



Over the Threshold : Wisdom Unfolding

Papers from the 2016 Spring Conference of MaeCymru

Ministry and Equality ~ Merched a'r Eglwys

**Saturday 21st May, 2016
Plas Dolerw, Newtown, Powys**



Hilary Cotton
Chair of WATCH



Rt Revd Libby Lane
Bishop of Stockport



Revd Terrie Robinson
*Administrator
International Anglican*

Over the Threshold : Wisdom Unfolding

**papers from the 2016 Spring Conference
of MAECymru
Merched a'r Eglwys / Ministry and Equality**

**Saturday 21st May
at Plas Dolerw, Newtown, Powys**

Contents

- 3 Conference programme**
- 4 The Call of Wisdom**
Reflections from the first woman to be a Bishop in England
Rt Revd Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport
- 7 WATCH - after women bishops**
Hilary Cotton, Chair of WATCH - Women and the Church
- 10 Anglican women and men working for just relationships and gender equality - resources to help us**
Revd Terrie Robinson, Director of Women in Church & Society, Anglican Communion Office
- 12 Question Time:** notes from the panel discussion with
- Rt Revd Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport;
 - Hilary Cotton, Chair of WATCH;
 - Revd Terrie Robinson, Director of Women in Church & Society, Anglican Communion Office;
 - Revd Canon Enid Morgan, MAECymru Chair



Over the Threshold : Wisdom Unfolding

**MAECymru Spring Conference 2016
Saturday 21st May at Plas Dolerw, Newtown**

Programme

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 9.30am | Arrivals and coffee |
| 10.15am | Welcome and introductions
Brief opening devotion |
| 10.30am | Keynote address: Rt Revd Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport |
| 11.15am | Hilary Cotton, Chair of WATCH - Women and the Church |
| 11.45am | Revd Terrie Robinson, Director of Women in Church & Society
Anglican Communion Office |
| 12.15pm | Lunch |
| 1.00pm | How do we respond in Wales?
Revd Canon Enid Morgan, MAECymru Chair |
| 1.20pm | Diocesan group discussions |
| 1.50pm | Panel discussion - all speakers |
| 2.45pm | Act of Worship |
| 3.15pm | Closing words |
| 3.30pm | Tea and depart |

Over the Threshold : Wisdom Unfolding

The Call of Wisdom

Rt Revd Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport

²⁰ *Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.*

²¹ *At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:*

¹³ *Happy are those who find wisdom,
and those who get understanding,*

¹⁴ *for her income is better than silver,
and her revenue better than gold.*

¹⁵ *She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.*

¹⁶ *Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honour.*

¹⁷ *Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.*

¹⁸ *She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called happy.*

My appointment as the first woman to be a Bishop in England has generated a lot of attention, and it was an historic moment in our nation's history. The occasion was extraordinary but that doesn't mean I am.

God ... will always leave them in some sense unfinished in order that, when they are resplendent in their marvellous achievements, they may still grieve their imperfections; and because they constantly have to struggle over trivial things... they will not be tempted to overestimate themselves when confronted by major things.
Gregory the Great

I don't think I am extraordinary, and I'm not sure I'm particularly courageous either: I have faced institutional resistance and personal opposition but I've never faced danger, felt at risk or suffered the kind of discrimination that undermined my sense of worth. (Though that is not the story of all women in church, even during the last 20 odd years I've been in ministry, some of whom have been attacked, persecuted, denied access and recognition. Many of them have demonstrated courage, and my position has been earned at great cost borne, by these and others, over many decades.)

The Archbishop of Canterbury said some kind things about me when my appointment was announced, including that I am calm and Christ centred - and those things have been what have carried me through these first months: the ability not to panic - and the security that comes from trusting not in myself but in the God who loves me.

A verse from the Bible that I chose for the service at Chester Cathedral at which I was installed as Bishop of Stockport, from the new Testament in one of St Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, says '*the God who calls you is faithful, and s/he will do it*'. That is where I get my courage, if that is what we are going to call the characteristic that summarises my journey. Karl Barth is attributed with the saying '*courage is fear that has said its prayers*'.

- It has been a year of contrasts: in conversation with the Chancellor but also with students struggling to pay their rent; a royal garden party but also the DR Congo with 6,000 Anglicans celebrating.

- I have become aware of the depth and scope of ministry as a Bishop - but that is the same for all Bishops and not unique to me.

- Women Bishops have become the new normal over this year - of 16 new appointments in England in the first 12 months, 8 have been women (9 and 10 next month).

- Change and continuity: the affirmation of being appointed in my own Diocese - not women in general but me in particular = they knew what they were getting. Participant Observers in the process of senior appointments, including Episcopal. 'Unknown parish priest from northern wasteland' was not the whole truth - though there's value in an 'ordinary' woman being first.

- the positive role I can have to promote women in leadership roles - people now respond differently to me on this: I can provide "space for aspiration".

- I don't think I've been a trailblazer and forced change on my own: I've stepped over thresholds of doors opened by others at every stage - selection, training, ordination, ministry, episcopacy. The environment for change was already there - I am happy to have been part of it.

- it's my vocation to occupy space for others to step through with confidence: women and men, for and against, those more excluded than I was/am as white, middle class, educated, married with children, able bodied . . .

- in my first year there were thousands of responses to my appointment - young and old, men and women, all faiths and none; more than 90 media events, 120+

events as the 'first'; lots of one offs. What I take from the first year is that I want to be seen as available – to God, to the Church and to society.

- I'm looking forward to my second year, offering me more depth and scope: my higher profile means I can highlight issues I think are important e.g. DBE, Foxhill, HoB + General Synod, Cranmer, Children's Society.

One of the delights of the past year has been the privilege of Confirmations. Scores of people of all ages and backgrounds who have chosen to respond to Jesus and say 'yes' to his invitation to follow him, to belong to his people and fulfil their call to be faithful among the people God has placed them - perhaps not as a Bishop, but, even more vitally, as friends, neighbours, colleagues; in schools and workplaces, in homes and communities. "*God has called you by name, and has made you His own*", I remind each one before I pray for the Holy Spirit to Confirm their faith.

When the announcement of my nomination as Bishop of Stockport became public just before Christmas 2015, a great deal was made of, at last, the Church of England was a step closer to reflecting our diverse society, and to honouring the rich variety of God's creation. What I have discovered in my first year of being a Bishop is that, while it does really matter what our public face looks like, what matters at least as much, if not more, is the faithfulness of those who choose to follow Jesus in their daily lives across the country. They come in all shapes and sizes, from all backgrounds and cultures, and God loves and calls each one, and every one is essential to the flourishing of God's Kingdom. What an encouragement to me it is to be a small part of their story as the Bishop who gets to Confirm them and pray for them.

My first year has meant quite a lot of individual attention for me. I am very conscious though, that all this has not really been about me. I want to honour the countless women and men who worked and struggled and prayed for years that this moment might come. I am hugely grateful to those who trusted me with this responsibility, who took that risk, and to those who continue to help, advise, encourage and to all those who pray for me.

Perhaps the most valuable thing I am learning about being a Bishop, and specifically about being the first woman Bishop, is how to deflect attention. The capacity not to be carried, or swept, away by the excitement and expectation but to remain rooted in Jesus, and then, being grateful and gracious about the attention that my role generates, pointing people on to the things that really matter: to opportunities for good, to examples to inspire, to indicators for change, to possibilities for making things better: the Kingdom of God - and, wherever possible, to turn attention to Jesus.

Over the threshold - wisdom unfolding

WATCH - after women bishops

Hilary Cotton, Chair of WATCH - Women & the Church

'Are you still going?' 'I thought WATCH would have shut down', 'What are you doing now?' are the sorts of things we heard over and over again during 2015, and even now.

The answers are:

Yes - WATCH has always had a remit beyond getting women to be bishops.

No - there is plenty still to do.

All the things we didn't have time to do in the last ten years: affirming the laity, campaigning for the wider aspects of gender justice in the CofE, including the structural and systemic things that are really hard to shift, as well as monitoring life for ordained women under a settlement that has retained opt-outs from their ministry.

The loss of a single-issue focus means that we have lost

- the external pressures of, for example, the General Synodical timetable, which kept up the momentum;
- the sense of a common cause, which keeps people focused and less likely to raise potentially divisive issues;
- capacity and energy, as the work of WATCH is no longer (rightly) a priority for many people who have been supporters and activists - they have moved on to other priorities.

How have we made the transition from a single-issue campaigning focus?

Three questions are significant:

- There is a much broader agenda - how do we choose?
- The issues are more subtle and more hard-wired - how do we approach them?
- The priority of gender as an issue has dropped - how do we keep the profile high?

1. Deciding what to do.

We follow the energy - what do people want to be doing?

When I say 'people' I mainly mean the national Committee - half lay/half ordained, men and women, young and older.

What excites them, what nourishes them, where is their energy and passion? We have produced three main headings:

Focus on the Laity, Campaigning for gender justice, Monitoring.

We recognise that our strategy has to be emergent, not planned, and we have to scan, seize opportunities, be quick to respond, dance.

What are we doing?

Laywomen's days - lament for the times we have not been valued, and exploring the question

'What would a church that truly valued women as well as men look like?'

Creating a Gender Justice Policy for the CofE - for which we are working with global partners/players, including Side by Side.

2. How do we approach the issues of patriarchy?

a) Where can we influence?

We aim to take opportunities. In the central church we aim to get gender firmly on the agenda: we are encouraged that two women have been appointed to work on vocation and discipleship for whom gender is a priority.

More lay people are keen to see more women in positions of authority than you might realise: it is in the culture in their daily lives. I have been surprised by how many in the church do 'get it' and really want things to change - in theory at least.

Do something big occasionally. We created the 'Report on developments in women's ministry, 2015', as a record of how things have been during that year. We intend to do this each year, so that evidence and stories don't get lost, and there is a record of what has happened and not happened.

We continue to work with the Transformations group to enable the gender culture of the Church of England to change, by offering well-regarded and rigorous research, and guidelines and suggestions for opportunities to make changes.

b) How can we grow?

Not so much in numbers as in wisdom.

We can offer opportunities for experience. We need to invest in ourselves: two years ago I asked the WATCH Committee *'Why are you involved in WATCH?'*. Many of them gave the answer *'It is the only place where I feel safe and supported in saying what it is truly like being a woman in the Church of England'*. We continue to sustain that.

I am so encouraged by those who do 'get it', for example female bishops who are prepared to speak up for women, and the new General Synod, many of whom are committed to working for gender justice.

c) Keep the profile high: we launched our strapline 'Just getting started' in Nov 2014 - as Royal Assent was given to the legislation for women in the episcopate. This made it clear that the work of WATCH was not yet finished.

We look for opportunities to be present - we have stands at General Synod, Greenbelt, and often at Diocesan clergy conferences.

Be online - our website is the face of WATCH, and although it takes a lot of work to keep it up to date, fresh and high-profile, it is hugely important that we do that.

We aim to focus on the positives rather than lapse into complaining or challenging in ways that lose us support.

I have recently read the book 'Awakening' by Catholic Women's Ordination. It is particularly relevant for us at this time, as it looks at being in it for the long haul. It also reminds us that having women in leadership is one significant achievement, but that transforming and renewing the church from patriarchy is an imperative if women are to be truly valued

Finally, we don't have a map of the new territory - but we do see some paths to dance along, in the grace of God and the power of the Spirit.

Over the threshold - wisdom unfolding

Anglican women and men working for just relationships and gender equality - resources to help us

Revd Terrie Robinson, Director of Women in Church & Society, Anglican Communion Office

The following are just some of the many resources available to help us reflect on the participation of women in church and society and on issues that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Please let me know about resources which you have developed or discovered: Revd Terrie Robinson, Director for Women in Church & Society, Anglican Communion Office, London, UK: terrie.robinson@anglicancommunion.org.

Communion Women: Tools for Transformation

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/community/communion-women.aspx>

The International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN): <http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org>.

Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IntAngWomen/>. Email terrie.robinson@anglicancommunion.org to join the IAWN mailing list.

Resolutions from the Anglican Consultative Council: The resolutions which particularly relate to just relationships between women and men, boys and girls are listed at the top of

<http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources.aspx>.

Side by Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice www.sidebysidegender.org.

Side by Side Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/sidebysidegender>

'Of the Same Flesh: Exploring a theology of gender', published by Christian Aid 2014-

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/of-the-same-flesh-gender-theology-report.pdf>

'Youth Changing the River's Flow: A gender transformative programme for young people' - a facilitator's guide/toolkit from Sonke Gender Justice

<http://www.genderjustice.org.za/publication/youth-changing-rivers-flow-facilitators-guide/>

Gender Justice Policy of the Lutheran World Federation:

<http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/resource-lwf-gender-justice-policy>

World Vision 'Community Change for Social Action Project Model' - download at

<http://www.wvLorg/communitychange>

Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World, eds Linda Day & Carolyn Pressler, 2006, Westminster John Knox Press

Ending gender-based violence and caring for victims and survivors:

See the Restored website at www.restoredrelationships.org, especially their pack for churches at

<http://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info!51!>.

The Primates' Letter to the Churches regarding Gender Based Violence following their meeting in Dublin, January 2011: http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources/docs/gbv_primates_english.pdf

Anglican Men Speak Out! Video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80UjabyVJJK>.
Accompanying leaflet at <http://bit.ly/10YVamZ>

'Anglicans and the 16 Days: Learn, Pray, Be Inspired, Act' - an information resource from the Women's Desk at the Anglican Communion Office for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.

http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources/docs/16_days_resource_20B.pdf

Raising awareness of human trafficking and slavery:

'To be silent is to be unfaithful', a resource from the Church of Scotland and Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS): <http://bit.ly/ls8WGQY>

Resources for Freedom Sunday: <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-views/international-affairs/human-trafficking/resources.aspx>

'Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery', a theological resource developed by the Mission Theological Advisory Group which is supported jointly by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland and the Church of England and: <http://bit.ly/lqix9S9>

Over the Threshold : Wisdom Unfolding

Question Time

Panel members: Rt Revd Libby Lane, Bishop of Stockport; Hilary Cotton, Chair of WATCH; Revd Terrie Robinson, Director of Women in Church and Society, Anglican Communion Office and Revd Canon Enid Morgan, MAECymru Chair.

- **Should we be careful using gender pronouns with reference to God? Does it matter and does it matter who does it?**

+Libby – Yes, it does matter and it matters who does it! Gender pronouns shouldn't just be changed in isolation - using liturgical language carelessly is bad theology and brings detrimental consequences. It can end up being the justification for things that are bad, wrong and wicked. It really matters how we understand God as this is ultimately how we understand our salvation and our relationships with one another and with God. This is an important part of grappling with scripture and how this feeds our identity.

Hilary – It really matters! Male language for God is a tap root for patriarchy. We need to deal with it. Using she and her is a huge stumbling block for some people that they shy away from and avoid tackling. We have to be prepared to tackle these contentious issues.

Enid – We need to be more creative in our approach to liturgy and not just replace masculine with feminine. Has shock factor when we do it though!

Terrie – Some progress has been made in CofE – lots of feminine metaphors e.g. 'mother hen' are now used. America and Canada are way ahead with liturgy and we can learn a lot from them

- **The Church in Wales is like a family and it can be hard if you come from outside. How do we break through as outsiders?**

+Libby – Healthy families can't indulge in incest! We need to bring in new ideas to stay fresh and relevant. Families cannot be closed – we need to be open to people coming in to flourish and to be supportive.

Hilary – Diversity is hard work. People need to recognise this and work hard to make it work.

Enid – There is a parallel here with non-Welsh speakers moving in to a Welsh speaking community. This works both ways and effort is needed from all concerned – to welcome newcomers and commitment to the new community from newcomers.

- **Should the Church in Wales continue to ordain men who don't support the ordination of women? How do we encourage younger men who are not sure to support women?**

Terri – Identify positive male role models and find men who are on your side. We need gender champions. Find allies. In the longer term, do something with children and in our schools to help young people understand how we should be dealing with one another, regardless of gender, race or sexuality.

+Libby - Refuse to be excluded! For the sake of all our congregations, we must model strong female ministry. Created as a child of God, called to this ministry and good at it! Will be part of their lives in some way, no matter how small e.g. church fete.

- **Are there any organisations that model best practice in respect of equality and inclusivity?**

Terri - Side by Side – the Faith Movement for Gender Justice. Their website includes many powerful case histories from across the world.

<http://sidebysidegender.org/>

+Libby – Sometimes it is good to walk alongside other organisations who are also on a journey. We are all still learning and learning together can be very powerful

- **How can we best learn from one another and support one another at this stage of our journey?**

+Libby - Don't be alone. We all need to stand together and unlock one another's potential. Honesty is really important.

Enid – we need to get to know one another and build relationships. Many new faces in the Church in Wales and we need to look after one another and nurture ourselves and one another.