

**DRAFT WOMEN BISHOPS LEGISLATION:**  
An introductory address to prepare for a Deanery Synod debate

*The Decision today/tonight*

Your deanery synod debate tonight/today is part of a wider process right across the Church of England in which diocesan synods are being asked—and required—to vote on the main motion before you on your agenda paper.

***“That this synod approve the proposals embodied in the draft Bishops and priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure and in draft Amending Canon No 30”***

Diocesan synods *have* to vote on this, but in this diocese,— as in many other dioceses,—we are also asking deanery synods to debate it too, even though the outcome of the deanery synods’ votes does not directly impact on the diocesan synod debate later in the year (but informs it) and it does not directly impact on the legislation process itself.

The main motion has to be debated in an unamended form to ensure consistency across the dioceses—and across the deaneries. It is possible, though for a synod to debate a Following Motion.

*The draft legislation does 2 things.*

***Firstly***, it amends the law to allow for the possibility of women being admitted to the Episcopate in the Church of England.—The law has to be changed to enable this to happen, as it is not possible at present.

***Secondly***, the draft legislation makes provision to seek to cater for those clergy and parishes who would find it difficult or not possible on grounds of conscience theologically to receive the ministry of an ordained woman priest or a woman bishop. It makes this provision through a particular process involving a statutory code of conduct.

Not all those who would wish to see women bishops would wish to see such provision made, for it may appear to them discriminatory. Others would wish to see any provision made in a different form for they believe that the present proposals for such a provision are inadequate to meet the needs of those for whom they are intended.

When you vote tonight/today, you will be voting on the package which this draft legislation brings before you combining both the possibility of women being able to become bishops and this particular form of provision for those unable in good conscience to receive the priestly or episcopal ministry of women.

In *purist* terms, if you are unable to accept either the admission of women to the Episcopate or the present package of proposals for provision for other people with difficulties of conscience, then you will presumably vote the motion down, and *only* if you are *happy* with *both* aspects of the legislative proposals will you vote *in favour* of the motion.

However, for some people this will be a less than straightforward position.

Some will wish to see the possibility of women bishops, but may not be happy with the present provisions for others, but they will wish to vote *for* the motion and they will hope that something

will be done to improve the provision for those other people somewhere along the way—perhaps through any pressure brought about through the passing of a Following Motion, if it might be passed.

Others may decide to vote *against* the motion because, whilst they are in favour of the admission of women to the Episcopate, they believe that the present package either makes *too much* provision for those other people or *too little* provision for those other people or—because there seems to be, in their eyes, *insufficient agreement* about the provision. They would prefer to delay admitting women to the Episcopate until such time as there can be either greater agreement over the issue itself or greater agreement over the appropriate form of provision.

You will need to make your own decisions, but there are some issues of principle which you will need to consider and to those I will return in a moment.

#### *The Process from here*

In terms of *process*, the voting tonight/today will be reported back to the diocesan synod for their information, before it debates the motion formally in October this year. The voting of the diocesan synod will then be reported back to the Church of England centrally and *at least half* of the diocesan synods in the Church of England must pass the present motion regarding the current legislative package if the legislation is to go any further.

If at least half of the diocesan synods vote for the present motion, the House of Bishops of the General Synod will consider the outcome of these debates (including reports on any Following Motions). The draft legislation can only be brought before the General Synod for final approval in a form approved by the House of Bishops.

If the draft legislation is brought back to the General Synod for a debate for final approval, then it must pass in the General Synod with a two-thirds majority in each of the 3 Houses of the General Synod, — the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity.

If it successfully passes with those majorities, then the legislation goes to the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament, made up of members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons. If Parliament is content with the draft legislation, it will then move towards the Royal Assent and, in due course, become law.

That of itself, of course, would not guarantee that a woman would immediately become a bishop. There are several procedures for how we discern and come to a nomination of a bishop in the Church of England and any candidate for episcopal vacancy, whether male or female, would have to be discerned and nominated through that process.

If the present legislation were to fail to pass through the General Synod at final approval stage, then there can be no attempt to re-introduce the legislation until at least until the end of the present Quinquennium—the five-year period of the General Synod’s life which began in November last year.

I will therefore continue by speaking about

1. What is proposed in the present legislation?
2. Some theological issues
3. Some Synodical background information

*What is proposed in the present legislation?*

1. It becomes possible for a woman to be admitted to the Episcopate of the Church of England.
2. A duty is imposed by statute on each Diocesan Bishop to make and publish a Scheme containing arrangements for a *male* bishop acting as his or her *delegate* to provide sacramental ministry and pastoral care to clergy and parishes who request it. Where a bishop has stated that he will *not* ordain women as priests, the Scheme will also make provision for the ordination of women and for providing them with ministry and support and pastoral care in the diocese of such a bishop.
3. A PCC can pass a resolution sending a Letter of Request seeking that only a male priest to be appointed as incumbent or priest-in-charge or that they receive sacramental ministry and pastoral care from a male bishop.
4. It mandates the House of Bishops to draft a Code of Practice which will give guidance about the implementation of the legislation, including the provisions of any Scheme published by a bishop for his or her diocese, and bishops and others shall be under a duty in law “to have regard” to this Code of Practice.

— At present, the House of Bishops has a working party made up of both bishops and others and of both men and women who are drafting a Code of Practice. The content of that Code of Practice will not be known until after the completion of all the diocesan synod debates throughout the country, but the General Synod will need to pass (by a straight majority vote, — if necessary, in all 3 Houses) any Code of Practice which emerges from this process.

(The present form of the draft legislation is not identical to that which was committed to the General Synod’s Revision Committee in 2009. 2 particular changes to emerge out of the Revision Committee process are that there is no obligation on the Archbishops to fill the suffragan sees which thus far have provided the so-called “Flying Bishops” and that there is no equivalent to Resolution A within this proposed legislation. After a transitional period of 3 years, the existing provisions for Resolutions A, B and C will lapse and whilst the Letters of Request arrangements under the proposed legislation would address, to some extent, the circumstances currently covered by Resolutions B and C, there is no equivalent to Resolution A, — the Resolution that no woman priest shall preside at Holy Communion or pronounce the absolution in the parish concerned.)

It is worth nothing what this draft legislation *does* do and what it *does not* do.

It *does* make *some* provision to cater for the needs of those who have difficulties on the grounds of conscience and conviction about the possible ministry of women as priests or bishops. If a bishop does operate his Scheme in accordance with the principles of the Code of Practice under the legislation, a “*male* bishop” *can* be offered to parishes who submit a Letter of Request. However, for some on the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church, that of itself is not sufficient and, indeed, for them the present provision on its own smacks of gender discrimination. For them, *not any male bishop will do*, but only a male bishop with a particular background story.—I will come back to that again in a moment.

The legislation also provides for the male bishops to receive their authorisation *as a delegate* of the diocesan bishop—and this is what currently happens with suffragan bishops, area bishops and, indeed, so called “flying bishops”—the provincial episcopal visitors,—or other bishops who exercise a ministry in Resolution C parishes. — This proposal for such a bishop to be a *delegate* is also problematic for some.

Those who have difficulty with the possibility of the ministry of ordained women as priests or as bishops fall into 2 general categories.

At the *conservative evangelical* end of the evangelical spectrum, there are those who read the New Testament Scriptures concerning the idea of “headship” and believe that Biblical teaching does not expect a woman to have authority over a man, but that in the good order of the Church, a man should have headship and that Scripture expects a “complementarity of roles” between genders and not what contemporary society would call an “equality of role” whereby people are interchangeable.—Forgive me for putting that into somewhat simple terms.

This is a case for some where a woman *should not* be a bishop.

For others, the theological problem can take the form that “a woman *could not be* a bishop”.

This is *one* strand that is found in some Anglo-Catholics. For them, the priest represents Christ at the altar. Christ was male; therefore the priest must be male. That is part of God’s revelation. Further, bishops flow from the apostles and all the apostles chosen by Jesus were male. He could have chosen women, but he only chose men. That is his revealed will for the leadership of the Church.

For some Anglo-Catholics, the difficulty is slightly differently expressed. To change the nature of ordained ministry which has flowed from the time of the Apostles onwards and which has seen male leadership in the ministry of the Church is something which can only be done by the universal body of Christ on earth. A decision of the whole Church would be needed to recognise that a priest can be both male or female or a bishop can be both male or female. Without that universal agreement, then it would not be right or possible to change this fundamental ministry of the Christian Church. Such a change could not be made unilaterally by *only one* part of the Church.

Of course, *others* respond with *different arguments* and say that it *is* possible and even desirable and necessary for a woman to be a priest and a bishop and I will touch on that in a few moments’ time.

However, for these purposes, note that the expression “a male bishop” or “a male priest” whom a Letter of Request can seek is not adequate to resolve the difficulty for some people.

If, from a Catholic understanding, you believe that the sacraments of Christ are ministered through the episcopal and priestly ministry of those ordained into the Church of God, there may be difficulties if such a person, even though male himself, has been ordained by a woman (who in their terms could *not* be a bishop) or who had been confirmed by a woman bishop or by a bishop who had been consecrated by a woman bishop or by a woman bishop amongst others. If such a male bishop has not been properly ordained as this Catholic view understands it, how can they offer the assurance of sacramental ministry which the Anglo-Catholics seek?

That is the difficulty which many (but certainly not all) within that tradition face.

Therefore, when a male bishop has authority *delegated* from either a woman bishop or from a male bishop whose own consecrational story is uncertain because a woman bishop is part of that story, then *delegated* authority to a male bishop will not do for those from that Catholic perspective.

They would wish to see on the face of the legislation a definition about who a bishop would be which would meet their concerns about sacramental assurance.

On the other hand, for those who are enthusiastic to see women ordained as bishops and who do not want in any way to have a sense that a woman may be any less a bishop than any male bishop, anything on the face of any legislation which suggests that a woman's episcopal ministry is in some way inadequate or qualified is to be resisted at all costs.—*One group needs something more on the face of the legislation. Another group would not have something more on the face of the legislation.*

One of the questions which we cannot fully answer is whether the diocesan Schemes working with the Code of Practice can deliver what those with difficulties over the prospect of women bishops or women priests say that they need. It is an act of trust to accept such arrangements,—they say,—and past experience,—they allege,—suggests that Codes of Practice over the course of time become less observed.

We will come back to some of these issues in a few moments' time.

### **Some theological issues**

There are many theological issues around this debate and we can only note some along the way.

One is the issue of “*reception*”.

This is where one part of the Church takes a step which is innovatory, believing it to be the will of God for the future of the Church and, as with the New Testament so-called Gamaliel principle, — time needs to be taken to see whether the development is accepted and received by the wider Church as being “of God”.

There are those who will argue that even the decision to ordain women in the 1990s is not something which can be fully received by the Church in such a short period of time and, clearly, the majority of Christians across the world who are to be found within the Catholic and Orthodox traditions have not accepted that development. Others will want to argue that the Church of England has already received that development and that taking the decision to ordain women into the episcopate will confirm that reception. They will argue that the Church of England is free to make such a decision, even without universal agreement across the worldwide Church.

Other theological issues relate to the *role of a bishop*.

In a diocese, the bishop is the principal minister of word and sacrament and has overall pastoral responsibility for clergy and laity. A bishop is an instrument of unity for the diocese. A bishop declares and upholds the apostolic faith. A bishop has the sole right to ordain other bishops, priests and deacons. A bishop is a leader in mission.

This raises certain questions for us to consider and answer.

*Can both men and women exercise all those roles?*

*Would appointing women bishops be a legitimate development?—Will it be biblically based, having implicit or explicit support in the Scriptures? Does it help us to make sense of the overall biblical picture of the role of women in the purposes of God? Does it take the logic of biblical material relating to women and apply it to a new cultural and historical context?*

Would the introduction of women bishops take the Christian tradition seriously? Christian understanding is formed across the length and breadth of the Christian Church. We hear the voices of others around us and of those who have gone before us. Do we understand why women were not bishops in the past and why it might *be right* or *not be right* for women to be bishops *now*?

Would appointing women bishops be a legitimate development for the Church of England, as part of the Church of God?

*Would the development be Biblically based? Has it explicit or implicit support in specific Biblical texts?*

For example, those in favour of women as bishops would point out that there are references to women in leadership in New Testament church—Romans 16, vv 1–16, 1 Corinthians 1, vv 11, Colossians 4, v15, Philippians 4, vv 2–3. Some will also quote the role of St Mary Magdalene as an “apostle to the apostles”, Luke 24, v 10, John 20 vv 11–18.

Much is also made by some of the implicit support found in what St Paul says about the abolition of the distinction between male and female in Galatians 3, vv 27–28.

They would say that this development to ordain women as bishops helps us to make coherent sense of the overall Biblical picture of the role of women in the presence of God.—Thus if the story of the Fall in Genesis 2, vv18–25 indicates that women became subordinated to men as a result of the Fall and it is believed that Christ has overcome the Fall and thus, for example, has given women back their equality, then having women bishops would be appropriate because it reflects this restored equality.

Does this development more properly reflect the Incarnation,—that God in Christ became fully *human*, not just male?

Would the development of having women bishops take the logic of the Biblical material relating to women and apply it in a new cultural and historical context?—Thus, this argument is that, in contemporary Western society which enshrines gender equality in law, ministry *needs* to involve women alongside men at *all* levels. To do otherwise would be violate some of St Paul’s principle of working within the societal structures of the time, both to aid evangelism and to transform those structures in the light of the Gospel. To deny women leadership in the Church in our own society presents the Gospel not as good news, but as bad news for women.

Those who are *opposed* to the Church of England having women bishops or who are not persuaded by these arguments speak of Biblical evidence reflecting a *complementary* role for the 2 genders in the redeemed society of Christ. They would highlight certain New Testament texts, indicating that in the earliest Church, women were deliberately *not given authority over men* in the life of the Church, but that they nevertheless played valued and vital roles within it. Seeing women in *leading* roles in the New Testament Church is different to seeing them in *leadership* roles.

Also, those not wishing to see women bishops would argue that there comes a point where seeking to mirror or to mollify contemporary society or culture removes something of the distinctive Christian contribution, not just of the Gospel itself, but of the Kingdom.

*Because we belong to a historical, God-sustained community within the entire family of the Church, we also have to listen carefully to what God has had to say to us through the other members of that community in the past and to act accordingly. Thus the question has to be asked:*

*Would appointing women bishops be a development which takes that long-standing Christian tradition seriously?*

Does it show awareness of what the traditions of the Church (as shown in the totality of its life) have to tell us about the role of women in general and the role of women in ordained ministry in particular?

Does it show that it understands why some of these traditions have existed?

Does it *build on* the Church's existing traditions rather than simply rejecting them?—If the Spirit of God has been at work down the centuries maintaining the Church in truth, would an approach which simply rejects those traditions be theologically questionable? A development which changes the episcopate needs to be a development which carries *forward* and is *consistent with* what has *gone before*.

In answering these questions above, a further question needs to be asked. *Does the development of appointing women to the episcopate take Reason seriously?*—Does the development build on Scripture and tradition? Does it address the belief in our society that equal opportunities for women are a moral good and the conviction of some women within the Church of England that they have a vocation to the ordained ministry? Does it respond to the experience of the ministry of women priests in the Church of England since 1994?

There is a further issue which relates to the topic of “*Reception*”.

Can a particular Church act on its own regarding the Church's ministry? If it does so, can it only do so on a provisional basis whilst waiting for a wider ecumenical consensus to exist to agree on such a development?

Resolution III. ii of the 1998 Lambeth Conference called on the Churches of the Anglican Communion to uphold the principle of “*open Reception*” in relation to the ordination of women to the episcopate. Would that mean that any development now to allow for the ordination of women to the episcopate should be subject to a process of Reception,— which could be quite an extended process?

It is partly this issue of taking “*Reception*” seriously that led to special provision being made in the 1990s for those unable to accept the decision to ordain women as priests in the Church of England. The important, but essentially open nature of that decision meant that the process of Reception involved *living with diversity*, and thus *provision for diversity had to be made*.

The decision of the 1990s to ordain women as priests already has impacted on some of the internal unity of the Church of England because those unable to accept the priestly women in ministry have been unable to receive priestly ministry in parishes where women priests officiate.

A further theological issue is therefore one which relates to *how the introduction of women bishops would affect communion within the Church of England*.

The Church of England is an episcopal Church. One of the key factors which holds it together is that all parishes are in communion with their bishops and the bishops are in communion with each

other. If women are appointed as bishops, this will cease to be the case for some and there will be parishes out of communion with their bishops and bishops who are out of communion with other bishops. Thus a theological question is whether it is right to legislate for a decision which would, in fact, create an internal schism in the Church of England.

If, for other reasons, it is believed that the legislation would be, nevertheless, the proper way forward, how can the legislation make provision to reduce that internal schism to the most limited degree?

This leads to a question which the Bishop of Manchester voiced at more than one debate in the process which has led to the present draft legislation coming into being. There he asked the question “*What sort of Church do we wish the Church of England to be?*”

In part, it is asking the question of whether we wish the Church to include women at the level of its most senior ordained leadership. Equally, it asks whether the Church of England is to be a Church which seeks to include those who cannot agree on this *innovatory* and, some would argue, *prophetic* development at this point in time in history anyway. Is the Church of England able to honour both viewpoints within its membership?

Would a Church which excludes women from episcopacy be less than the Church ought to be?

Would a Church which excludes women from this role thus remain within the overall approach of the Church of across almost 2000 years and within the approach of the numerical majority of contemporary episcopal Christians across the world in the Church, of which we are a part and of which, indeed, we ought to be a part?

### **Some Synodical perspectives, both past and future**

In this last section, it is probably important to say something about what has happened and what might happen in the synodical process at national level.

The Revision Committee which considered the draft legislation received a very large number of requests to amend the elements of the proposed legislation which made provision for those unable to accept the priestly or episcopal ministry of women. In general, those requests fell into 3 categories.

*1 Set up separate dioceses in which those unable to accept the episcopal ministry of women could belong and freely flourish.* Those dioceses would need to be ones without necessary territorial connections. — Thus parish A could be in one place and parish B in a totally different place, but both would belong to the same diocese. They would have the same diocesan bishop. The parish could seek to belong to a diocese where the bishop would not just be male, but a male bishop ordained and consecrated by male bishops who themselves had been ordained and consecrated by male bishops. The sacramental assurance which is felt necessary in the Catholic tradition would thereby be given.

The Revision Committee decided against that option, partly because it seems so alien to our traditional Church of England position of one parish and its neighbouring parish belonging to the same diocese in a general geographical locality (except where a particular diocesan boundary lies between the two). To create special dioceses in this way would leave other dioceses looking like Gruyere cheeses with holes where parishes had opted out. Secondly, this proposal risked creating a Church within a Church.

2 *Create a Society whose bishops would be acceptable to those needing bishops ordained and consecrated in a particular manner and parishes could opt to belong to that Society.*—A notion of a “Society” in this sense was not too different to the notion of a separate diocese outlined in the first proposal, but there was a separate difficulty in that the Church of England does not give episcopal authorisation and jurisdiction to a Society. We give it to an individual, appointed to a particular bishopric or see. A Society may have some other useful benefits, but it does not overcome the key problem of how bishops receive jurisdiction and authorisation.

3 *Where clergy, people and parishes need a bishop whose sacramental roots are assured and who can himself provide sacramental assurance in the ministry which he offers, then provide by legislation for the legislation itself to give authorisation and jurisdiction to such a bishop, — not for such authorisation to come by the virtue of *delegation* from another bishop whose own position as a bishop had sacramental questions about it. Thus such a bishop would be a bishop in their own right by virtue of a statute, not by virtue of delegated authorisation received from someone else.*

The Revision Committee was ready to explore this possibility for a time, feeling that it offered a potential for a way forward round some difficult areas. In particular, might it be possible for some key areas of episcopal activity to be given through vesting or transfer by the statute itself, whereas some other lesser episcopal role or activities could still be delegated by the normal diocesan bishop and, of course, the day-to-day working out of episcopal ministry for the parishes concerned would be by co-operation between the bishops, probably working within guidelines provided through some Code of Practice?

The difficulty for those keen to promote the cause of women as bishops was that this solution looked like making a woman bishop less of a bishop than a male bishop. If episcopal authorisation was to run across the whole of the diocese, it should not be possible for bits to be taken away from a bishop without her consent or authority. She should be a bishop with as much episcopal authority and jurisdiction as any male bishop.

In the end, the majority of the Revision Committee could not agree on the functions which could properly be transferred or vested by statute, and thus this proposal also fell in the Revision Committee’s deliberations.

When the Revision Committee report was brought back to the General Synod for debate in July 2010, certain amendments to the draft legislation were proposed from the floor of the Synod.

*The first amendment* was to introduce the separate dioceses option.

This proposed amendment fell with one third of the Synod supporting it and about two thirds of the Synod overall rejecting it.

*A second proposed amendment* was to re-instate the proposal of the vesting and transfer of authorisation and jurisdiction to a bishop directly by any legislation itself.

Again, about one third of the Synod supported it and two thirds of the Synod rejected it.

It is quite possible that both of these proposals and, especially the second one, were affected by the expectation of *a third major proposed amendment* put forward to the General Synod in July last year. This proposed amendment was in the name of the two Archbishops and it put forward a variation on the transfer/vesting proposal. This proposed that legislation should transfer authorisation and jurisdiction directly to the bishop looking after the parishes who needed such

episcopal oversight, but that the jurisdiction which they conferred was *not taking away* from the jurisdiction of a normal diocesan bishop, but *would be concurrent with it*. It would be called a “*co-ordinate*” jurisdiction. This bishop would have full authorisation and authority in respect of a parish who needed it, but so too would the diocesan bishop. Nothing was taken away legally from the diocesan bishop’s rights and powers and authority. Of course, in practice, the two bishops would need to work out how they dealt with issues relating to such parishes.

In support of the argument, examples of other concurrent episcopal jurisdiction within the Anglican experience were brought forward. For example, in the Church of England, we have bishops for prisons and bishops for the forces and their ministry operates in prisons and in various forces bases in this country which lie within the geographical territory of a normal bishop. There is no difficulty about this. In Europe, a number of concurrent episcopal Anglican jurisdictions operate across the same geographical territory.

There was passionate debate about this proposal and, clearly for some, the fact that it had not been explored further through the Revision Committee process (because it arose after the Revision Committee had completed its work) was a concern.

Eventually Synod voted on this proposal. A clear majority of the Synod members favoured it (216 in favour; 191 against; 9 abstentions). However, the proposal was *lost* because a vote was called for a “division by Houses”. This requires that a proposal is passed in each of the 3 Houses of the Synod, — the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity. The Archbishops’ proposal was won in the House of Bishops (25 in favour; -15 against) and it was won in the House of Laity (106 in favour; 86 against; 4 abstentions), but it was lost in the House of Clergy by just 5 votes (85 in favour; 90 against, with 5 clergy also abstaining).

This left Synod in a very difficult situation, - but even if the voting had gone the other way with the same number of votes cast against the Archbishops’ proposal overall and the same number of votes cast for it overall being cast in a reverse way, there would still have been a divided General Synod.

This is relevant for the future because, as mentioned previously, if the draft legislation reaches the General Synod for a vote of final approval, it has to pass in all 3 Houses with a two-thirds majority in each House. On the basis of the evidence of last July, that would not happen.

There have been changes since then because a new General Synod has been elected. The new situation may reportedly be that the House of Laity is possibly more conservative now, and possibly the House of Clergy is more liberal now. The House of Bishops is also changing fast as new Diocesan appointments are made. No-one quite knows how a new General Synod would vote on the draft legislation, but if the House of Laity is more conservative, then it is likely that the draft legislation would not get through with a two-thirds majority, and if the House of Clergy is more liberal, it would be possible that any attempt to amend the draft legislation at the final stages would also be defeated on a call for votes by Houses.

Some are therefore arguing that since any legislation to come for final approval must come in a form approved by the House of Bishops, then the House of Bishops must do something to overcome this legislative log-jam and seek to amend the draft legislation so as to acquire the full consent of the General Synod. Whether that might happen, we do not know. It might also involve a further Revision Committee consideration of any particular change proposed by the House of Bishops, but in some dioceses, Following Motions are being put forward, seeking to have the existing provision for those unable to accept the episcopal ministry of women to be improved.

Such Following Motions are being proposed, in part, on the basis that the House of Bishops may feel the need to respond to such Following Motions.

Of course, many who dearly wish to see the admission of women to the episcopate are not wishing to see either a change in the legislation or any further delay. They too will be lobbying hard.

In the background, we have discussions by Anglo-Catholics seeking to form a Society which may, in some way, help them in different ways, including in part, by providing a pool of people suitable for being made bishops in a way which can offer sacramental assurance for those who need it. At the conservative evangelical end, there is also some suggestion of a Society with similar purposes, but from quite a different theological background.

In Parliament, Frank Field, MP, has put down an Early Day Motion, which has attracted some signatories and which would seek to remove from the Church of England exemptions under the Equalities legislation, if the existing draft legislation fails on a “technicality” — by which he means - if one of the Houses of the General Synod does not give it the full two-thirds majority. It is another attempt to lobby opinion and exercise leverage on the outcome of the present and forthcoming debates.

Now, you have *your* opportunity to make your view known through your deanery synod’s debate.

Will you vote *for* the present package of legislation? Will you vote *against* it? And *why* will you vote the way in which you will vote?

Perhaps we come back again to that question raised by the Bishop of Manchester.

*“What sort of Church do we wish the Church of England to be?”*

Or — more especially, — *“What sort of Church does God wish the Church of England to be?”*

I wish you well in your debating and your decision-making in your Deanery Synod.

Ven Clive Mansell  
Archdeacon of Tonbridge