

## Root & Branch Synod – 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021

### Christina Rees, OBE

Thanks to Penelope Middelboe and Mary Ring and all those who have organized this Synod. Groundbreaking!

We meet on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre. Shocking – sobering to see such deadly intent. And today, the situation in Afghanistan reveals such a strong will to control, to dominate, to lay down the law in a way that many people will find oppressive. Such a contrast to Jesus who called us to freedom and who wanted us to know life in all its abundance.

Say a bit about my experience of being part of the move to ordain women in the Church of England. We know, as good as it is when women are included in the orders of the church, that is not everything: there are many other ways in which women – and men – are excluded and their influence denied or diminished.

Since 1989 – took on Established Church, Anglican tradition, the status quo

Monica Furlong: attempting to catch a minnow, caught a leviathan: a malaise about women deep within society

1918 Maude Royden – 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conference

1935 Archbishop's Commission – 'theological' findings

1944 24<sup>th</sup> January -Florence Li Tim-Oi

1971 HK 1974 – 76 – US

1986 Deacons in C of E

1992 General Synod votes for women's ordination as priests (1994 ordinations)

(RC: we would have started with bishops! Authority flowing from bishop)

1993 Act of Synod – Flying Bishops (only Bishops and lawyers – not through synodical process)

2014 Women bishops – First consecration January 2015

Nearly 30 women bishops – six or seven diocesans – rest suffragans

Nearly 40% clergy women – many self-supporting ministers

Those opposed: traditionalist Anglo Catholics and Conservative Evangelicals, who are now focused on LGBTQI+ community

### **What did I learn?**

ASK: who is benefitting from the status quo? The way things are now?

Present the VISION: don't just be against something: present an alternative positive vision (Bristol Text!)

Start with THEOLOGY: give people tools to do their own theology Why might this be a positive and orthodox way forward? How is our vision more in keeping with the values and teaching of Christ?

As far as possible model the difference you want to see: be inclusive & collaborative

FIND YOUR ALLIES: at all levels, parishioners, priests and bishops

Understand the fear of change: why would some people cling onto the way things are?

TWO groups: Women and the Church (WATCH) broad based and multi-agenda and Group for Rescinding the Act of Synod) GRAS: single issue, outspoken (Uppity – mag)  
So, work where you can with all allies. Allow each to work in their own way but communicate!

## LETTERS, LUNCHEES, LEAFLETS and LECTURES

Spokesperson and leaders take time to brief producers, editors and presenters. (100s of interviews on radio and TV, articles, press conferences)

Three centres of response: HEAD (Cogent arguments, history, examples), HEART (stories, anecdotes, painting the picture) and GUT (deep centre of what the person really feels) Ex: Bishop at GS

What is the Church? What is it for? Who is it for?

The miracle has happened: what does it look like?

Powerful questions: does God have a different relationship to women as women, to priests as priests? If so, nature of relationships?

Does God value males more than females? Clergy more than laity?

Does Holy Spirit give gifts based on sex? If not, on what?

Did Jesus treat men and women differently on basis of sex?

**What would you attempt if you knew you could not fail?**

Christina Rees 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021