



A Pastoral Letter from the Bishop of Salisbury

To Clergy, Churchwardens and PCC Secretaries

St Nicholas Day, 6th December 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Responding to General Synod

The damage to the morale of the local Church by the General Synod's failure to give Final Approval to the measure for the ordination of women bishops is considerable. Given the level of hurt this has caused, I am grateful that many of our women clergy are receiving considerable personal support from their congregations and the wider community. Thank you for taking care of each other and continue to have a particular care for our women clergy and all women in ministry at this unsettled and difficult time.

In working out our responses to what has happened we are trying to hear what God is saying to us. There have been a number of meetings in the diocese at which people have voiced their feelings and ideas for how to get an even better outcome than was being considered by General Synod in November. Of course there are a variety of views about what this might be but I am encouraged by the strength of determination to find a solution as quickly as the Church of England is able.

The Archbishops' Council met last week and issued a statement saying they wanted the Church of England to be able to resolve this matter and restart the process that will lead to women bishops at the next meeting of the General Synod in July. Here in the Diocese of Salisbury the Bishop's Council voted unanimously for me to do all I can by working with other Bishops to find a way forward quickly when we meet on Monday 10th and Tuesday 11th December.

One of the things that has helped me in the immediate aftermath is that the Church continues to get on with prayer and worship, care and service in all our communities. At the Advent service From Darkness to Light in the cathedral last weekend I walked behind a banner proclaiming the Wisdom of God, which in the Hebrew Scriptures is feminine. Advent is an affirmation that we live in hope. At Christmas we will read in John's Gospel again that the light of Christ shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

In the Bible a crisis is both a judgement and an opportunity. We will want to make the most of what God is giving us.

Advent blessings,