

Church of England set to vote on women bishops

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CANTERBURY, England (RNS) Women's rights activists greeted with delight signs the Church of England is poised to relent and allow women to be consecrated as bishops.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby will preside over a historic General Synod meeting at the University of York when a make-or-break vote on the subject is expected Monday (July 14).

"I think we're there at long last," American-born Christina Rees, one of the church's leading women's rights campaigners, said in an interview Thursday.

Supporters of female bishops are convinced the General Synod—the Church of England's governing body—will approve amended legislation that will allow for the appointment of women as bishops by November and the first consecrations sometime in 2015.

Reports published in England say Welby is determined to drive through legislation to allow female bishops and is even prepared to dissolve the present General Synod so that a freshly elected Synod could vote on the measure before the end of 2014.

In 2013, the General Synod came within six votes of allowing women bishops.

Senior sources say that revised legislation has convinced those who voted against women as bishops in 2013 to change their minds.

Passage of legislation allowing women bishops will end a 20-year dispute. Women were first allowed to be ordained as priests in 1994.