

The [report](#) and [appendices](#) set out the findings of a review requested by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in March this year following the announcement that the Bishop of Burnley, Philip North, was to withdraw from nomination to the Diocese of Sheffield.

The 75-page report draws from meetings with and personal submissions from more than 100 people (including over 60 from the Sheffield Diocese) over recent months seeking to learn lessons from the events surrounding Bishop North's nomination to and subsequent withdrawal from the See.

Sir Philip was appointed in 2014 as Independent Reviewer to resolve disputes arising from the operation of the House of Bishops' Declaration, which sets out the Five Guiding Principles behind the legislation which opened the way for women bishops. His report seeks to set out valuable lessons for the wider Church of England following events in Sheffield.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York said: "We are very grateful and deeply indebted to Sir Philip for this detailed, thoughtful and authoritative review.

“We will be reading it carefully and discussing the lessons with the House of Bishops when it meets later this year and will respond in greater detail in due course.

“We reaffirm our commitment to the vital principle of mutual flourishing as the Church and will endeavour to maintain the bond of peace and affection and live God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ, even amid difference on questions on which Christians may disagree Christianly.”

Concluding his report, Sir Philip remarks: “The story of what happened in respect of the Sheffield nomination is not populated by villains but by people who were simply seeking to do their best according to their own understanding of their responsibilities and in the light of their Christian convictions.

“There is, frankly, no merit, if those of differing convictions in the Church are to continue to live together, in anybody searching for scapegoats.”

He adds: “I have suggested in this report that further consideration under the auspices of the House of Bishops, of the theological and pastoral issues raised so far by the Church's experience of living out the 2014 Settlement would be healthy.

“But at the end of the day of the day, the choice facing the Church is a simple one ... whether to continue wrestling with the issues I have identified, for the sake of the Gospel, or whether to abandon the Settlement.

“Equally if those in the minority wish to continue as honoured and full members of the Church of England, they need to ensure that they act and speak in ways which show understanding of the position of ordained women, which emphasise their commitment to the corporate life of the Church and which encourage the majority to remain unequivocally committed to the success of that Settlement, ‘that they may all be one so that the world may believe.’”

Summary of findings and conclusions:

Sir Philip finds that Bishop Philip North's nomination to the See of Sheffield was entirely consistent with the terms of the 2014 Settlement which enabled the consecration of women as bishops in the Church of England. However:

- The nomination of Bishop North – a bishop who would not ordain women as priests - came as a surprise to many, indicating a failure to inform and educate people that such a nomination was possible under the terms of the Settlement.
- There is scope for improvement in the processes leading to the nomination of candidates to the Crown for appointment as diocesan bishops.
- Events surrounding the nomination also raise some fundamental theological and pastoral issues relating to the 2014 Settlement and its operation.
- They also point to a failure to anticipate the likely reaction to Bishop North's nomination and to plan for handling it.

Sir Philip makes four recommendations, principally to the House of Bishops, designed to enable the whole Church to address these issues:

1. That the House of Bishops commissions a group with balanced membership to review what has been done to inform and educate clergy and laity about the Settlement agreed in 2014; distil examples of good practice within dioceses; and provide resources to help dioceses, deaneries and parishes, and theological training institutions to engage in further consideration of the issues.
2. That questions raised in the Review over whether the current procedures relating to a Vacancy in See committee and to the Crown Nominations Commission are capable of improvement be considered alongside the outcome of a separate review of the Crown Nominations Commission led by Professor Oliver O'Donovan. These should include the issue of the extent to which the cloak of confidentiality currently surrounding the work of the Commission can be relaxed in order to ensure the degree of preparation for the announcement of a nomination commensurate with the controversy it is likely to arouse.
3. That the House of Bishops invites the Faith and Order Commission to examine the theological challenge which has been posed to the 2014 Settlement and that the results of this work - together with the House's response to the pastoral challenge as to what the nomination of a non-ordaining bishop as a diocesan implies for the ministry of women clergy and lay ministers - inform the ongoing process of discussion and education about the Settlement.

In addressing this challenge, it will also be appropriate to address the implications of appointing a woman bishop for her pastoral relationship with those male clergy in her diocese who are unable on theological grounds to accept the sacramental validity of her orders.

Together with his colleagues in the National Church Institutions, and those involved in the dioceses of Sheffield and Blackburn, the Secretary General reviews the lessons to be learned from what happened in order to plan better for handling any such events in future.

- [Read the House of Bishops Declaration of 2014](#)
- [Further details on the work of the Independent Reviewer](#)
- [Read a joint statement from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York which led to the review](#)

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