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The vote in General Synod on the proposal for Women Bishops will have been a real shock to many in our parishes. This is not the time for rapid decisions or knee-jerk reactions but rather a time calmly to take counsel together.

It was obvious in November 1992 that the Church of England had changed substantially for the worse. In the years that followed we have lived together with a real Gospel sense of purpose and they have been good years for us and our parishes. This week's vote at General Synod came as a real shock to me, not because I expected to win but because I had not realised the depth of the uncharitable and unchristian attitudes held by the majority. It became absolutely obvious that, in spite of appeals from both Archbishops, the majority of so called liberals were determined to see us out. I have been quite impressed today that a liberal bishop and an archdeacon have both phoned me saying they shared our sense of shock. The Bishop of Dover, who is a supporter of women bishops, said in Synod: *'for the first time in my life I feel ashamed'*.

So what has changed apart from clarity about the nature of our opponents? I suspect not very much. As a priest and as a bishop, and as Chairman of Forward in Faith, I have always believed that the changing ecclesiology in the Church of England made collective demands on us. My conviction has always been that we have to seek a common ecclesial way forward. Our hope was that this would be established by the General Synod and though this now seems unlikely, it is still not an impossibility. I remain determined to find a way forward.

There has been speculation in the media about contact with Rome. I am strongly committed to Christian unity and, as many of you know, I was involved in the talks with the Roman Hierarchy in 1992 and later spent a considerable time with the then Cardinal Ratzinger in 1996. My problem then was that, although there was great generosity, there was no offer of an ecclesial reconciliation. In other words, our common Eucharistic and spiritual life was not recognised. That remains a problem for me. I am fascinated by the conversations between the Traditional Anglican Communion and Rome as well as those between some of our Bishops and the Holy See. Will these now offer a way forward?

Many of you have phoned me in the last twenty four hours, angry or distressed. Several have suggested that we should declare war on those who seek to destroy us. Particularly, the suggestion has been made that we stop paying Diocesan Quota. I am open on this matter but think that now is not quite yet the time for such drastic gestures, for whatever we do needs its timing to be agreed by us all so that we can act *together*. Be assured of my commitment to our common life and of my determination to continue to seek a common way forward in faith for all of us.

Every Blessing,

The Right Reverend John Broadhurst
Bishop of Fulham
Chairman

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