

Church of England names its first woman bishop

by [Trevor Grundy](#)

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CANTERBURY, England (RNS) The Church of England announced on Wednesday (December 17) that Libby Lane, a parish priest from Hale, a small village outside Manchester, would become its first woman bishop, ending centuries of all-male leadership in this country's established church.

The announcement from Downing Street, the prime minister's official residence in London, came just a month after changes to canon law making it possible for women to assume the role of suffragan and diocesan bishops.

Lane, 48, a mother of two and the wife of an Anglican vicar, will be consecrated as the eighth bishop of Stockport, in the Diocese of Chester, at a ceremony at York Cathedral on Jan. 26. Her appointment is as a suffragan bishop, a bishop subordinate to a metropolitan or diocesan bishop.

"This is unexpected and very exciting," she said. "I'm honored and thankful to be called to serve as the next bishop of Stockport and not a little daunted to be entrusted with such a ministry."

Prime Minister David Cameron described the church's decision as "an historic appointment and an important step forward for the Church towards greater equality in its senior positions."

Lane was one of the first women priests to be ordained, in 1994.

Only bishops in charge of dioceses—there are 41 in England—sit in the House of Lords, Parliament's Upper Chamber.

The first diocesan woman bishops are expected to be announced early next year to fill vacant posts in the dioceses of Oxford, Gloucester, and Newcastle.

“I only wish Libby had been made a diocesan bishop instead of a suffragan bishop,” said Christina Rees, a member of the House of Laity in the General Synod, the Church of England’s governing body. “But she is still a bishop, and that’s thrilling news.”