

St X's PCC paper on Passing a Resolution

This paper considers the possibility of the PCC passing a resolution under 'the House of Bishops' declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests'. After explaining what a resolution is, it outlines why we are asking the PCC to consider passing a resolution now. It then explains the grounds for passing a resolution and clarifies what passing a resolution does and does not achieve and imply. It goes on to explore four different resolution options, and their nuances, advantages and disadvantages for St X. It then commends a particular resolution option to the PCC before explaining the process a PCC would need to take to pass a resolution. It concludes with a list of relevant resources.

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What is a resolution passed under ‘The House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests’?

Following the Church of England’s decision to consecrate women as bishops, the House of Bishops issued the ‘House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.’ This declaration recognises that while the Church of England has decided to ordain and consecrate women as priests and bishops, those churches and individuals who continue to hold to the ‘complementarian’ vision of men and women’s roles they discern in Scripture are “within the spectrum of teaching and tradition of the Anglican communion.”¹ It further promises that the Church of England is committing to their flourishing within its “life and structures.”²

In order to make this commitment a reality, the bishops’ declaration protects and provides for parish churches and clergy whose theological convictions mean they cannot in good conscience accept the episcopal or priestly oversight of women. It does this by giving PCCs the right to pass a resolution asking that arrangements be made to ensure a church’s and/or a church’s clergy’s need for appropriately qualified male teaching and pastoral oversight is accommodated.

Passing such a resolution is currently the only legal grounds upon which clergy can request episcopal oversight from a male bishop who shares their convictions. It is also the only way in which PCCs can legally require that only male priests be considered and appointed as a church’s incumbent.

¹ From the Five Guiding Principles, found in ‘the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests’, p. 3.

² From the Five Guiding Principles, found in ‘the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests’, p. 3.

Why consider passing a resolution now?

At the March PCC meeting, Rev A outlined our shared conviction that the Bible teaches that God created men and women to be complementary - equal in dignity and value yet different. The Bible establishes that in the two institutions God has ordained – the family and the church – this complementarity is worked out through men and women exercising different functions alongside one another. In the church, while the New Testament is clear that both men and women should be encouraged and trained to use their gifts alongside one another, God intends that the authoritative teaching and spiritual leadership roles of bishop and priest only be held by some qualified men for the self-giving service of all.

This ‘complementarian’ understanding of the Bible’s teaching on the role of men and women in the church’s ordained leadership is held by many on the PCC and, we believe, also by a substantial part of the regular church family in both congregations.

However, until now Rev A has not felt it necessary to ask the PCC to pass a resolution. This has changed for two reasons.

1. A female area bishop

Until February 2023, the Kensington area of the London Diocese was overseen by a male bishop. Since the appointment of Bishop Emma this is no longer the case. We have both met Bishop Emma and like and respect her personally. We share much in common with her theologically and wish to work with her as far as we are able with a graciousness and generosity of spirit.

However, we believe that accepting the pastoral and teaching authority of a female bishop over us would be to accept something Scripture prohibits. Receiving Bishop Emma’s spiritual leadership through, for example, accepting her episcopal review, or inviting her to conduct confirmations or preach at St X’s, would mean violating our consciences and acting as if something we believe is not God’s good will for his church and its flourishing should be affirmed or accepted.

The only alternative option to passing a resolution - not asking for extended episcopal oversight but practically avoiding Bishop Emma’s oversight by refusing to attend an episcopal review and never inviting her to St X’s – would, we feel, be more disrespectful to Bishop Emma than honestly and graciously seeking a resolution. It would also mean that Bishop Emma continued to be our

spiritual leader when we could have sought an alternative, and this raises questions of conscience for us both.

2. An upcoming vacancy in the next few years

If a substantial number of people on the PCC and in the regular church family do share our complementarian convictions, then the question of whether or not St X's can receive the incumbency of a female priest will come up at vacancy. For a variety of reasons outlined below, we believe that the church's unity would be best preserved and promoted by beginning these conversations and passing a resolution now, while Rev A is still in post, rather than raising these conversations for the first time after he has left and at a pressurised point of transition.

Grounds for passing a resolution, and the accompanying explanation and request

The resolution a PCC passes can specify different reasons for making an arrangement. Four points are worth considering:

1. *All resolutions must note that the PCC is passing a resolution on the grounds of theological conviction.* Quite rightly, a PCC may not pass a resolution on misogynistic grounds, or because of instinctive social conservatism unrelated to fidelity to Scripture.³
2. *A resolution can state that it is being passed to preserve unity in a church family where not all agree on the role of men and women in the church.* Such a resolution would still be making a request on the grounds of theological conviction but would make clear that these convictions are not necessarily personally shared by all, or even a majority, on the PCC or in the church.
3. *A resolution can state that it is being passed to protect the convictions and consciences of the church's clergy.*
4. *A resolution can state both reasons given in bullet points 2 and 3 above.* A resolution can be passed to protect both the convictions of clergy and the unity of the church family.

Accompanying theological statement and requesting arrangements.

When any resolution is passed a PCC is expected to be able to explain the theological basis for the request. The London Plan, which outlines how the London bishops handle all such requests, states that when a PCC passes a resolution, the text of the resolution should be sent to the diocesan Bishop alongside an explanation of the theological grounds underpinning the resolution.

A resolution may be passed because the PCC wishes the church itself to take a biblical complementarian position. Alternatively, and as noted above, the PCC may be passing a resolution because of the biblical complementarian convictions of its clergy and/or some in the church. In either case, the same biblical complementarian convictions would be articulated in the theological explanation.

The Bishop of Ebbsfleet, Rob Munro, who provides extended oversight to complementarian parishes, recommends that PCCs include alongside their

³ See 'The House of Bishop' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests – Guidance Note from the House, paragraph 10, p. 2-3.

theological explanation an outline of the arrangements they wish to be put in place in light of the resolution. This makes it more likely that the specific outcomes intended by the PCC are agreed by the bishops and put into practise.

There are two broad arrangements a PCC may request be made following the passing of a resolution alongside a biblical complementarian explanation:

1. The PCC may ask for the church and its clergy to receive the ministry and oversight of a male bishop “who believes, teaches and practises a theological position based on a complementarian ... view of ministry.”⁴
2. The PCC may also be asking that arrangements be made to ensure that only be considered as potential parish incumbents in the future. It would do so if the PCC is passing a resolution not only to protect the convictions of clergy but also to either preserve the unity of the church family or because the PCC wanted the church itself to take a complementarian position.

The relationship between a resolution and PCC members’ own convictions

When considering and voting on a resolution, “it is for each PCC member to consider what weight to give to his or her own theological convictions as against the convictions of others in the church community.”⁵ This means that a PCC member who holds complementarian convictions may decide not to vote for a resolution for the sake of church unity or because of the egalitarian convictions of others in the church. Likewise, a PCC member who does not hold complementarian convictions may decide to vote for a resolution for the sake of the church’s clergy, or to preserve the unity of the church family because some within it hold complementarian convictions.

If a PCC passes a resolution, it can, in the letter it sends to the diocesan bishop, note differences of theological conviction within the PCC, and the different reasons members had for voting for or against the resolution.

⁴ The London Plan (2019), paragraph 5b, p. 4.

⁵ ‘The House of Bishop’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests – Guidance Note from the House, paragraph 11, p. 3.

What a resolution does and does not achieve and imply

A resolution passed alongside a request for extended episcopal oversight from a male bishop who held the complementarian position would, in London, mean that the Bishop of Ebbsfleet, Rob Munro, would exercise extended episcopal oversight over St X's. This would mean he, rather than the Bishop of Kensington, would exercise spiritual leadership and pastoral oversight over St X's and Rev A and Curate B. This would:

1. Ensure Rev A and Curate B had direct episcopal oversight and supervision from a male bishop, thereby protecting their consciences and ensuring they were not in a theologically compromised position. In London, this would mean Rev A received any Episcopal Review from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet rather than the Bishop of Kensington.
2. Provide those members of St X's church family who hold complementarian convictions with a male bishop whose spiritual authority, and oversight over the vicar, they could accept.
3. Ensure we had a bishop who Rev A could share teaching and pastoral responsibility with in good conscience, enabling us to continue to have confirmations performed at St X's.
4. Ensure St X's had a bishop who could be invited to teach, preach and perform confirmations without violating the consciences of those with complementarian convictions in the congregation, and without causing controversy in the church family.
5. Mean that the Bishop of Ebbsfleet would act as the sponsoring bishop for any candidates for ordination at St X's, meaning an orthodox, complementarian bishop would make the decision on whether to recommend those candidates to Stage 2 and how to respond to the Stage 2 report.
6. Mean that, in the case of a vacancy, the Bishop of Ebbsfleet would be involved in the interview process for a new incumbent and would make a recommendation to the Bishop of Kensington which the Bishop of Kensington would be expected to respect.
7. Mean that, unless the resolution was rescinded during a vacancy, the Bishop of Ebbsfleet would preach, preside and carry out the installation, collation and licensing of a new vicar on behalf of the diocesan Bishop.
8. Mean that the Bishop of Ebbsfleet would be involved in discussions with the Bishop of Kensington about the placement of future curates at St X's.

9. Mean that the Bishop of Ebbsfleet would be consulted on, and involved in any discussions about, proposals for parish reorganisation that might impact St X's.

However, receiving the oversight of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet would not:

1. Mean that PCC members who voted for the resolution were declaring that they held complementarian convictions (see p. 6 above).
2. Remove St X's from the diocese of London. It would not prevent us from fully participating in the diocese's common life to the extent we wished to do so. It would not change the procedures for pursuing faculties, the quinquennial inspection or the Archdeacon's visitations.
3. Affect our representation or involvement in the Chelsea Deanery. We would continue to be entitled to our full representation at Deanery Synod and Curate B and Rev A would continue to be members of the clergy Chapter.
4. Impact our safeguarding arrangements or support. We would continue to receive the full support and expert advice of the Diocese's safeguarding team and continue to have access to its training and resources. Rev A and Curate B's clergy files would still be held by the Kensington area, ensuring they, and records on them, were not 'lost in the cracks' (though the Bishop of Ebbsfleet would be entitled to view these files at any time). Self-supporting Ministers based at St X's would also have their Permission to Officiate and clergy files processed by the Kensington area.
5. Prevent candidates for ordination from St X's from being ordained deacon by the Bishop of London and ordained a priest by the Bishop of Kensington. While the diocese's starting expectation would be that those ordained to serve at St X's would be ordained by the Bishop of Ebbsfleet, they could choose otherwise.
6. Prevent us from inviting female bishops or clergy to services or events. This would be at the vicar's discretion.
7. Be permanent. The Bishops' Declaration says PCCs should review the resolution from time to time, and especially when there is a vacancy. The PCC can rescind a resolution at any point providing it goes through the established process (see p. 20 below).

If a resolution was passed alongside an explanation that not only referred to the clergy's convictions but also to the complementarian convictions of others in the church, and to the preservation of church unity, this would mean making the request that only a male priest exercise incumbency at St X's. This would:

1. Reflect the theological conviction of a substantial part of the PCC and regular church family that teaching authority and spiritual leadership in the local church should only be exercised by some qualified, servant-hearted men. Those with such convictions might feel unable to remain in the church if a female vicar was appointed.
2. Significantly ease the process for requesting that only male priests be considered for appointment as incumbent at the point of a vacancy. For details on this, see below.
3. Mean that, so long as the resolution was reviewed positively or voted for again at the point of a vacancy, it would guarantee that only orthodox male clergy applied.⁶ Together with the role of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet in the interview process, and our Church Society Trust patrons, this would secure the appointment of an orthodox evangelical clergy person as the next vicar of St X's.

A resolution passed alongside a request that only a male clergy person exercise incumbency of the parish would not:

1. Determine the precise role of women in St X's teaching ministry. Unless the theological explanation accompanying the resolution stated otherwise, the possibility of women preaching under a male vicar's authority, or leading services, or even being appointed as curates or permanent deacons, would be left open and at the vicar's discretion.
2. Change anything about the life of St X's or its worship as discerned by the average member of the congregation. All St X's clergy are already male and hold complementarian convictions they are willing to explain openly and graciously.
3. Make the pool of potential future vicars too small. Rev A and Curate B are convinced there are plenty of godly and gifted complementarian male clergy who could apply for a vacancy at St X's in the future.

⁶ This is not to say that only male clergy who are complementarians are orthodox and rooted in Scripture. That is demonstrably not the case. It is only to say that male complementarian clergy are reliably orthodox and rooted in Scripture.

4. Prevent the PCC from changing its mind in the future. It could at any point choose to rescind or revise a resolution (see p. 20 below).

Four Resolution options for St X's

If the PCC is minded to pass a resolution, it has four options available to it. Each of these options has different implications, and so advantages and potential disadvantages.

Option 1 –passing a general resolution alongside an explanation that clarifies the church is taking the complementarian position

A general resolution would follow the recommended wording in the Bishop's Declaration without alteration:

'This PCC requests, on grounds of theological conviction, that arrangements be made for it in accordance with the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.'⁷

This declaration would be most appropriate if the PCC wished to state that St X's holds to the biblical complementarian vision for ministry. Taking such a position might be the right course of action if either a) the great majority of the PCC agreed with the complementarian view of ministry and thought it was sufficiently important that it should be established as part of the church's ethos and tradition, or b) the PCC believed that a significant majority of the wider regular church family held the complementarian view of ministry already.

This resolution would be accompanied by a theological explanation explaining that the majority of the PCC and/or church family held the complementarian convictions described in the first section of this paper and that consequently the PCC was asking that only a male priest exercise incumbency and that the church be provided with extended episcopal oversight from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet.

Advantages:

1. If the great majority of the PCC held the complementarian view and wanted to develop the church's ethos in that direction, this would be the most straightforward way of exercising such leadership.
2. If the PCC believed a significant majority within the wider church held the complementarian view of ministry, passing this resolution would simply recognise the current ethos and tradition of the church.

Disadvantages:

⁷ The House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Priests and Bishops, paragraph 20, p. 4.

3. If it is not the case that a significant majority of the church family is in favour of the complementarian position, passing a resolution establishing that the complementarian view is the view of the church might leave some feeling unrepresented or alienated. It might, therefore, cause greater controversy and conflict than is necessary.

Option 2 – a resolution that focuses on protecting the consciences of current clergy

This resolution would state something like the following:

‘Our flourishing requires the flourishing of our Vicar and other clergy. In order to safeguard their convictions, this PCC requests on grounds of theological conviction, that arrangements be made for it in accordance with the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.’⁸

This declaration would be most appropriate if the PCC only wanted to pass a resolution that protected the consciences of the current clergy. Choosing to do so might be appropriate if a) the majority of the PCC disagreed with the biblical complementarian position but valued its clergy and did not want them to have to violate their consciences by accepting the spiritual oversight of a female bishop. It might also be appropriate if b) the PCC believed that only a very small number of people in the church held complementarian convictions and that the possibility of a female vicar in the future would not be controversial or cause many to leave.

This resolution would be accompanied by a theological explanation clarifying that it is the clergy’s theological convictions being expressed but that the PCC wanted its clergy to have episcopal oversight those clergy could accept in good conscience. The PCC would be asking that St X’s consequently be provided with extended episcopal oversight from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet. It would not state that it wanted the incumbency of the parish to be exercised by a male priest.

Advantages:

1. This version of the resolution would be unlikely to cause much controversy. Even church members who were convinced egalitarians would probably recognise that the PCC and church itself was not taking a complementarian stand. Most egalitarian congregation members would

⁸ This form of words is one of the options outlined on the ‘Passing a Resolution’ part of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet’s website. See <https://www.bishopofebbsfleet.org/guidance/passing-a-resolution/#:~:text=A%20resolution%20is%20passed%20when,to%20be%20present%20were%20attending.>

probably respect the clergy's convictions and not want them to do anything that violated their consciences.

2. It would allow Rev A and Curate B to exercise their ministry in line with their convictions and receive pastoral and spiritual oversight and support from a male bishop who shared their convictions.

Disadvantages:

1. Notwithstanding the first advantage noted above, some on the PCC or in the church family who hold complementarian convictions might feel that this resolution did not go far enough in recognising and protecting their convictions and long-term place in the church because it would make no mention of whether or not the church could accept a female incumbent.

If at the point of a vacancy arising, a number of PCC or church members could not accept a female vicar, then the PCC would need to consider whether or not to pass a resolution during a vacancy and before publishing a profile without any precedent to draw on.

2. If the PCC decided to pass a resolution for the first time at this point, it would need to hold a consultation and deal with any controversy this caused without an established and trusted vicar to help hold the church community together.
3. If the PCC decided not to pass a resolution, then complementarian members of the PCC or church might feel unheard and alienated and could decide to leave at a critical point of transition.
4. If the PCC decided not to pass a resolution, its representatives would have no basis in law for refusing to accept the application of a female candidate for vicar and would have to discount candidates' sex if they received applications from women. This would make it more likely that a female vicar was appointed. If some in the church were complementarian, this could create further controversy and might lead to some leaving St X's.

Option 3 – a resolution that focuses on protecting church unity

This resolution would state something like the following:

'In order to safeguard and promote the unity of our congregations, this PCC requests on grounds of theological conviction that arrangements be

made for it in accordance with the House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.⁹

This form of resolution would be most appropriate if the PCC believed that a) a substantial minority or majority on the PCC and in the wider regular church family held complementarian convictions and b) that it would be controversial and divisive if the church had to decide whether or not it was open to a female vicar only after Rev A had departed. This form of resolution would be passed alongside a request that the church receive extended episcopal oversight. It would also include an explanation stating that there were a range of convictions on the question of women in ordained ministry at St X's, but that a substantial proportion of the congregation held complementarian views and so, for the sake of unity, only a male priest could exercise incumbency in the church.

Advantages:

1. This resolution would not be stating that the church as a whole took the complementarian position but would only be claiming that a substantial part of the regular church family or PCC held complementarian convictions. It could therefore potentially be supported by a broader range of PCC and church members.
2. Such a resolution would mean that congregation members uneasy on theological grounds with being under the oversight of a female bishop would have their consciences protected.
3. The focus of the resolution would be on preserving unity by ensuring that everyone in the church was able to accept the leadership of those with teaching and pastoral oversight over it. This focus would help church members remember their love for one another in any disagreements on the role of women in ordained ministry. Those with complementarian convictions would not press others to share their stance as the only acceptable 'St X's view', and those with egalitarian convictions could accept a resolution passed not as a reflection of the entire PCC or church's view, but for the sake of their complementarian brothers and sisters convictions and consciences and place in the church family.
4. If it is true that a substantial part of the church family would be uncomfortable with, or unable to accept, a female vicar, then the PCC will need to consider passing such a resolution at some point. Doing so for

⁹ This form of words is adapted from one of the suggested options outlined on the 'Passing a Resolution' part of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet's website. See <https://www.bishopofebbsfleet.org/guidance/passing-a-resolution/#:~:text=A%20resolution%20is%20passed%20when,to%20be%20present%20were%20attending.>

the first time now, rather than in a vacancy, has several advantages. Passing a resolution like this for the first time while a male vicar is in post and without plans to leave would be much easier than potentially stating it for the first time during a vacancy. This is because a) passing such a resolution while St X's already have a male vicar would not lead to an immediate change and so would feel less like a departure from current practice. It would also b) allow a resolution to be first discussed and passed while Rev A is still present as a trusted vicar with the credibility, relationships and time to resolve any disagreements well. Establishing the precedent of a resolution requesting only male incumbency would also make it easier for the PCC to do one of two things at the point of a vacancy if it were so minded:

- a. If the PCC passed a resolution like this now, then the resolution remains in force until it is rescinded through a process identical to the process required to adopt it.¹⁰ At the point of vacancy the PCC could decide to simply 'review' the resolution rather than vote again on a new resolution.¹¹ This could take the form of a minuted discussion in a PCC meeting or Section 11 meeting, and so would not need to involve another consultation in the wider church family. This would potentially head off conflict within the church family at a point where Rev A is not around to help the PCC negotiate that conflict.
- b. Alternatively, the PCC might decide that even though they were not obligated to pass a new resolution at the point of vacancy, it was nonetheless wise to go through the full process again at such a significant point in the life of the church. In this situation, having passed a resolution in 2023 would still have been very helpful because it would establish a precedent for stating that, for the sake of church unity, St X's could only accept a male priest as incumbent. This would make the consideration of a resolution during a vacancy feel less like a radical change or 'bolt from the blue' and more like a continuation of a recently established and previously discussed position. Conversations between those with different views would already have started before a vacancy and so these

¹⁰ See 'The London Plan Working Arrangements, p. 3.

¹¹ The London Plan and the House of Bishops' guidance does not require that a new resolution be passed at the point of a vacancy, only that it be reviewed. The Bishop of Ebbsfleet notes that a review can simply involve a minuted discussion of the PCC, though of course the process could be longer and involve more reflection.

conversations would be easier and less likely to lead to hurt or misunderstanding.

Disadvantages:

1. If it is not the case that a substantial part of the PCC or regular church family holds complementarian views and would not be comfortable with a female vicar, this option might be seen as unnecessary and inappropriate.
2. Like all other resolution options, some consultation would need to be carried out beyond the PCC. It would therefore still open up difficult conversations.

Option 4 – a resolution that focuses on protecting church unity and the consciences of current clergy

This option is a combination of options 2 and 3. This form of resolution would read something like:

‘Our flourishing requires the flourishing of our Vicar and other clergy, and the maintenance of congregational unity. In order to safeguard our clergy’s conviction and the unity of our church, this PCC requests on grounds of theological conviction, that arrangements be made for it in accordance with the House of Bishops’ Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests.’¹²

This form of resolution would be appropriate if the PCC wanted to immediately provide support to Rev A and Curate B by ensuring they have pastoral oversight they can receive in good conscience. It would also be appropriate if the PCC at the same time believed that, a) there was a range of views on the question of women in ordained ministry at St X’s but that, b) a substantial part of the PCC or regular church family shared the clergy’s complementarian convictions and so, c) the PCC wanted to indicate that, for the sake of church unity and respect for those with such convictions, the church could only accept the incumbency of a male priest. It would pass this motion rather than option 1 if it did not think it was appropriate to state that the church as a whole took a complementarian stance.

This resolution would be accompanied by an explanation requesting extended episcopal oversight from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet. It would also include an explanation that, while there was a spectrum of opinion at St X’s on the

¹² This form of words is adapted from a form suggested by the Bishop of Ebbsfleet. See https://www.bishopofebbsfleet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/bishop-full_screen.pdf, p.7.

question of women in ordained ministry, a substantial proportion of the PCC or regular congregation held complementarian convictions and so, for the sake of unity, the church could only accept the incumbency of a male priest.

Advantages:

1. This form of resolution would have all the advantages of option 3.
2. It would not have the disadvantages of option 2.
3. It would allow Rev A and Curate B to exercise their ministry in line with their convictions, and receive pastoral and spiritual oversight and support from a male bishop who shared their convictions.
4. It would give two different reasons for passing the resolution – the consciences of the clergy and the unity of a church with a range of views – that those who do not hold complementarian views could support. This might make it more likely to be accepted by the full breadth of the PCC and church family than option 1 or 3.

Disadvantages:

1. As it would take a position on incumbency, it could still be more controversial than option 2 for those with egalitarian convictions.

A resolution recommendation

We recommend that the PCC consider passing an ‘option 4’ resolution.

This option would protect our consciences, providing us with alternative episcopal oversight.

It would also reflect the likely reality that a substantial proportion of St X’s PCC and the regular church community would be uncomfortable with a female incumbent, and our belief that the appointment of a female vicar could lead to a conflict in the church that might cause a number of people to leave. Passing a resolution now establishing that the church could only accept the incumbency of a male priest would set a precedent for reviewing or renewing a resolution saying something similar during a vacancy, rendering that later decision-making process less fraught. It would allow for the initial discussions on this subject to take place in the context of stability, and while Rev A is still present as vicar to help guide and resolve conflicts.

However, we do not believe that it would be appropriate to pass a resolution that stated that the church itself was taking a complementarian position (option 1). There are a range of views on this subject at St X’s and we would not want those with an egalitarian perspective to feel that they were not welcome, respected, or represented. By passing a resolution stating that the church could only accept a male incumbent for the sake of unity, we formally acknowledge that our church contains a range of perspectives, and we can be clear within the congregation that it is unity – not uniformity – that we wish to promote by passing a resolution.

The process for passing a resolution

There are a number of steps a PCC is required or advised to take when passing a resolution.

1. **Consider:** The PCC will want to consider the available options and discuss whether passing a resolution is right for the church. This will involve PCC discussions and may involve inviting others in. This could include the Bishop of Ebbsfleet or one of his representatives, or a member of the London Diocesan senior leadership team.
2. **Consult:** Guidance states that consultation beyond the PCC is “good practice”.¹³ The bishops in London encourage PCCs to make this consultation as broad as possible but there is absolutely no requirement to do so and what constitutes consultation is left open to PCCs to decide. Consultation could include a survey within the church family, but it could also include something decidedly more low-key like a statement that the PCC is considering the matter and invites anyone with a view to submit it. It could also, or alternatively, involve gathering key leaders in the church beyond the PCC – e.g. Home Group leaders – to seek their perspective. The London Diocese expects a PCC to clarify the nature of the consultation conducted when informing the Bishop of London that a resolution has been passed.
3. **Notice:** The secretary of the PCC must give members four weeks notice that a resolution will be discussed and voted upon. (Resolutions can, however, also be passed under Section 11 of the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 at a meeting called to determine the details of a church’s parish profile during a vacancy).
4. **The vote:** A resolution is only adopted if it is passed either a) by a majority of those present at a meeting at which at least two thirds of the members of the PCC who are entitled to attend are present or b) by a majority of all the members of the PCC.
5. **Inform:** The PCC is then required to inform the Diocesan Bishop that a resolution has been passed, copying in the area bishop, the Archdeacon, the Diocesan Registrar and the church’s patron. In London, this involves sending a letter including, a) the text of the resolution, b) details of the numbers on the PCC and present at the vote and the size of the majority,

¹³ ‘The House of Bishops Declaration on the Ministry of Priests and Bishops – Guidance Note’, paragraph 7, p. 2.

- c) a theological explanation outlining the grounds of the resolution, and clarifying whether it is being passed for the sake of the clergy, or because of a range of views in the church etc. It may also, d) include the specific arrangements the PCC is requesting be made for it.
- 6. Consultation with the area bishop:** The area bishop may exercise her right at this stage to consult further with representatives of the PCC about the arrangements they wish to be put in place.
 - 7. Reviewing a resolution:** Guidance states that a PCC's should review its resolution from time to time, and especially during a vacancy. It does not stipulate what this review process should involve and it could involve anything from one minuted discussion right through to a decision to hold another vote.
 - 8. Another vote:** If a PCC decides to hold another vote on a resolution it must go through the above steps again.
 - 9. Rescinding a resolution:** If a PCC decides to rescind a resolution it must do so by following the same process as that carried out to pass a resolution.

Relevant resources and links

Resources on the Biblical basis for complementarianism

1. *Different by Design: God's blueprint for men and women*, by Carrie Sandom.

– A great introduction to God's plan for men and women.
2. *Men and Women – Equal Yet Different: A brief study of the biblical passages on gender*, by Alexander Strauch

– A brief study of key questions of interpretation written in a conversational style.
3. *Embracing Complementarianism: turning biblical convictions into positive church culture*, by Graham Beynon and Jane Tooher

– guidance on how to develop a complementarian church culture that values and involves both men and women.

Resources on passing a resolution

1. *House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Priests and Bishops -*
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GS%20Misc%201076%20Women%20in%20the%20Episcopate.pdf>

- See paragraphs 16-29 for the relevant passages on resolutions and extended episcopal oversight.
2. *House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Priests and Bishops – Guidance note from the House -*
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GS%20Misc%201077%20House%20of%20Bishops%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Ministry%20of%20Bishops%20and%20Priests%20-%20Guidance%20note%20from%20the%20House.pdf>

- A non-binding guidance note on how to apply the declaration's decisions on resolutions and extended episcopal oversight.
3. *'The London Plan' and connected working arrangements – visit*
<https://www.london.anglican.org/about/the-london-plan/>

- Details on how the London Diocese responds to resolutions and the type of oversight available in the London diocese.

4. *Passing a resolution* - <https://www.bishopofebbsfleet.org/guidance/passing-a-resolution/#:~:text=A%20resolution%20is%20passed%20when,to%20be%20present%20were%20attending.>

- Brief guidance from the Bishop of Ebbsfleet on passing a resolution and seeking his oversight. Other resources are available from the 'sidebar' on this page.

5. *Passing a Resolution under the House of Bishops' Guidance* - https://www.bishopofebbsfleet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/bishop-full_screen.pdf

- A more detailed explanation of the resolution process, with some suggestions. This was written by the Bishop of Maidstone, the previous Bishop for parishes which pass resolutions on complementarian grounds.

Curate B
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