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Church Society Trust holds patronage rights on behalf of Church Society which is a voluntary association of members of the Church of England.

Church Society exists to uphold biblical teaching and to promote and defend the character of the Church of England as a reformed and national Church. The Society is strongly committed to the supreme and final authority of the Bible as God's Word written.

Further information about Church Society and many other resources can be found on our website:

**[www.churchsociety.org](http://www.churchsociety.org)**

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## Clergy Appointments

# What are Resolutions A & B?



There is a lot of jargon associated with clergy appointments some of which is explained in our leaflet "Clergy Appointments - An Overview".

## **Appendix - "Resolution C"**

The so-called Resolution C was not part of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993, but is rather part of an "Act of Synod". It still has force, but is not in legislation.

The form of words is:

*This Parochial Church Council resolves to petition the Diocesan Bishop, requesting that Episcopal duties in the parish should be carried out in accordance with the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993.*

Passing this resolution does not take the church out of the Diocese. Instead it indicates that the church looks to those who retain a biblical and historical view of ministry to exercise the pastoral oversight which is charged to a Bishop. It will ensure safeguards against the Bishops imposing people of different views on the parish. Evangelicals were upset, but not surprised, when the Church of England first created only two of these "Flying Bishops" who were Anglo-Catholic and then finally appointed a third. Nevertheless there are some evangelical parishes which have passed Resolution C, some of them happily accept the ministry of a Flying Bishop, others have special arrangements through their Diocese for another Bishop to exercise this form of oversight.

There are special rules governing this resolution and it is usually passed at a separate meeting. Resolution A or B must have been passed first.

If a parish has passed Resolution C then their "Flying Bishop" should be invited by the Diocesan Bishop to have a role in the appointment of the incumbent or Priest-in-Charge.

Puritans and the evangelical revivalists through whose ministry God transformed the whole nation.

Today the Church of England is dominated by a liberal mind set. Many liberals deny the full divinity of Christ, the necessity of his saving death and the authority of the Bible. We do not have to look far to see where this will lead. In America and Canada in particular where they took the decision to ordain women 30 years ago the growth of liberalism and decline of Biblical teaching has continued apace leading to the endorsement of sexual immorality and to Bishops being appointed who deny most, if not all, the fundamental tenets of the faith. Part of the reason for this has been that those who remained faithful to Biblical teaching on the ministry of women have often found themselves hounded out or unable in conscience to remain.

The Church of England has prevented itself bleeding to death in this way, or at least stemmed some of the flow, by the provision of these Resolutions. You should not therefore be embarrassed to pass these resolutions. The PCC must not be swayed by pressure from the Church or from the world. You must come to the clear conviction that what you do is in accordance with the word of God, that is what faithful Anglicans have always done.

For two millennia, the Church of God has consistently and uniformly taught that the bible precludes women from servant-leadership in the household of faith. In this last generation or two many protestant churches of the western world have embarked on a process of wholesale change from Biblical and traditional practice and teaching. It would be hard to find any denomination which has undertaken this revisionist agenda and seen numerical growth. In fact, as the Church has decided to put cultural conformity above the teaching of Scripture it has lost influence and turned people away.

To go against the spirit of the age is not easy and this is particularly so today for women who wish to uphold Biblical teaching rather than the standards of the world. Yet if we would truly honour God and show our love for Christ, we must be obedient to His revealed will.

## **What are Resolutions A & B?**

In November 1992 the General Synod of the Church of England voted to allow women to be ordained as priests. In 1993 a Measure was introduced not only permitting this innovation but also giving a form of protection to congregations who believed this to have been a mistake, or who, for whatever reason, felt that women should not minister as priests in their local church. This was a recognition not only of differing opinions but that such a dramatic change, which was virtually unknown in the previous two millennia of Church history, needed to be tested and received by the Church.

Two resolutions were provided in the legislation which permit parishes to restrict aspects of their ministry to men. These are in primary legislation in English law and therefore stand alongside other national legislation relating to sexual equality. They are referred to as Resolutions A & B. A third resolution was permitted not through legislation but through what is called an Act of Synod. This concerns the provision of episcopal ministry and is often called Resolution C.

When there is a vacancy in a parish one of the things the PCC must do is consider whether to debate and vote on Resolutions A & B. There is no need to actually vote on them, but it is required that consideration be given as to whether they should be debated and voted upon.

We have set out in a separate leaflet the reasons why evangelicals have continued to assert from Scripture that women should not be presbyters. The logic of this position is that a PCC which accepts this argument should at least pass Resolution B.

## **Resolution A**

*"That this Parochial Church Council would not accept a woman as the minister who presides at or celebrates the Holy Communion or pronounces the Absolution."*

This resolution sounds too catholic in tone for many Evangelicals. It covers those actions which are, at present, the preserve of the priest. This implies a view of ministry that few Evangelicals can accept. However, not passing this Resolution allows various things to happen:

- A woman could be appointed as an assistant minister and made Priest.
- A visiting woman from another parish could preside at Communion.
- During an interregnum, or if the incumbent were ill, the pastoral care of the parish could be passed to a woman priest from another parish.

Whether you like the wording or not, you must think through the implications of this for the life of the congregation as a whole.

## **Resolution B**

*"That this Parochial Church Council would not accept a woman as the incumbent or priest-in-charge of the benefice or as a team vicar for the benefice"*

This is more straightforward, it concerns specifically the appointment of a Vicar, Rector or Priest-in-Charge for a parish. Some people seem to think that the patronage system itself can safeguard parishes but this is neither true nor does it reckon with the fact that the patrons have no legal safeguards whereas the parish does.

Many parishes say they are not against women as Vicars, they just don't think it right for them.

There are two things to bear in mind.

- In many places considerable pressure is brought to bear on parishes, particularly through threats of a long interregnum, this has led to unsuitable people being appointed. In many Dioceses almost all vacant benefices are being suspended and in such a situation a parish has no legal rights or safeguards except that if they pass Resolution B this is binding.
- If a parish does not pass Resolution B and then turns down a woman candidate simply because she is a woman the PCC could be prosecuted under sex discrimination legislation.

The PCC must decide whether it would wish a woman to be appointed as Rector/Vicar. Such a person would have the pastoral and spiritual charge of the congregation, including; the main

preaching ministry, presiding at the Communion, and leading the life of the church.

Resolutions A and B have been provided as a means for Church Councils to signal either their hesitation about the ordination of women or their continuing acceptance of the Biblical teaching on male presbyters (priests). Church Society Trust recommends that PCCs that have a conscientious objection to the women as presbyters should pass at least Resolution B. However, it should be remembered that the appointment of clergy is exempted from sex discrimination legislation. Therefore it is not illegal for parish representatives to refuse a woman candidate even if Resolution B has not been passed, nor is it illegal for patrons to refuse to present, or indeed for a Bishop to refuse to license or institute for reasons of conscience.

Team ministries and united benefices present a particular difficulty because some parishes may be actively in favour of the ministry of ordained women whilst others are opposed. If one PCC passes Resolution B this will apply to all others in the benefice or Team. Conversely, a PCC which has passed, or might be considering passing, Resolution B is sometimes put under pressure to revoke the resolution, or not pass it. In such a situation patrons and the Bishop need to be mindful of the issue.

The Code of Practice to the Pastoral Measure in relation to the appointment of Priest-in-Charge alludes to a similar situation: "The bishop should also give careful consideration, in making any appointment, to the views of any particular congregation within a parish that is not disposed to welcome a woman priest in the senses indicated in Resolutions A or B, even if the PCC of that parish has not passed either of those resolutions."

## **The changing faith of the Church of England.**

In the past many evangelical parishes have taken a defiant stand against certain trends because of their utter conviction that the Bible is fully and completely the Word of God and that through His Word God governs His Church. This was the faith of the English reformers who transformed the Church of England, it was the faith of the