

## 'Mutual Flourishing' in the Church of England: present reality or future hope?

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The consecration of women to the episcopate in the Church of England in 2014 was accompanied by the adoption of 'Five Guiding Principles', promoting the 'Mutual Flourishing' both of those who approved of the ruling and of those who disagreed with it. Recent studies have shown the actual outcome to be, at best, independent flourishing within 'buffer zones', and at worst, protecting the flourishing only of the minority who disagreed with the ruling. Test cases, such as the proposed (but later withdrawn) appointment of a bishop who does not ordain women to the Diocese of Sheffield, have highlighted the difficulties involved in dealing with conflicting claims of 'flourishing'.

This raises the possibility of what Paul Lakeland terms 'internal receptive ecumenism' within a denomination, and this paper looks at how the concept of Receptive Ecumenism can be used to deepen our understanding of mutual flourishing. A particular problem that arises is that Receptive Ecumenism requires taking responsibility for one's own learning, regardless of the level at which the other side is prepared to participate. This raises questions for the goal of *mutual* flourishing. Issues of power and vulnerability are highlighted with the possibility of non-reciprocity of advances. Recent work on recognition, reconciliation and belonging as ecumenical categories offer a lens through which to explore these intra-church relationships.