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REPORT OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY
THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
RELATING TO THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN TO THE PRESBYTERATE

At a special meeting of the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada held on May 29th, 1976, at Huron College, the Bishops reaffirmed the collegial position they had expressed at the meeting of the House held in November, clarified their understanding of the Conscience Clause, and set St. Andrew's Day, November 30th, as the date for the first ordinations of women to the priesthood in those Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Canada where Bishops felt called to take this step. The House felt it might be useful to provide to members of the Anglican Communion and others a summary of the main steps which have been taken in our Church and in the wider Anglican Communion as the Church has come to this decision. Hence, this report.

The issue of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood is not a new issue for Anglicans. Over forty years ago the Archbishop of Canterbury appointed a Commission on the ministry of women which reported in 1935:

"The continuous tradition of the Church has been that of a male priesthood, and with this tradition we believe that the general mind of the Church is still in accord. Moreover, we believe that for one branch of the Church to admit women to the priesthood would involve disloyalty to that fundamental unity in witness and tradition which exists even in the present divided state of Christendom."

The issue was not settled by this action. In 1944 the Bishop of Hong Kong ordained a woman as priest but there was so much adverse reaction from other parts of the Communion that she resigned the exercise of her Orders.

Concern about the situation persisted and at the Lambeth Conference in 1948 a committee reported:

"Anglican tradition and order have certainly not hitherto recognized or contemplated the ordination of any women to the priesthood."

Again the issue was not settled. It kept reappearing in England and elsewhere. In 1967 it was debated in the National Assembly of the Church of England and a report prepared which did not make recommendations either way.

Since the matter had come to be one of concern in many parts of the Anglican Communion, it was discussed by a Sub-Committee, by the Section on Renewal in Ministry and then by the whole Lambeth Conference in 1968.

The Section on Renewal in Ministry stated that the Section could find no conclusive theological reason for withholding ordination to the priesthood from women and continued:

"The tradition flowing from the early Fathers and the medieval Church, that a woman is incapable of receiving holy orders, appears to reflect biological assumptions about the nature of man and woman which have been generally discarded today. If the ancient and medieval assumptions about the social role and inferior status of women are no longer accepted, the appeal to tradition is virtually reduced to the observation that there happens to be no precedent for ordaining women as priests."

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The Conference as a whole passed the four following Resolutions:

"The Conference affirms its opinion that the theological arguments as at present presented for and against the ordination of women to the priesthood are inconclusive."

"The Conference requests every national and regional Church or Province to give careful study to the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood and to report its findings to the Anglican Consultative Council (or Lambeth Consultative Body) which will make them generally available to the Anglican Communion."

"The Conference requests the Anglican Consultative Council (or Lambeth Consultative Body)

- (a) to initiate consultations with other Churches which have women in their ordained ministry and with those which have not.
- (b) to distribute the information thus secured throughout the Anglican Communion."

"The Conference recommends that, before any national or regional Church or Province makes a final decision to ordain women to the priesthood, the advice of the Anglican Consultative Council (or Lambeth Consultative Body) be sought and carefully considered."

In Canada these Resolutions, and others from Lambeth, were referred to appropriate bodies in our Church for study and were received by the 1969 General Synod. Synod specifically requested the Primate to appoint a task force to study the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The task force was appointed and following much study gave an interim report to the 1971 General Synod and asked for and was given an extension of time before making its final report. The 1971 Synod requested dioceses and parishes to study the Lambeth Conference statements in the light of present day conditions.

The Anglican Consultative Council met for the first time in 1971. It received reports at that meeting that eight Provinces had begun a study on the Lambeth Conference request concerning the ordination of women to the priesthood, but no formal reports were received. It also received, through the Council of South-East Asia, a communication from the Bishop of Hong Kong who, following approval of his Diocesan Synod of the principle of the ordination of women to the priesthood, desired to ordain two women to the priesthood. The Council passed the following Resolutions, one general, one specific.

"Many of the Churches of the Anglican Communion regard the question of ordination of women to the priesthood as an urgent matter. We therefore call on all Churches of the Anglican Communion to give their consideration to this subject as requested by LCR 35, and to express their views in time for consideration by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1973."

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"In reply to the request of the Council of the Church of South-East Asia, this Council 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 his Province, that, if he decides to ordain women to the priesthood, his action will be acceptable to this Council; and that this Council will use its good offices to encourage all Provinces of the Anglican Communion to continue in communion with these dioceses."

This motion was passed by a very small majority. (Carried 24-22)

In the same year in Canada the House of Bishops authorized appropriate action whereby women could be ordained as deacons and those presently holding the office of deaconess could become deacons, if they so desired. They were then recognized as being in Holy Orders.

These were in keeping with Lambeth recommendations.

The Primate's Task Force on the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood reported to the General Synod Committee on Ministry in the interval between the 1971 and 1973 Synods. The majority report recommended acceptance of the principle of the ordination of women to the priesthood. The committee approved the recommendation and communicated it to the House of Bishops and to General Synod, together with a draft resolution for presentation to Synod. The House of Bishops discussed the report and recommendations with care. When General Synod met, following long and careful debate, the following motion was passed in all three Orders:

"That this General Synod accept the principle of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, that this decision be communicated to the Anglican Consultative Council, and that implementation not take place until the House of Bishops has worked out a pattern for the Canadian Church that would include an educational process for the Church."

In 1973 the Anglican Consultative Council met for the second time. It noted that the Bishop of Hong Kong had ordained two women as priests and that no Church or Province had ceased to be in communion with the Diocese.

"This is not to say that all of them approve the action taken. In fairness it must be said, however, that remaining in communion indicates that the other Churches and Provinces respect the right of Hong Kong to its action, in the light of Limuru Resolution 28."

It also received reports from the Churches of the Provinces of Burma, New Zealand and Canada all approving the principle of the ordination of women to the priesthood and from the Church of England, the Church of Wales, the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. and the Church of Australia indicating that preliminary actions had been taken and final action pending. The South Pacific Council and the Province of Central Africa indicated that it would not be opportune to take action in their areas.

"The South Pacific Anglican Council reported that most of its people are not yet ready to accept women priests.

Central Africa reported that it would not be opportune at the time to proceed with any proposal. Study by each diocese, however, has been recommended."

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The Council also passed the following Resolutions:

"The Council agrees to recommend once more that, where any autonomous Province of the Anglican Communion decides to ordain women to the priesthood, this should not cause any break in communion in our Anglican family."

In favour 50, against 2,
abstentions 3

"The Council recognizes that any firm decision on the ordination of women to the priesthood will have important ecumenical repercussions, which need to be taken into account; but this consideration should not be decisive. The Churches of the Anglican Communion must make their own decision."

In favour 54, against 1,
abstentions nil.

"The Churches, Provinces and extra-provincial dioceses which have not yet responded to the Secretary General in terms of Limuru Resolution 28(a) and (c) are again urged to do so, on order that a wider consensus of opinion may be obtained for further deliberation at ACC 3 in Perth in 1975."

In favour 54, against 1,
abstentions nil.

There seemed to be a clear indication of the direction of movement in the Anglican Communion generally.

The House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada met in December, 1973. They reviewed the report and actions of the Anglican Consultative Council relating to the ordination of women to the presbyterate and then began an examination of factors requiring consideration if the decision of General Synod was to be implemented. They considered five such factors - selection, training, placement, support and authorization. There was general agreement that women postulants should be treated in the same way as male postulants in the matters of selection and training, and when ordained should receive the same levels of financial support and fringe benefits as men. These factors are already operative in the case of women deacons. It was recognized that initially there would be difficulties relating to placement and great care would have to be exercised. The major concern however was in the area of authorization. Following careful discussion, the House passed the following motion:

"The House of Bishops, in considering the Resolution of General Synod that implementation of the accepted principle of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood not take place until the House of Bishops' has worked out a pattern for the Canadian Church that would include an educational pattern for the Church, recognizes an evident division within our Church on this matter, and our own difficulty in reaching collegial consensus on when implementation might be possible. We agree that no immediate implementation will be possible and that time must be provided for a careful educational process; and for consultation with other Christians, especially those in other parts of the Anglican Communion."

At the May, 1974 meeting of the House, Bishop Valentine introduced a discussion relating to the ordination of women to the priesthood. He suggested that discussion would be more valuable and helpful if it could be undertaken under particular categories and suggested six - namely, Scriptural or Biblical, historical, theological, ecclesiological, sociological and constitutional. Once consideration had been given to the categories, the next stage would be to weigh the priorities of the categories. The House discussed the question in

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small groups using the suggested categories as a basis for its discussion. Reports of the discussion groups were given to Bishop Valentine for use in the preparation of a paper to be presented at the December meeting of the House. In the plenary session, the following motion was passed:

"That this House asks the Chair to appoint a Task Force to prepare a report for distribution to all Bishops in advance of our December meeting, outlining the essential steps which would make possible implementation of the General Synod approval of the Principle of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, and that our December meeting accept and/or reverse this report for distribution to the whole Church."

This was done.

At the December meeting of the House of Bishops, Bishop Valentine presented a paper on the implementation of the General Synod resolution re the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood. Some revisions were made in the paper in the course of discussion and the following motion was then passed:

"That this House of Bishops approve this document as revised on the Ordination of Women for release and circulation throughout the Church."

The revised paper was printed as an insert in the Canadian Churchman in the January, 1975 issue.

There were two additional motions passed which related to the topic of concern:

"That an in-depth corporate study on Ministry be placed on the Agenda of the next meeting of the House of Bishops, to include two papers on Ministry subsequently to be made available to the Church."

"That the House see to it that 'the Committee on Ministry prepare and distribute immediately to the dioceses a bibliography of study on the nature of priesthood as requested by General Synod, Regina', along with the revised Diocese of Huron Study Guide on the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood."

"That each diocese be encouraged to involve its constituents of each Order in initiating a process of study, thought and prayer on issues surrounding these concerns."

"That at the completion of the process there be an opportunity to assess the mind of the people."

"That it is the opinion of the House of Bishops that even while the implementation of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, (Act 31, General Synod, 1973), was referred to the House of Bishops, the approval in principle could well be a matter of Faith and Order of the Church and should be ratified by a second vote at General Synod under Section 11, paragraph 2 of Declaration of Principles and that this opinion be directed to the Organization Committee."

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The House of Bishops met again in June 1975 just prior to General Synod and spent considerable time discussing the question of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood and the stand which the House should take when it was discussed at General Synod. A memorial was prepared for General Synod as follows:

"The House of Bishops has continued to study the matter of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, and in particular has studied resolutions (a) and (b) presented by the General Synod Committee on Ministry. Resolution (a) is similar to the first part of the resolution on the principle of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood adopted at last General Synod; resolution (b) takes the process a step further.

"Having in mind the unity of the Church and the collegiality of the House of Bishops, as well as the will of General Synod as expressed in the 1973 resolution, the House of Bishops believes the right course of action at this time is to be the simple reaffirmation of the 1973 resolution.

"The House of Bishops shares the concern of the General Synod that a principle, once declared and ratified by the Synod, should not be rendered ineffective by improper delays in implementation. The House therefore undertakes to be guided by the common decision of the Bishops and other delegates, and to carry forward the task of implementation, if such is indicated, with due regard to the feelings of the Anglican Church throughout Canada, and the consciences of individual Bishops on both sides of the question.

"The House of Bishops therefore moves that in place of resolutions (a) and (b) substantive to the report of the Committee on Ministry, this General Synod reaffirm the decision of the 26th Session which is expressed in these words:

'That this General Synod accept the principle of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, that this decision be communicated to the Anglican Consultative Council, and that implementation not take place until the House of Bishops has worked out a pattern for the Canadian Church that would include an educational process for the Church.'

"The House further memorializes General Synod and the Agenda Committee that it regard further debate and discussion on the floor of Synod and in the issue groups to be a non-productive process. The House therefore urges the Agenda Committee to change the procedure in the following way once the previous procedural question is settled:

(a) To act to have no further speeches pro or con;

(b) To allow one full hour for a quiet reading and study of the document 'The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood Pro and Con', singly in the Synod meeting room, or in consultation with other delegates in some other place;

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- (c) To provide fifteen minutes of corporate silent prayer while we invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- (d) Then to vote by secret ballot by Orders.

If the Agenda Committee finds it impossible to do this, the House is prepared to move this course of action on the floor of Synod."

A special meeting of the House was convened at noon on June 16th during General Synod when, following receipt of a report of a consultation with the Agenda Committee and Assessors which dealt with constitutional and procedural requirements relating to General Synod, the Memorials of the House of Bishops were withdrawn.

General Synod, in due course, received the report of the Committee on Ministry, together with its motions, and following careful discussion passed the following motions:

"That this General Synod reaffirm the principle of the ordination of women to the priesthood.

It was requested that the vote on this resolution be recorded:

	<u>In favour</u>	<u>Against</u>
Laity	88	18
Clergy	75	30
Bishops	26	8
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	189	56
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"That this General Synod further affirm that it would be appropriate for women qualified for the priesthood to be ordained at the discretion of diocesan bishops acting within the normal procedures of their own jurisdictions and in consultation with the House of Bishops.

	<u>In favour</u>	<u>Against</u>
Laity	95	9
Clergy	86	19
Bishops	27	7
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	208	35
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"Be it resolved that no bishop, priest, deacon or lay person including postulants for ordination of the Anglican Church of Canada should be penalized in any manner nor suffer any canonical disabilities, nor be forced into positions which violate or coerce his or her conscience as a result of General Synod's action in affirming the principle of the ordination of women to the priesthood and requests those who have authority in this matter to act upon the principle set out above."

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The House of Bishops met next in October 1975 and Bishop Valentine presented a further paper on the ordination of women to the presbyterate. It was agreed later in the meeting that the paper be circulated to members of the House and that Bishops be free to use the paper as they wish. The following motion was also passed:

"This House reaffirms a collegial commitment to the principle and implementation of the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate, while not pretending to unanimity, and therefore supports the desire and intention of those Bishops who, after due consultation with their Dioceses, determine to ordain certain qualified women to the Presbyterate.

"Further, the House requests the Primate to inform the other Primates of the Anglican Communion of this resolution, to seek their response to it and report to the House by February 1976; and that he inform other Communion of our intention.

"This House agrees that if these responses are not overwhelmingly negative Bishops are free to proceed to the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate after November 1st, 1976.

"In any case we intend to present our case, reasonably and urgently, to the Lambeth Conference of 1978, or an acceptable alternative, and thereafter to proceed to full implementation."

Following the meeting of the House of Bishops the Primate sent or delivered the following letter with the indicated attachments to all Primates or Presiding Bishops in the Anglican Communion. A number of these persons met informally in Nairobi prior to the World Council of Churches General Assembly.

November 4th, 1975.

"I am enclosing with this letter copies of two motions passed by our House of Bishops which met from October 31st - November 1st, 1975. (See above).

"These two motions come after action of two successive General Synods approving the Principle of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood (1971, 1973), and also action of the 1973 General Synod giving authority to the Bishops to act in consultation with the House of Bishops. Copies of these motions are also enclosed. (See page 7)

"I hope that at the meeting of the Primates in Nairobi and also at the Anglican Consultative Council some time can be given to this question. We do want to act as responsible members of a family and not complicate the situation of the other Provinces.

"The two questions I would like to address to the Primates for discussion from the point of view of the Anglican Church of Canada are:

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- "1. In the Anglican structure, in the light of past action by the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council, would you agree that each Province has the authority to act as long as 'due procedure' in terms of its own Canons is observed?
- "2. Would you, personally, recommend to your Province that women, qualified under the criteria of the Province concerned, and ordained to the Presbyterate according to the procedures of the Province, should be recognized as having been validly and regularly ordained priests? We would recognize that in other Provinces, as in other dioceses in Canada, they would not have the right to exercise their ministry without the permission of the Province or Diocese, House of Bishops or Bishop concerned, (depending upon where authority lies in each Province).

" This decision has not been made "unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly", and I am personally heartened by the level of the discussion, the recognition of the differing views, the charity with which they were expressed at both General Synod and the House of Bishops, in the context of a very sincere desire to try to discover God's will for our Church in Canada, and to be willing to respond to it.

"We are now in the process of seeking to develop adequate means of continuing discussion with, and providing pastoral support to, those for whom the decision creates deep concern and hurt."

The discussion at Nairobi and subsequent mail responses did not indicate an overwhelming negative response. The House of Bishops received a verbal report from the Primate when it met in February 1976, and also received a report from a Task Force on Guidelines re the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate. Since time for discussion was limited and since the Anglican Consultative Council would be meeting in April, it was agreed that a special meeting of the House to receive information from the Anglican Consultative Council and to make firm decisions about the next steps in Canada should be held on May 29th. Prior to the meeting, the Primate mailed to all Bishops the following materials:

- the draft section of the Anglican Consultative Council report on the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate:

"There is no more pressing and perplexing problem of ministry than that of the Ordination of women."

"With those words, the ACC meeting in Dublin in 1973 began its report on the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood. In the time since that report the issue has continued to grow within the Church's life, influencing it in all of its parts, calling it more and more to decisions.

"The great volume of opinion written about the theological, psychological, social and cultural aspects of the ordination of women to the priesthood makes it unnecessary to undertake a restatement or re-interpretation of that material.

"It is more important that the church face squarely what is happening within Anglicanism in relation to the issue, and to work from that reality. Through the agency of the ACC the provinces may come to know both what is undertaken in the rest of the Communion and why.

"To that end it may be useful here to describe briefly what actions have been taken in several places in the Anglican Communion since the meeting of ACC-2. It will be seen that considerable movement has occurred since that 1973 meeting in Dublin. Information about positions in the Communion up to that time can be found in the Report of 1973.

"Ordination of Women to the Priesthood Accomplished

"Diocese of Hong Kong

"At the time of the Dublin meeting two women had been ordained. Since then there has been one more woman ordained to the priesthood, and a fourth has been made deacon.

"Ordination of Women to the Priesthood approved in Principle

"(a) The Anglican Church of Canada

The General Synod of this Church in 1975 reaffirmed ordination in principle. The House of Bishops reaffirmed a collegial commitment to the Principle while not pretending to unanimity, and supports the desire and intention of those bishops who determine to ordain women. The House agreed to refer their intention to the other primates of the Anglican Communion and in the absence of an overwhelmingly negative response to proceed to ordination of women after November 1, 1976. The Primate of Canada reports that no such response has so far been received by him. It is also intended to refer the matter to the next meeting of the Lambeth Conference.

"(b) The Church of England

General Synod in July 1975 resolved 'That the Synod considers that there are no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood'. The Synod invited the House of Bishops to bring before the Synod a proposal to admit women to the priesthood when 'in light of developments in the Anglican Communion generally as well as in this country' they judge the time of action to be right.

"(c) The Episcopal Church in Scotland

Whilst no specific synodical action has been reported the Commission on Ministry reported 'while we can see no theological objection in principle ... this is not an appropriate time for our Church to take independent action.'

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"(d) The Church of Wales

The Governing Body in April 1975 decided 'there are no fundamental objections to the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, but it would be inexpedient for the Church in Wales to take unilateral action in this matter at the present time.'

"(e) Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean

A Provincial Synod in November, 1974 approved in principle and left it to each Diocese to put into practice.

"(f) The Church of the Province of New Zealand

A Bill to allow the ordination of women to the priesthood was adopted in 1974. General Synod procedures require a reconsideration of such a matter at the following General Synod: this will be in May 1976. The majority of Diocesan Synods have approved.

"(g) PECUSA

The General Convention in 1973 did not adopt canons to enable the ordination of women to the priesthood. Since that time the House of Bishops has re-affirmed its earlier acceptance of the principle of the ordination of women to the priesthood and the matter will come before General Convention in 1976 where to be adopted it requires acceptance in both the House of Bishops and the House of Deputies.

"(h) Church of Ireland

The House of Bishops have said that they see no objection in principle to the ordination of women. A motion is to be brought to Synod and the legal steps to enable action to be taken are being examined.

"(i) The Church of South India

Synod in 1976 declared that 'men and women are both equally eligible for the ordained ministry of the church ...'. The declaration needs to be ratified by two-thirds of the diocesan councils.

"Preliminary Action Taken, Final Action Pending

"(a) Church of the Province of South Africa

A Provincial Commission will ask the Provincial Synod in 1976 to approve the ordination of women to the diaconate, priesthood and episcopate.

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"(b) The Episcopal Synod of the Province of Central Africa

A Resolution of the Episcopal Synod in 1973, after ACC-2, 'that it is not practicable to proceed actively in this matter at the present time ...' is to be debated by the Provincial Synod when it next meets.

"(c) Church of the Province of the West Indies

The Provincial Synod in 1975 requested all Dioceses 'to address and educate themselves to the importance and implications of the Ordination of Women'. Further action will be taken at the next Provincial Synod.

No action or negative action taken

"(a) Sri Lanka

No action taken yet as the matter is not yet an issue of importance or urgency.

"(b) Singapore

In December 1974 the Synod voted against the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood.

"SUMMARY

"This reveals that:

- one diocese has ordained women
- eight Provinces have approved in principle, (as has the Church of South India)
- seven Provinces have taken some preliminary action
- four Provinces have decided against.

"It is evident from this listing that there is within Anglicanism an increasing acceptance of the principle that women may be ordained to the priesthood. While it is recognized that the work of the Spirit of God is not bound by majority opinions, the ACC has committed itself to listen to its member churches, on this and other matters, and to describe consensus as it forms. Most important to report is that the decisions taken in the Provinces, as described here, and those under discussion elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, are decisions made by faithful people. They are decisions made after study and prayer and in the conviction that the god who acts in human history has called his church to face this issue and to decide.

"In all of this there have been countless discussions and debates among people of goodwill and strongly held convictions. Such is inevitable in any body of redeemed sinners. What is not inevitable is that disagreement should lead to disunion. The Anglican Communion faces an opportunity, as decisions about ordaining women to the priesthood give way to action and the number of women priests is increased. It is the opportunity to give witness to diversity without breaking the bonds of love which bind us in one Communion.

"In some places that opportunity has already been seized. The Episcopal Synod of the Province of Central Africa has adopted the recommendation of ACC-2 that, 'Where any autonomous Province on the Anglican Communion decides to ordain women to the priesthood, this should not cause any break in Communion in our family'. (1974). In Southern Malawi, the Diocesan Synod resolved, by a 3/4 majority, that any ordained woman priest temporarily visiting in Southern Malawi be allowed to exercise a priestly ministry.

"Christian people have ever faced the painful difficulty of maintaining communion in spite of the divisions of conflicting ideologies and even of warring nations. What they have discovered is that such communion is not possible, except in Christ.

"We commend, therefore, to each Province, and within the Provinces also, the grave duty to maintain unity in Christ, by the full measure of love and toleration which is ours by the example of his ministry."

- a copy of a letter received from the Province of Central Africa

"From F.R. Snell PO Box 383, Marandellas, Rhodesia Telephone 2511

"By unanimous decision of the Episcopal Synod of the C.P.C.A. meeting in Salisbury from March 6th to 9th, 1976 I was instructed to send as soon as possible the message the text of which follows below.

F.R. Snell Secretary to Episcopal Synod, C.P.C.A.

March 11, 1976.

"From the Episcopal Synod of the Church of the Province of Central Africa
To the Primate, Archbishops and Bishops of the Anglican Church of Canada:

"Dear Brothers in Christ,

Conscious of our relationship as Partners-in-Mission, and thankful for the benefits that your Church has bestowed on ours in that relationship, we address to you this plea to delay your professed intention to proceed with the ordination of women to the priesthood until more general agreement has emerged on this issue within the Anglican Communion.

"We acknowledge that the Canadian Church is an important part of our Communion, and feel that this makes your proposed action the more significant and, we fear, possibly dangerous.

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"The last Lambeth Conference certainly did not give our Communion the advice, as is sometimes misleadingly implied, that no theological objections exist to the ordination of women to the priesthood. At the same time we are convinced that the Anglican Consultative Council has not yet achieved sufficient authority for its recommendations to be the basis of action in so controversial a matter, which involves a serious departure from our ancient tradition - serious enough to threaten the undefined bonds that bind Anglicans together.

"We therefore ask you to delay action in this matter, at least until after the next Lambeth Conference, at which it can be established whether or not a sufficient consensus exists in our Communion for us to proceed with this grave, though possibly desirable, step."

"Provincial Officer of the Anglican Church in Central Africa (C.P.C.A.)"

- A statement of the Russian Orthodox Church

"(From a Report on the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches prepared by the Russian Orthodox Church and mailed to the Moderator and General Secretaries).

"In the course of the Assembly discussion over the sacramental ministry of women, it appeared that the Protestant majority considers it necessary to reach a positive solution on this question in the context of general disapproval of the discrimination against women.

"The Assembly found it necessary to recommend the churches which accept the sacramental ministry of women that they should not, "out of ecumenical considerations", give up this idea and called upon all the churches - both which ordain and which do not ordain women - 'to continue the dialogue about full participation of women in the church ministry'.

"We see no reason to object to any solution of this question in the confessions which do not recognize ministry as a sacrament and which, therefore, from the Orthodox point of view, have no sacramental ministry as such.

"We do not deny the useful purpose of discussion on a more active participation of the laity - men and women alike - in the life of the Church. But it is our belief that the way in which this question was put up at the Fifth General Assembly and the trend it was allowed to take by its solution there do not serve the cause of Christian unity.

"The Orthodox Church cannot share the position of the Protestant majority which opens up a possibility for sacramental ministry of women and repeatedly expresses the attitude to this problem in the secular categories, alien to the Divine Revelation. In the mysterious unity all the members of the Body of Christ are in the possession of the treasure of the life in Christ and there is nothing that can come into comparison with this treasure. But the call of all the people to holiness, to the eternal life, to the universal apostolate does not imply the call of all people to the sacramental ministry.

"The divine wisdom of Christ - the Founder of the Church - predetermined the solution of this question. There were women among those who were close to Christ, but none of them was included in the number of the twelve Apostles. We cannot hold that doing so Christ was making a concession to the spirit of His time.

"Thus, in this question the Orthodox Church considers it obligatory for her to follow the tradition of the ancient and universal church outlined by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The history of the Church does not know examples of the sacramental ministry of women."

- a copy of a letter from the Pope to the Archbishop of Canterbury which was marked "not for publication".

This letter set for the present position of the Church of Rome, indicated that proposed Anglican action would constitute a further obstacle, but stated, "Obstacles do not destroy mutual commitment to a search for reconciliation. We learn with satisfaction of a first informal discussion of the question between Anglican representatives and those of our Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, at which the fundamental theological importance of the question was agreed on. It is our hope that this beginning may lead to further common counsel and growth of understanding."

When the House met on May 29th, it dealt primarily with the matter of the ordination of women to the presbyterate. It had before it all the material received since the last meeting of the House, information from other churches, together with letters expressing the views of some members of the House who were not able to be present. Following a review of developments within the Anglican Communion over many years and a careful and prayerful consideration of the new information and expressions of opinion available, the following motions were passed:

"Having consulted throughout the Anglican Communion and elsewhere about our intention to proceed with the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate and having carefully discussed several representations requesting the House to change its position, this House reaffirms its collegial commitment to the Principle and Implementation of the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate as indicated by our previous motion of November 1975."

"That the Conscience Clause passed by General Synod be reaffirmed with the understanding that this, in effect, recognizes the tolerability of living with an anomaly, and removes any question of the integrity of those who while in opposition to the Ordination of Women to the Presbyterate and unable to recognize the reality of such Ordinations, are yet able to remain within the Communion of the Anglican Church of Canada even as it respects the integrity of Bishops who ordain Women to the Presbyterate and the Canonical Rights and integrity of Women so ordained."

"That the Service of Ordination used for women Presbyters be the Canadian Prayer Book Ordinal or the accustomed Service in the diocese concerned."

.....

The Primate was asked to prepare a summary of the steps which have been taken in the Anglican Church of Canada and the wider Anglican Communion which have led us to our present position. This report is the response to this request.

Information concerning our action, (together with a copy of this summary), is going to all the Provinces of the Anglican Communion and to other Churches.

Edward W. Scott,
Primate,
The Anglican Church of Canada.

P.S. On June 4th since the action of the House, the Primate received the following information from Archbishop Johnston of New Zealand.

"I thought that you would be interested to know that our General Synod gave approval to the ordination of women to the priesthood at our recent meeting. We required a two-thirds majority in each House and this was obtained without any difficulty. The matter has to lie on the table for a year to allow for any possible appeal to a tribunal, so we will not be operating the new provision for twelve months."