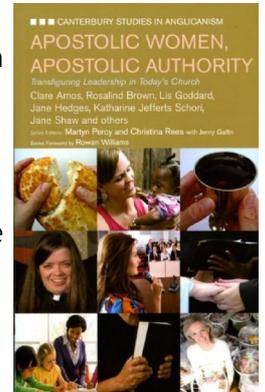


apostolic women, apostolic authority: transfiguring leadership in today's church

Martyn Percy and Christina Rees, editors, with Jenny Gaffin
(Canterbury Press, 2010)

This collection of essays brings together a wide variety of authors and viewpoints, all relating to the challenge of 'transfiguring leadership' – re-envisaging it, reshaping it – in the light of the debate about women bishops and the changing nature of leadership. Prior to the 2008 Lambeth Conference, 100 women occupying a variety of senior posts in Anglican world – the women bishops attending Lambeth, other senior women from around the world and clergy in the Church of England – came together to explore issues surrounding women's leadership and oversight. Some of the 16 contributions are papers given at this conference, while others were added later. Together they make up an impressive collection, covering Scripture and Tradition, Leadership and Ecclesiastical Authority, Facing the Change, and The Character of the Future.



Inevitably with a wide range of authors, theological viewpoints and topics, some essays will appeal to readers more than others. But I was struck by how many of the pieces yielded significant new insights, and I found the book a banquet of rich fare.

Without wishing to blow my own trumpet too much, I was pleased to be invited to contribute myself, a revision of an earlier exploration of the question: 'How did Jesus Develop Women as Leaders?' While there were relatively few evangelicals attending the conference, the editors have worked hard to ensure that this wing of the Church has been better represented in the book.

I'm currently working with an author who is writing on leadership and power, and I was interested to see how many references there are to the subject of power in a number of the essays – perhaps not surprisingly. Among essays which stood out for me were two on a subject addressed at a recent consultation hosted by CPAS and Awesome, on the relative lack of women leading larger churches. Kirsten Rosslyn-Smith has written 'Size Matters', a piece of research and reflection on this issue, and Catherine Roskam's US perspective is extremely useful, as well as worrying: while some women are now being called to larger churches there, she concludes that 'women have yet to be regarded as serious candidates in many of the largest parishes in most dioceses.'

I enjoyed Charlotte Methuen's exploration of women in scripture and church history; I was intrigued by an exploration of leadership in Anglican religious communities, and by Emma Percy's piece on 'What clergy do, especially when it looks like nothing'; I was pleased to see that Jane Hedges had contributed an account of her research into whether women are open to more senior posts in the Church. Jane Shaw raises some interesting questions about the nature of leadership, Liz Hoare explores themes from spirituality which affect women as leaders.

Lis Goddard's essay, the last in the book before Katharine Jefferts Schori's Closing Reflections from the conference, highlights the difficulties of disagreements among evangelicals, but puts forward some interesting proposals for 'transfiguring' episcopate, which both help to move it from its current monarchical and hierarchical model to something more collaborative (in tune with this style in the rest of the church), and might enable bishops from both 'integrities' to be able to work together as part of a mixed team.

This book will provide useful background material for the forthcoming debates in diocesan synods, as well as a stimulating introduction to some of the issues affecting women as the Church prepares (in the fullness of time!) to welcome its first women bishops.

Rosie Ward © CPAS 2011