

THE RIGHT REVEREND JOHN E. HINES  
PRESIDING BISHOP, EPISCOPAL CHURCH



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July 5, 1973

The Hon. Hugh Jones  
1605 State Office Building  
207 Genesee Street  
Utica, New York 13501

The Rev. Canon C.M. Guilbert ✓  
815 Second Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Hugh and Charles:

This letter and inquiry comes to you over my signature, but with the full knowledge and approbation of the Rev. Dr. John B. Coburn, President of the House of Deputies. I address my inquiry to you because of your long exposure to and experience of the workings of the General Convention.

The forthcoming General Convention will be called upon to take action with regard to the ordination of women to the priesthood and to the episcopate. The matter comes to the attention of the Convention by way of a resolution of reference from the House of Bishops at its Special Meeting in New Orleans last November and by way, also, of a number of Memorials and Petitions (in excess of 25 at the moment) from Dioceses and other bodies.

Two questions, both of them procedural, concern me (and Dr. Coburn, also) as presiding officer of one of the Houses of the Convention, and it is in respect of these questions that I seek your opinion.

1. Does the question involve a constitutional amendment; or, can it be decided by proposing merely amendments of the Canons; or, as was suggested in the Report of the former Joint Commission on the Lay and Ordained Ministry to the 63rd General Convention, could the matter be settled by a Resolution of interpretation?
2. In view of the fact that the constitutional issue will almost certainly be raised, and lacking an organ comparable to the Supreme Court which could rule

authoritatively on constitutionality, how can the General Convention, as a deliberative and legislative body, reach a decision about whether constitutional amendment is necessary?

Your opinion about the foregoing questions will be deeply appreciated and will be a very great help to me in presiding over the House as it attempts to deal with this sensitive matter. I recognize, of course, that your opinion can only be confidentially advisory, and the General Convention will be the ultimate arbiter both of substance and procedure.

Faithfully yours,



John E. Hines  
PRESIDING BISHOP

JEH/ml

cc: The Rev. Dr. J. B. Coburn  
The Rt. Rev. Robert F. Gibson