church and 40 of these later returned.⁵⁷ But the careful provisions and safeguards so patiently agreed beforehand through consultation with groups such as Cost of Conscience did not seem to some to be enough after the vote. The groups of opponents soon united in a new organization known as Forward in Faith and began to lobby intensely for further concessions. The bishops, responding to the situation, focused their attention on this sizeable and loud minority to the chagrin of women clergy.

Faced with the threat of perhaps thousands of traditionalist clergy leaving the Church of England for Rome unless their requests for additional safeguards were met, the House of Bishops representing all of the dioceses met together two months later in January 1993 in Manchester to consider their next steps. The bishops were also faced with the possibility, even if remote, that the uproar would derail the passage of the legislation in parliament. There were those in parliament who saw it as their duty to insure that minorities were protected and rumors swirled that it could object to the church's majority vote. Parliament had the right to reject the legislation if it deemed that it was "not expedient."⁵⁸

The bishops took time to outline the procedures to be adopted for discerning the vocations of women deacons being considered for priesthood, a necessary preparation needed for when the measures became law. But the meeting also gave consideration to its pastoral problem and as a result the meeting became much better known for its "Manchester Statement," a widely publicized announcement from the bishops on pastoral assurance. The statement noted that while the majority of bishops warmly welcomed the decision to ordain women, they wished to give every reassurance to those in the church who were opposed that they were still considered to be valued and loyal members and that differing views could "continue to be held with integrity." They concluded with a commitment to maintaining the overall

⁵⁷Other observers suggest 487 left and 60 returned during the subsequent decade. Factors relating to how to account for illness or retirement underlie the difference. Leading campaigners for the Anglo-Catholic wing argue the number was nearer six hundred (Jones, 21).

⁵⁸Furlong, 6.

unity of the church, noting that “we intend to insure that provision continues to be made by the diocesan bishop for the care and oversight of everyone in his diocese.” The historic position of the church on the sacrosanct borders of a diocese would be maintained and bishops would retain full authority within their diocese. Other bishops could not intrude without invitation and approval by the bishop in authority. But the document also suggested that what was being envisaged by the House of Bishops was some form of “extended Episcopal care.”⁵⁹

Flying Bishops, Pastoral Care, and Keeping a Church Together

The proposals hinted at in January 1993 were published in more complete form in June in a document the bishops entitled “The Bonds of Peace,” which was accompanied by a draft, “Act of Synod,” and a theological paper, “Being in Communion.” These documents were important statements about the change-and-conflict-management strategies needed to maintain unity within the church and explained how bishops of differing views would assist one another. Thus a diocesan bishop who did not favor the ordination of women could not prevent another bishop, who was invited to do so, from ordaining women to serve in his jurisdiction. Likewise, a bishop in favor of the ordination of women priests would care for the needs of those opposed to women’s ordination by inviting an opposing bishop, known as a flying bishop, to minister to their needs. There was a deep concern, as Mary Tanner explains, to care for those who might be “fearful that the validity of the sacraments would be endangered by a change in the gender of the person ordained as well as those ordained by her.”⁶⁰ This strategy would also insure that no diocese would become what was called a “no-go” area.

According to Tanner, the bishops’ plan worked. After the passage of the legislation for women’s ordination in parliament in March 1994, no bishop exercised his right to opt out using clause 2 of the safeguards. This was a notable achievement. But a substantial number of parish councils resolved that they did not want a woman priest and requested to be exempted under the safeguard clauses. In 2010, there were approximately 900 such congregations, representing 7 percent of the churches in England, but only 2.8 percent of these parishes had requested the services of a flying bishop.

The bishops had hoped that the arrangement for episcopal visitation by flying bishops, which had first been tentatively proposed by the College of Bishops in America, would be implemented not only at a local level, but also at a regional level. At the regional level, the House of Bishops would nominate suitable bishops from the region whose primary role would be to serve across

⁵⁹House of Bishops, “Statement by the House following Its Meeting in Manchester, 1993,” para 9.

⁶⁰Tanner, 63.

the region and who would report to the diocesan bishop. As a support and a supplement to these parish and regional arrangements, the Archbishop of Canterbury proposed that at the provincial level he would appoint two additional suffragan bishops to be known as Provincial Episcopal Visitors to exercise episcopal care duties across the whole province in a way similar to that of the regional extended-care bishops. One such suffragan bishop would also be appointed as a Provincial Episcopal Visitor by the Archbishop of York. The task of Provincial Episcopal Visitors was to provide sacramental ministry and to serve as spokesmen and advisors for those clergy opposed to the 1992 decision to ordain women priests.⁶¹

These plans were voted with a significant majority in an Act of Synod in November 1993. The act had no binding legal authority for it was not framed as legislation for parliament, but nevertheless it carried the strongest moral authority because it had been passed by the general synod. Only 16 out of 424 (3.8%) attending the synod opposed it. According to Jones, there was a great sense of relief on the part of most bishops at this development. Soon after the November 1993 synod, the three Provincial Episcopal Visitors were appointed. Nicknamed “Flying Bishops” by the press, their role was ridiculed in some quarters because they came to be viewed popularly as ministering only to out-of-touch misogynists and sympathizers with Rome. But they provided a valuable ministry even for moderate Anglicans.

The Provincial Episcopal Visitor concept was not an ideal solution for it uncomfortably stretched the boundaries of the historic understandings of the role of the bishop within the diocese. Critics questioned whether it was even acceptable under canon law to create suffragan bishops to look after a minority constituency on this issue when no such step had ever been taken before on any other matter of dissent. Many advocates for women clergy felt that it was a huge step backward and an utter betrayal of what had been decided in 1992. What amazed women clergy and their advocates was that the bishops seemed to have an overwhelming sense of identification with the disaffected minority in the endeavor to relieve their distress, while there was a total inability to identify with women clergy whose position was increasingly demeaned by what were seen to be insulting concessions.⁶²

What particularly troubled many women was that despite the bishops’ statements to the contrary, the language and provisions of the “Act of Synod” seemed to condone the view that male bishops could be “tainted” by ordaining women. According to the *Church Times* of October 1993, some bishops had spoken openly of “taint.” For Furlong and other women closely involved in the campaign for the ordination of women, the act was a disaster because it more deeply institutionalized the discrimination against women that was

⁶¹Ibid., 71.

⁶²Furlong, 5.

already partially embedded in the terms of the 1992 legislation, which they had already accepted grudgingly as a compromise. This new act, introduced in panic and without adequate forethought, was a betrayal of the women about to be ordained. One woman likened it to “spiritual apartheid,” and others argued that it was profoundly damaging to the unity of the church.⁶³ But what really made the women furious was that the language and side effects of the act made it virtually impossible for women to become bishops in the Church of England, even though such developments had already taken place elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, such as in Boston (1989) and in Dunedin, New Zealand (1990).⁶⁴ Most women and their advocates in favor of ordination, however, believed that the act was a statesman-like way of achieving the best that could be obtained from the situation at the time—it was pastoral in that the church had been “fair” to women and now it only seemed right to be “fair” to their opponents. Furthermore, as Jones reports, church members expressed a sense of exhaustion over the issue. Besides, they felt that the initiative would be successful in preventing a large damaging division in the church. Nevertheless, there were those such as Furlong and other highly articulate and well-informed individuals who were not at all persuaded of the act’s value and their unhappiness resulted in the creation of a new monitoring organization Women and the Church (WATCH) as an effective and powerful successor to the Movement for Women’s Ordination. This organization continues to campaign for rescinding the “Act of Synod” and for new legislation to permit the consecration of women as bishops in the Church of England.

Ten years on from the historic vote of 1992, the ordination of women and their full participation in the ministry alongside their male counterparts has become a reality in many parts of the Anglican Communion, even as it is still becoming a reality in the Church of England. In a major research study of opinions within the Church of England a decade after the 1992 vote and the first ordinations of women in 1994, Jones reports that attitudes throughout the Communion continue to move toward greater acceptance of the decision. Eighty-one percent of clergy in the randomly selected survey sample indicate support for the 1992 decision and only 11.5 percent still oppose it. In the 1992 general synod, the percentage of clergy in favor of the action was 68.9 percent.⁶⁵ While some regret was experienced over the division caused by the debate, the most common theme Jones found emerging from interviews was

⁶³Helen Thorne, *Journey to Priesthood: An In-depth Study of the First Women Priests in the Church of England* (Bristol: Centre for Cooperative Studies in Religion and Gender, University of Bristol, 2000), 123.

⁶⁴Furlong, 8. Furlong’s book of essays by those opposed to the Act of Synod is a helpful discussion of the weaknesses of the Act and provides useful insights as to why the Act will end up being a temporary measure.

⁶⁵*General Synod Debate*, 90.

gratitude for the additional gifts and insights that women had brought through their priestly ministry. Ten years after the decision the percentage of women employed as priests in the Church of England was approximately 19 percent, but with considerable variation across dioceses (e.g., 3.8% in Hereford to 7% in Chichester). Only one of the 44 dioceses, the Isle of Man, did not have any woman priest. As of 2002, 49 percent of students in training for the ordained priesthood were women and by July 2012 the percentage of ordained women in the priesthood had climbed to 31 percent, exceeding 3,500 in number.⁶⁶ The Church of England, it seems, had weathered this storm and become stronger in the process.

Jones points out that the terminology of “supporters” and “opponents” is, in fact, too simplistic and crude a framework for understanding the differences of opinion over the issue of the ordination of women and argues that a multipolarity of opinion is a reflection of the real church, as indicated in **Table 1**. The results of Jones’s study, confirmed from both survey data and in-depth interviews, indicate that shifting evangelical opinion prior to 1992 was a major factor in enabling the legislation to achieve the necessary support for the ordination of women priests and that in the decade since the decision movement toward acceptance had increased among conservatives. The majority of this strand of church tradition were largely untroubled by women’s ordination.

Self-identified Theological Tradition	Percent Who Strongly Agree/Agree	Percent Who Disagree/Strongly Disagree
Anglo-Catholic	57.0	32.9
Charismatic Evangelical	75.0	20.8
Catholic-Evangelical	77.8	11.1
Conservative-Evangelical	81.4	7.4
Evangelical	83.8	4.4
Liberal-Catholic	84.4	12.6
Liberal	92.0	2.0
Liberal-Evangelical	92.0	0.0

⁶⁶*The Tablet*, 3 July 2012 (<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/latest-news/4306>) (accessed 11/4/12).

Recent reports on patterns of support for the consecration of women as bishops as the church moved in November 2012 to take this step indicated that 41 of the 44 diocesan synods approved the initiative. Only 7 percent of parishes chose not to be served by a woman. As church leaders acknowledged that the preceding fifteen years produced much pain and frustration on both sides, nevertheless “the Church of England has managed to model the holding together within one Church of people who differ profoundly on a major theological issue.”⁶⁷

*Lessons to Be Learned from Change-and-Conflict Management
and the Ordination of Women*

The Christian church, as well as being a community of faith, is at the same time an organization with structures and interpersonal dynamics and relationships. As an organization, it exhibits the characteristics of an organization, behaves like one, and can be studied as such through the lens of organizational behavior theory. Such a theoretical framework, with its models of conflict-and-change management, can offer useful perspectives. While a full analysis of the changes in the Anglican Communion as an organization from within the framework of change-management theory⁶⁸ is not attempted here. A reflection informed by insights from the study of organizational behavior may offer helpful insights to administrators in other church organizations facing the challenge of relating to, administering, and coping with change. What lessons can be learned from the way that the Anglican Communion and more particularly the Church of England related to and attempted to manage the process of change whereby women were eventually admitted to the priesthood?

The Acceptance of Diversity

Anglicans came to recognize that the accomplishment of the gospel commission in different cultural contexts, even in something as important as the restructuring of its ministry, requires accepting diversity. Leadership first stumbled over the need for diversity in seeking to relate to developments in China in the mid-1940s. Twenty years later the issue arose again and this time it was approached with a deeper awareness of the different cultural contexts found in Hong Kong, Southern China, and other parts of Southeast Asia. This helped the archbishops gathered at the Lambeth Conference in 1968 to see that they needed to be flexible in regard to national and regional situations. It is important to note that the issue of diversity was not that of

⁶⁷Recent reports are available at <http://search.churchofengland.org/results.aspx?k=Legislation%201992> (accessed 11/9/12).

⁶⁸Such as the approach of John Kotter’s eight-step process (*Leading Change* [Boston: Harvard Business School, 1996]).

the Western church needing to address and relate to societal changes in their own countries, such as those arising from the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries movement for the emancipation of women, in which critics argued that the church was succumbing to the pressures of secular society. Rather the question of women's ordination to the priesthood in Southeast Asia was an example of the church undertaking mission to a society and a culture that, as the diocese in Hong Kong pointed out in 1945, had for centuries valued the role and unique contribution of women. Allowing each province of the church to consider its own cultural context and mission needs and to proceed to the ordination of women to the priesthood with due caution and consultation but at its own pace was a major step in keeping the church together. The church heard Christian Howard's plea that changes needed to be made for the sake of the gospel, not resisted simply because it was a way to reject what seemed like a secular Western feminist campaign. The commitment to continuing mutual recognition of each other and the maintaining of communion was vital to this process.

Because the church came to recognize the importance of enabling itself to accomplish its mission in differing cultural contexts, it has gone on to allow for some variation in provincial church structures and for the creation of overlapping diocesan boundaries to respond to cultural differences such as in the province of Aotearoa, New Zealand. The same is true in Polynesia, which in 1992 restructured its constitution, thereby allowing five Maori "Hui Amorangi," that is, administrative districts to overlay seven European dioceses and for their bishops to serve as partners in leadership even as they implement different cultural styles of decision-making.⁶⁹

Recognition that Societies Change

Anglicans came to recognize that societies where the church has existed for long centuries change. As Gill illustrates in his thoughtful and well-documented history, *Women in the Church of England*, not all change is bad. Societal change is inevitable, though it may come in unexpected forms and in unexpected ways. Developing an approach to understanding the relationship between the church and society from the perspective of a theology of incarnation has helped Anglicans better understand how to relate to movements such as feminism, even if adjusting to the insights and developments has been fragmented and slow. The Anglican Communion has taken seriously the study of its church history and the way in which the church has interacted with and responded to an ever-changing society. And it has tried to benefit from this reflection.

⁶⁹<www.anglican.org.nz/About/History>.

Relating Positively to Advocacy Groups

Anglican leadership has come to feel more at ease with and relate in less-threatened ways to organized advocacy groups and special-interest social-justice campaigns as it has worked through the issues surrounding the ordination of women. On the issue of women in ministry, numerous organized groups were established to argue the respective viewpoints, present evidence, and express opinions. The best known of these groups—the Movement for the Ordination of Women, the Church Union, and Cost of Conscience—were coalitions that intentionally tried to remain in the mainstream in order to have their voices heard.⁷⁰ They attracted important supporters from within church leadership and well-educated laity who were often prominent members of society. For example, the Movement for the Ordination of Women’s founding chair was the Bishop of Birmingham and the group was, for some time, chaired by a bishop or senior member of the clergy. These groups attracted talented writers and thinkers who were able to articulate ideas clearly, cleverly and, at times, with humor. The mantra of the Movement for the Ordination of Women—“it will not go away”—was telling. Other activities involved major advertisements in newspapers with signatures of well-known supporters, prayer vigils at ordination services, the planning of celebration services when women were ordained overseas, and even the distribution of buttons. One of the more creative ideas launched following the consecration of women as bishops in the United States and New Zealand was the wide distribution of a purple commemorative tea towel with the words,

A woman’s place is in the House . . .
 . . . of Bishops.

Even less prominent groups were led by notable church figures and had respected thinkers among their ranks. For example, Forward in Faith, a loose alliance of Anglo-Catholic organizations including sisterhoods, religious orders, clergy, and bishops, and REFORM, a much smaller evangelical clergy group, which held to the “Divine Order of Male Headship” and which preferred a less monarchical version of the episcopate, also developed a range of initiatives to communicate their points of view. A high level of discussion and informed thought characterized the materials prepared by these groups and there was a studious avoidance of personal attack. Such an approach was simply “not Anglican” (see **Appendix 3** for a more complete list of organizations).

The church recognized that the advocacy groups, though at times uncomfortable and bothersome, were nevertheless important to the process

⁷⁰Webster, 60, notes that it a strength of the Movement for Women’s Ordination was that it also connected with the more radical groups because while it could, at times, distance itself from them and disagree with their approach; yet, it was also able to benefit from their energy and insights. Such groups could sometimes do things it was unwise or not possible for a mainstream group to do to draw attention to an issue.

of education, discussion, and debate and that they represented important perspectives in the conversation. There is no evidence to suggest that the church took action to sideline such groups or to discredit them, although at times due to legal reasons there were restrictions on their use of certain properties or meeting spaces for celebrating the Eucharist. Church leaders regarded such groups with respect and maintained an impressive level of cordiality in personal interactions with their leadership.

A further important element of the process was that input from these groups was invited and welcomed when commissions were appointed by the archbishop to study the issue of women's ordination. The organizations submitted memoranda, had their leaders appear in person as witnesses, and provided input in other ways. In the framing of position papers or draft statements or legislation, working task forces would consult with the various groups and revisions would be made to texts in accordance with suggestions from the groups. The church seems to have been willing to view these groups as a necessary part of the conversation. An important example of this conciliatory attitude by church leadership is the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams's invitation to the leaders of Women and the Church (WATCH) to join him in 2011 in planning a "Transformation Conference" for women at Lambeth Palace as an "opportunity for honest reflection on the experience of 17 years of women's ministry." Another example occurred in 2012 when the same group submitted a petition to the general synod and secured a delay in the consideration of an action on the consecration of bishops until they could be sure that the language was satisfactory.⁷¹ The continuity of such groups in monitoring and advisory roles was perceived as helpful. Margaret Webster notes that, as a result of the church's approach, the Movement for the Ordination of Women voluntarily disbanded too early after the 1992 vote, thinking that its task was over. Three years later, it was reactivated in order to insure that opponents to ordination did not succeed in turning the clock back.

Valuing Pastoral and Scholarly Reports and a Culture of Openness

Another vitally important part of the process that enabled the Anglican Communion to relate to the pressure for change with regard to the ordination of women was the undertaking of studies and the preparation of reports on leadership and advice on how to proceed. The quality and depth of these reports and studies is truly impressive, representing a full range of perspectives. They illustrate that the church was not taking the decision lightly. Beginning in 1917, reports were called for regularly by Lambeth, the meeting of Primates,

⁷¹www.womenandthechurch.org/news-stream/newsflash/transformations-presentation-college-bishops.

the House of Bishops, and by the general synod and were proven particularly helpful at critical junctions. Of particular note are Howard's 1972 consultative document, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*, and the oft-cited reports from the Eames Commission and Monitoring Group chaired by Archbishop Robin Eames of Amargh, Ireland. The Eames Commission produced a series of five reports and the group served as a monitoring group, reporting to Lambeth Palace on developments in the communion, suggesting important strategic initiatives and directions to help guide leadership in keeping the communion together.

Another highly valuable report, produced by a working party chaired by Archbishop John Grindrod of Brisbane, Australia, helped guide the church through the turbulent period of the late 1980s and 1990s when the Church of England was concerned with the ordination of women and other parts of the communion were moving on to the consecration of women as bishops.⁷² Grindrod's report not only set out valuable theological perspectives, but analyzed a range of possible reorganizational and structural options that might be considered as the Communion struggled to find ways of embracing and maintaining its communion in diversity. There were numerous other reports also prepared for the House of Bishops and for the general synod as the church moved toward 1992. Other reports included the Rochester Report, *Women Bishops in the Church of England*, and the Manchester report of the task force analyzing the range of options for possible draft legislation.⁷³ A striking feature of the Anglican Communion's approach to dealing with the issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood was and is, at least after the dry and prevaricating period following World War II, the openness of the process. The reports were widely published as an intentional strategy to keep clergy and laity informed and to allow a consensus to develop about the best way to resolve the issue. Transparency was valued highly. Though clearly there was considerable cost in order to make this a reality, there was a willingness to make the resources available to achieve it. It was considered a vital part of the responsibility to educate both laity and clergy.

Allowing Pastoral Care to take Priority over Policy

A willingness to provide pastoral care over long-held policy was an important approach the Church of England adopted to enable it to help church members adjust to changes arising from admission of women to the priesthood. When the provisions of the 1993 Act of Synod authorized the appointment of

⁷²*Women and the Episcopate: The Grindrod Report* (Anglican Consultative Council, 1988).

⁷³*Rochester Report* (<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/38523/gs1557.pdf>, 2004); *Manchester Report* (<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1254839/gs1685.pdf>, 2008).

“flying bishops,” the concept of the territorial diocesan administration was stretched. The conviction that the House of Bishops developed, and with which the general synod agreed, was that people were more important than policy and they were willing to bend canon laws on the appointment of suffragan bishops and their reporting relationships to their superiors. The consent to this innovative interpretation as a solution to the confinements of canon law was for some an uncomfortable compromise. Others saw it as a temporary necessity. In late 2010, three of the “flying bishops” resigned from the Church of England to join the Roman Catholic Church through the provision of an Ordinariate order by the Vatican, which has highlighted the temporary nature of this policy arrangement.⁷⁴ But pastorally the role of the Provincial Episcopal Visitors has enabled communicants from the edges of both the Anglo-Catholic and evangelical wings of the church to remain in communion, though the solution addressed different concerns for each of them.

In some parts of the Anglican Communion, the willingness to live with policy differences extended to allowing alternative structural arrangements in church governance such as in New Zealand and Ethiopia. These alternative structures involved geographically overlapping diocesan administration arrangements within a province. These arrangements are sensitive to important cultural differences in the patterns and processes of administration and decision-making throughout the communion. This pattern of governance, revolving around the administration of the Eucharist in the Church of England, creates a third province geographically overlapping the other two provinces and is based on theological differences over the role of women in the priesthood. Some might argue that these differences, too, are ultimately cultural rather than theological. The idea of a third province was seriously considered in 2007, but rejected for other less-radical options involving the transfer of some of a bishop’s authority to a complimentary bishop as a way of providing sacramental ministry to opponents of women bishops. The Communion continues to study the fluidity that has resulted from the institution of flying bishops and has been willing to change and evolve in order to enable it to respond to the challenge of mission in changing societies.

What has developed in more recent years is the irregular extension of geographically overlapping patterns of diocesan supervision which had been approved on a limited basis within some provinces to situations outside the province. This has happened without approval in response to the blessing of same-sex marriages and accepting openly practicing gay bishops in some provinces. This innovation has prompted strong resistance from church leadership. The innovation involves the realignment of diocesan supervision in which a dissenting diocese unilaterally places itself under the care of a

⁷⁴*The Guardian*, 8 November 2010.

more orthodox province. How far this realignment will be permitted to go is a current issue stretching the fabric of the communion much more than the issue of the ordination of women. These developments are clearly testing the limits of diversity. A commissioned task force, which studied the complex issues involved in these questions with their implications, has produced what is referred to as the “Windsor Report” setting out the need for restraint in these areas, but some dioceses have been unwilling to acknowledge these calls for restraint and, for the first time in recent Anglican history, called for measures of discipline against dissenting bodies.

Developing a Theology of Change

The Anglican Communion is willing to live with policy differences between provinces, if such differences serve the local mission of the church and are viewed by Lambeth as not touching core doctrine. Along with this willingness, the Communion also actively seeks to develop a theological way of understanding the unsettling changes that have swirled around the church in the past thirty years. Unsettling though they were, the changes themselves were, nevertheless, extensively studied and approved by majority votes after deep and extended theological reflection. Yet, there has still been dissent and change has not been universally accepted. In response, church leadership attempted to develop a theology of change to help communicants understand and cope with change that many were not sure about and were fearful represented a departure from the ancient faith. A theological framework was sought to enable the church to live with differences and to make a place for people who hold different viewpoints. This has enabled the church to remain united in spite of holding to two divergent integrities—it is right to ordain women to the priesthood and it is not right to ordain them—in spite of the fact that some disagree that the church can hold two integrities in this way.

In the Grindrod report, theologians began to refer to the ideas of “reception” and a “process of open discernment” as theological constructs to explain rates of uneven development and the acceptance of new insights and new practices across the provinces of the church. The report suggested that if a province “were persuaded by compelling doctrinal reasons, by the experience of women in ordained ministry, by the demands of mission in its region and if it had the overwhelming support of its dioceses, then such a step should be offered for reception in the Anglican Communion and in the universal Church.” Reception, it was argued, was a “long and spiritual process involving both the official response by the synods and councils of the church ‘at the highest level of authority.’” The Grindrod task force pointed out that if, in the course of time, “the Church as a whole receives a synodical decision, this would be an additional or final sign that it may be judged to be in accordance with God’s will for the Church.” A central element to this

theological approach was the recognition that “the people of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, have to be involved in forming the mind of the Church in matters affecting the faith of the Church.” It was argued that within this process “the authority of those exercising leadership, individually and corporately, is not a formal or imposed one. It is an authority supported and accepted by the involvement of the whole fellowship.”

Advocates of this theological perspective were at pains to point out that the process of reception could not be hurried. Patience and listening was called for by all sides of the discussion, as well as a spirit of generosity and an openness to the possibility of either acceptance or rejection by the Church. Crucially, it would also involve “a willingness to live with diversity throughout the ‘reception’ process.” During the process, “the continuing communion of Christians with one another in faith and worship maintains the underlying unity of the church.”⁷⁵

Following the acceptance of the Grindrod report by the 1988 Lambeth Conference, the Eames Commission further developed the idea of discernment and reception in its series of reports and articulated more clearly how such an understanding was grounded in the experience of the early church of the NT, in which different patterns and definitions of the faith coexisted and flourished independently in isolated and scattered places and only over time were harmonized into “one congruous and universal” pattern even if the pattern was not entirely uniform.⁷⁶ In a fallen world and a divided Christian church, argued the Grindrod group, communion would always be, in some sense, “impaired” and yet still allow for there to be real communion. In a further theological development for Anglicans, the Eames report argued that communion should not just focus on the celebration of the Eucharist. More attention needed to be given to seeing communion also rooted in the rite of baptism and a common faith.

Women and men in the Anglican Communion, across the boundaries of continents, across the divides of oceans, of different cultures and nations live in relation to one another, because of their common baptism and common faith and because they are bound within the particular ecclesial communion of the Anglican Communion. The experience of the past years suggests that we are learning a little of what it means to belong to one

⁷⁵*Women and the Episcopate: The Grindrod Report* (Anglican Consultative Council, 1988). Christopher Hill has an excellent discussion of the theology of reception (“Reception and the Act of Synod” in *Seeking the Truth of Change in the Church*, ed. Paul Avis [London: T. & T. Clark, 2004], 101-122; see also Tanner, 71).

⁷⁶Eames Commission, First Report, para. 44, in *Women in the Anglican Episcopate: Theology Guidelines and Practice, The Eames Commission and Monitoring Group Reports* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998).

another, forbearing one another in love, bearing the pain of difference, as on a journey together we struggle to discern Christ's will for the Church.⁷⁷

A Commitment to Educate the Church

Another aspect of the Anglican approach to resolving the contentious issues related to women becoming involved in ministry was the church's deep commitment to education of the church membership. This educational endeavor in the Church of England, for example, was mandated by the regulations for the general synod in England, adopted in 1970, when the previous general assembly morphed into the general synod. The change involved more lay representation than previous configurations and required that any major change in policy or teaching necessitated consultation with the dioceses and the deanery synods. This meant that information materials and position papers flowed back and forth in the task of informing communicants so that voting was meaningful. The process of education also welcomed the supplementary input of interest groups. For example, materials from the Movement of Women's Ordination and the Church Union were made available at the parish level for those interested. This commitment to education and to open conversation over time helped the whole Anglican Communion shape its thinking and contributed in no small measure to the development of a consensus that enabled the church to move forward in resolving the issue of women's ordination and remain unified.

Valuing the Quality of Inclusiveness in Public Rhetoric

Among the most important of strategies among the leadership of the Anglican Communion was the warm tone of pastoral care and inclusiveness evident in both speech and in writing. To a significant degree, the bishops sensed strongly their pastoral responsibility to be pastors to all of their people. There is a clear intentionality in most cases to choose language of affirmation and pastoral inclusiveness when addressing the issues in written materials and in public addresses. Language of official documents was carefully nuanced to be inclusive, even as the documents struggled to find ways of implementing that inclusiveness in the difficult areas of practice, particularly in the celebration of the sacraments and forms of the liturgy.

Church officials communicated in their discourse that their authority was a moral authority and that provinces participated voluntarily in communion. This was a different ethos from that characteristic of other more hierarchical organizations, in which a kind of top-down coercion and the exertion of pressure to follow orders might be appropriate. The church was a different kind of organization. Note, for example, the following language of the Eames

⁷⁷Ibid., para. 52.

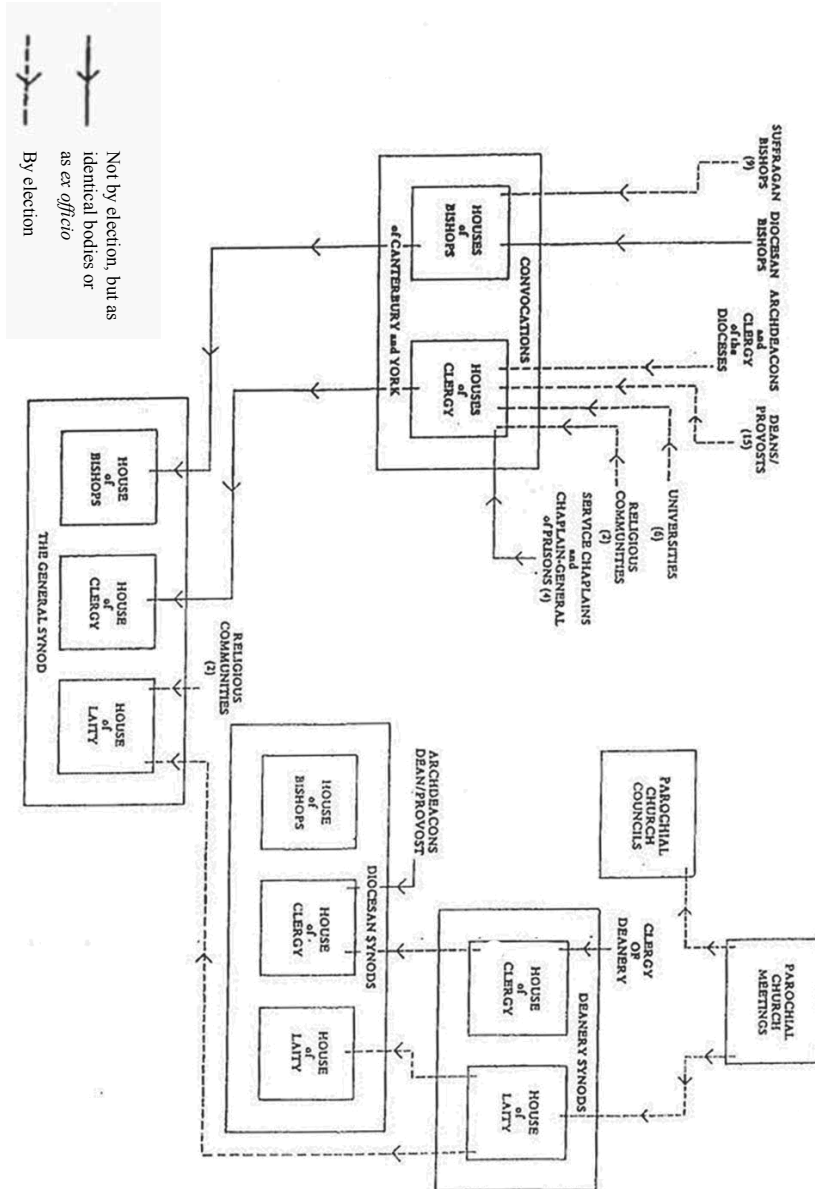
Commission in speaking of the interdependence of the provinces; it does so even as some provinces took initiatives in advance of others and not always with approval, however, not without consultation:

In the story [of recent Anglicism] we can see a struggle between the concept of provincial autonomy on the one hand, and interdependence on the other. In the Anglican Communion, binding decisions may only be taken at the provincial level and yet, in wrestling with the issue of women's ordination, an issue that touches the unity of the Anglican Communion, no Province has in fact acted in such a way as to suggest that it is sufficient on its own, that it has no need of the others.⁷⁸

There is a level of depth and informed theological reflection in public speeches and in the many reports. Listeners and readers could not mistake the point that the essence of communion also necessitated internal attitudes of heart and mind that celebrated what was held in common in spite of differences.

⁷⁸Ibid

Appendix I Decision-making Structure of the Church⁷⁹



⁷⁹From Welsby, Appendix 1.

Appendix II An Outline Chronology of the Ordination of Women in the Anglican World	
1855	Bishop of Maryland sets apart two deaconesses.
1862	Bishop of London “sets apart” Elizabeth Ferrard as the first Anglican deaconess by laying on hands. Establishment of Mildmay Deaconess Training College in London modeled on the Kaisewerth Deaconess institution in Germany.
1871	Deaconesses are defined as “being set apart” for service within the church, but with no formal description of their role or authority.
1885	Deaconesses set apart with laying on of hands in Alabama and New York.
1889	Deaconess canon adopted by the U.S. General Convention of Episcopalians.
1890	Deaconess training programs begin in New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.
1917	Lambeth Conference requests study of deaconess role.
1919	General Convention (U.S.) recommends including deaconesses in Clergy Pension Fund, but Board of Fund says they are not “clergy.” General Synod (U.K.) receives 1917 report.
1920	Lambeth Conference concludes its program with the “ordination” of a deaconess, conferring holy orders on her and enabling her to preach and lead liturgical prayers.
1922	Ability for deaconesses to lead liturgical prayers withdrawn by the Archbishop of Canterbury.
1925	Commission recommends licensing women lay readers, but “disclaims purpose or desire” to consider women’s ordination; convention (U.S.) rejects lay-reader recommendation.
1930	Lambeth changes its mind, asserting that deaconesses are not in “holy orders,” but, at the same time, authorizes them to baptize children and to “church” women.
1935	Church of England commission finds no reason for or against ordination of women, but affirms all-male priesthood “for the church today.” The church is not persuaded that women should not ever be admitted to priesthood, but neither has a theological justification been given that is sufficient to warrant a change.
1944	Florence Li Tim-Oi is ordained a priest in South China by Bishop R. O. Hall of Hong Kong. Eighteen months later, to protect Hall from censure, she agrees not to function as a priest. Hall is rebuked by Archbishop of Canterbury.
1948	Lambeth Conference refuses Hong Kong’s request for “experiment” with women’s ordination, even with a twenty-year limit.

1950	Lambeth Conference allows deaconesses to take part in liturgical services other than communion.
1958	Episcopal Theological School (U.S.) admits women to BD degree program.
1960	Diocese of Hong Kong requests Lambeth Conference for permission to ordain women as priests.
1962	<i>Gender and Ministry</i> report submitted to Church of England Committee on Ministry.
1964	General Convention (U.S.) changes deaconess canon to read “ordered” rather than “appointed.”
1965	Deaconess Phyllis Edwards recognized as a deacon by Bishop James Pike, San Francisco.
1966	House of Bishops (U.S.) receives report, “The Proper Place of Women in the Ministry of the Church,” affirming ordaining women; asks Lambeth Conference to consider ordaining women to the priesthood.
1968	Lambeth agrees that deaconesses are within the diaconate and requests member churches to undertake a study of the question of the priestly ordination of women. Hong Kong, Kenya, Korea, and Canada begin ordaining women to diaconate.
1969	Special General Convention authorizes women lay readers and chalice bearers; appoints joint commission to study ordination of women.
1970	At General Convention, women admitted as lay deputies after fifty-year struggle; deaconess canon eliminated; women included in canon on deacons, are eligible for Clergy Pension Fund; authorization for ordination of women to priesthood approved by laity, but narrowly defeated by clerical deputies.
1971	The newly established Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Kenya, comprised of bishops, clergy, and lay representatives from member churches, declares it is “acceptable” to them for a bishop to ordain a woman if there is full synodical agreement in the diocese or province. Jane Hwang and Joyce Bennett are ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Gilbert Baker of Hong Kong in November. Florence Li Tim-Oi’s orders are recognized <i>in absentia</i> , and as China emerges from the cultural revolution, she resumes priestly ministry in the nationalized Chinese church. Episcopal Women’s Caucus founded. American House of Bishops refers women’s ordination for further study. Episcopal women begin to be ordained alongside men.
1972	American House of Bishops vote 74-61 in favor of ordaining women priests.
1973	In October, the General Convention rejects the ordination of women to the priesthood; 56 bishops issue statement of distress. In December, women deacons presented alongside men for ordination to the priesthood in New York, but bishop refuses to act.

1974	<p>In June, sermons preached in Cambridge, Philadelphia, and Syracuse call for ordination of women to the priesthood.</p> <p>On July 10, bishops, priests, women deacons, and lay people meet in Philadelphia to plan an ordination.</p> <p>On July 29, eleven women deacons ordained to priesthood by two retired and one resigned bishop in Philadelphia.</p> <p>On July 30, some women priests are inhibited by their bishops from priestly functions, some from deacon's service; others agree voluntarily to refrain from priestly ministry.</p> <p>On July 31, presiding bishop John Allin calls emergency meeting of House of Bishops.</p> <p>On August 15, bishops meeting in Chicago decry the four bishops' "violation of collegiality," refuse to talk with women, and assert the ordinations were not valid. Women reject bishops' actions; Charles Willie resigns in protest as Vice President of House of Deputies.</p> <p>In August, ecclesiastical charges are filed against the Philadelphia bishops.</p> <p>In October, the House of Bishops reaffirms endorsement of ordaining women, but votes almost unanimously not to act until General Convention approves.</p>
1975	<p>On June 18, the Anglican Church of Canada approves ordaining women.</p> <p>In July, Church of England Synod approves women's ordination "in principle."</p> <p>On September 7, four women deacons are ordained to priesthood in Washington D.C. by another retired bishop.</p> <p>On September 19, the House of Bishops censures all bishops who ordained women.</p>
1976	<p>In September, the General Convention approves the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate.</p> <p>On November 30, the Anglican Church of Canada begins ordaining women.</p>
1977	<p>In January, women ordained in Philadelphia and Washington D.C. begin to be "regularized" and regular ordinations of women to the priesthood begin with 100 ordained by year's end.</p> <p>In September, opponents to women's ordination form break-away church.</p> <p>In October, the presiding bishop Allin tells House of Bishops he "is unable to accept women in role of priests" and offers to resign. Bishops affirm Allin's leadership, adopt a statement of conscience, asserting that no one should be penalized for opposing or supporting women's ordination.</p> <p>Anglican Church in New Zealand begins ordaining women to priesthood.</p>

1978	Lambeth accepts women's ordination, but recommends no province consecrate a woman bishop "without consultation with the Primates and overwhelming [local] support."
1981	Florence Li Tim-Oi emigrates to Toronto, resumes ministry in Anglican Church.
1982	Church of Brazil begins ordaining women deacons.
1983	Unofficial ordinations of women begin in Church of the Province of Kenya.
1984	Florence Li Tim-Oi celebrates fortieth ordination anniversary at Westminster Abbey in London; unofficial ordinations of women begin in Church of Province of Uganda; Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire follow.
1985	American bishops vote not to withhold consent for woman bishop; Brazil begins ordaining women to priesthood.
1986	Anglican Church of Canada rescinds "conscience clause," prohibits discrimination against ordained women.
1987	Church of England eliminates separate deaconess canon and begins ordaining women deacons.
1988	In August, Lambeth rejects measure prohibiting women bishops and commits to unity despite differences on the subject. On September 24, the Rev. Barbara C. Harris of Philadelphia is elected Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts.
1989	On Feb 11, consecration of the Rt. Rev. Barbara C. Harris in Boston by Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning and sixty other bishops before a crowd of 8,500, with the Revs. Florence Li Tim-Oi and Carter Heyward as concelebrants. In June, the Church of Scotland approves allowing women ordained elsewhere to celebrate the Eucharist. In November, the Diocese of Dunedin, New Zealand, elects Penelope Jamieson diocesan bishop.
1990	The Rt. Rev. Penelope Jamieson consecrated Bishop of Dunedin, New Zealand. Ireland approves ordaining women to priesthood and episcopate; Provincial Synod in Kenya approves ordaining women. Uganda House of Bishops approves ordaining women (Kenya and Uganda had been ordaining women unofficially for several years).
1991	Women ordained to priesthood in Quezon City, Philippines.
1992	In November, the Church of England Synod authorizes drawing legislation to permit ordination of women. Anglican Church in Australia approves ordaining women.
1993	In October, UK parliament approves legislative measures for ordination of women priests. In December, Kenya ordains first women priest after approval.

1994	In February, the Church of England canons on ordination of women promulgated. On March 12, first women ordained to priesthood in England. In June, Episcopal Church in Scotland approves ordination of women to priesthood and episcopate.
1995	Province of West Indies begin ordaining women.
1996	Church in Barbados begins ordaining women priests; Church in Wales approves women's ordination.
1997	Church in Portugal begins ordaining women deacons.
1998	Eleven women join the more-than-700 male bishops at Lambeth Conference.
1999	First woman ordained priest in Nippon Sei Ko Kai (Japan).
Information for this abridged chronological outline is drawn from the following: Gill, <i>Women and the Church of England</i> ; Webster, <i>A New Strength, A New Song</i> ; and others.	

Appendix III Glossary	
Benefice	A reward (remuneration usually by stipend) received in exchange for services rendered to the parish. It will often include the right to occupy the parsonage associated with a parish.
Canon	A church rule adopted by a synod or council; these canons formed the foundation of canon law. From various languages including Greek <i>kanon</i> /κανών, Arabic <i>Qanon</i> /قانون, Hebrew <i>kaneh</i> /קנה, meaning “straight”; a rule, code, standard, or measure.
Chaplain	A member of the clergy who is employed to perform specialist duties outside of a parish; for instance, in schools, hospitals, and prisons. Some chaplains are paid by the church, others are paid by the organizations they are working for. Some individuals (the Queen and diocesan bishops) also have chaplains.
Curate	Also called assistant priest or minister, a curate is licensed by the bishop to assist an incumbent in a parish setting. A curacy is generally a junior or training position; however, some retired, experienced priests also undertake curate duties.
Deacon	The diaconate is the name given to the “probationary period” for priests, which lasts for one year after ordination. When women were ordained deacon in 1987, it was initially for an indefinite period. The deacon can undertake pastoral duties, preach, teach, administer holy communion, lead worship, officiate at baptisms and funerals, but cannot preside at communion, absolve sins, or bless. There are currently 111 permanent deacons.
Deaconess	The Order of Deaconesses was created in 1861 as a formal accredited lay ministry for women. Women were ordained as deaconesses and could fulfill some elements of the ministerial role. The Order is now closed, but many women priests were originally deaconesses and some women have chosen to remain deaconesses.
Dean	A member of the clergy, appointed by the bishop, to have administrative authority over a particular geographical part of the diocese known as a deanery. Also the “first among equals” at a cathedral who is responsible for its government.
Deanery	A group of neighboring parishes within a diocese which are formed into a district and administered by a dean appointed by the bishop of the diocese. The synod for the deanery is convened by the rural dean (or area dean). It consists of all clergy licensed to a benefice within the deanery, plus elected lay members. It is a statutory body and acts as an intermediary between the parochial church councils of each parish in its deanery and the synod of the diocese as a whole.

Diocese	The district or “see” under the supervision of a bishop. It is divided into parishes. From the Greek term <i>διοίκησις</i> , meaning “administration.” “See” from Latin, <i>episcopalis sedes</i> is, in the original sense, the official seat of a bishop also referred to as the bishop’s cathedra, which is placed in the bishop’s principal church, called a cathedral. The bishop’s seat is the earliest symbol of bishop’s authority, and the word “see” is thus often applied to the area over which the bishop exercises authority. This usually corresponds to a diocese.
FiF	Forward in Faith, a coalition of Anglo-Catholic opponents to women’s ministry formed in 1992 who believe that the ordination of women was a failure to acknowledge that the Church of England was a part of one holy, catholic and apostolic church and that it had no authority to change. They have campaigned for a free, nongeographical province in the Church of England which excludes women priests and their supporters. The group lists parishes that have opted out from having a women priest.
General Synod	The deliberative and legislative body of the Church of England. The synod was instituted in 1970, replacing the Church Assembly, and is the culmination of a process of rediscovering self-government for the Church of England that had started in the 1850s. The synod is tricameral, consisting of the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy, and the House of Laity. There are currently 467 members in total.
GRAS	Founded in 2000 in London, the Group for the Rescinding of the Act of Synod and the promotion of women as bishops in the Church of England is an organization that believes that the Act of Synod, while pastoral in intent, nevertheless damages the church because it institutionalizes division.
Incumbent	Clergy who have the tenure of a benefice, which has been granted until the age of 70 and cannot be removed, except on the grounds of ill health, serious misconduct, or a serious breakdown in pastoral relationships.
Measure	Pieces or acts of legislation approved by the General Synod. They have the force of an act of parliament and are approved by parliament.
MOW	The Movement for the Ordination of Women was a single issue campaign group established in 1978 to campaign for women’s priesthood. It was disbanded in 1994 after completing its objectives.
Provost	Like a dean, the provost exercises leadership in a cathedral. However, this title is used in newer dioceses, where the cathedral is also a parish church. There are no women provosts at present. There is, however, one female vice provost.

Rector	The title “rector” is now interchangeable with that of “vicar” unless the individual is a team rector. A team rector is the senior member of a clergy team who manages one or more team vicars in a combined parish.
Suffragan	A suffragan bishop is appointed to assist the diocesan bishop to act on his behalf and with his authority. Unlike an assistant bishop, the suffragan has tenured status.
Synod	Historically, a synod is a council of a church, usually convened to decide an issue of doctrine, administration, or application. In modern usage, the word refers to the governing body of a particular church, whether its members are meeting or not. The word comes from the Greek <i>σύννοδος</i> (<i>synodos</i>) meaning “assembly” or “meeting,” and it is synonymous with the Latin word <i>concilium</i> (“council”).
The “Act of Synod”	The Act of Synod was passed by the general synod in 1993, one year after the measure to ordain women had been agreed. It made provision for parishes to opt for someone other than their diocesan bishop to carry out episcopal duties in the parish. Parishes are able to request for extended episcopal oversight, normally undertaken by a provincial episcopal visitor (or flying bishops).
The Church Union	Founded in 1859 as the English Church Union to recall the Church of England to its Catholic identity. In 1933 it merged with the Anglo-Catholic Congress under the new title of The Church Union and continues to work for the visible unity of the church and to oppose women in the priesthood.
WATCH	Women and the Church (WATCH) is the title of a group formed in 1996 to work for the inclusive ministry of women and men, lay and ordained, in the Church of England. It is campaigning for the end of discrimination against women and their supporters in the church and is seeking the appointment of women bishops.