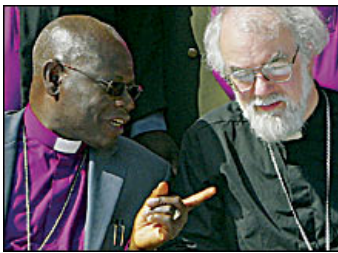


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# Anglican Crisis Reaches African Summit — Pray for this Church to Stand Firm in Truth

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Thirty-five of the Anglican Communion's Thirty-Eight primates, each presiding over a national church, are meeting this week in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The meeting is a last-ditch effort to avoid a total meltdown in the communion over the issue of homosexuality. Of course, the deeper issue is biblical authority — and many of the bishops attending the meeting are only too aware of this fact.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, is going to the meeting as the traditional leader of the Anglican Communion, though his leadership may be undermined even before the meeting starts. The Anglican experiment is now called into question. The American church, The Episcopal Church USA [ECUSA], effectively detonated a bomb at the heart of the worldwide Anglican community by electing an openly-homosexual man as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003.

Since then, the American church has done almost everything within its power to antagonize the global church and to make ever more clear its determination to normalize homosexuality. The Windsor Report, fashioned as an attempt to hold the Communion together, demanded that ECUSA cease and desist from electing any further homosexual bishops and apologize to its sister churches. The ECUSA response has fallen far short of those demands. Then, to add insult to the wounds, the American church elected a woman, Katharine Jefferts Schori, as its Presiding Bishop.

This may pose the first obstacle to any solution at Dar es Salaam. Bishop Jefferts Schori is not recognized by many of the other primates, who are likely to refuse to meet if she is present. The vast majority of Anglican churches worldwide do not ordain women as priests, much less as bishops.

All Christians should be in prayer for our Anglican brothers and sisters at this crucial time. There is little hope, humanly speaking, for a resolution to the conflict. The American church, joined by liberals in the Church of England, are unwilling to cease their efforts to normalize homosexuality. The churches in the “Global South” refuse to surrender biblical authority. These churches are absolutely correct in seeing the issue of homosexuality as a crucial test of theological and biblical integrity — and an unavoidable battle for the soul of their Communion.

A weakening of witness in one church or communion affects us all. We must pray that this historic and influential communion will hold the American church accountable — fulfilling the prayers of so many faithful Episcopalians who grieve the travail of their church.

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SEE THESE LINKS:

Ruth Gledhill of *The Times* [London] sees schism as inevitable and, all things considered, probably best:

*The primates of the Anglican Communion may wish to consider the benefits of schism when they meet in Tanzania tomorrow. There are now people in the Church who see so far from eye to eye that it is right that they should go their separate ways. And there is no shame in that.*

*There have been many schisms in the past. The Great Schism was between east and west in 1054. The Reformation was a whole series of disruptions between the 14th and 17th centuries. In both, the seeds were sown long before the splits. Just as now, the differences were deep-seated and often cultural as well as theological. It is possible to argue that these splits were necessary to allow the different Churches to go their own way in freedom and faith.*

*In the West, there has been sexual emancipation in all walks of life. It is no longer a crime to be homosexual, though the Churches have been determined to ensure the sin remains. So it is no surprise that it has now become an issue of such combustibility in the Anglican Church, which is no longer solely the child of its Western birthplace. Anglicans in the African and Asian provinces outnumber those in the West, and are appalled at the Western Church's accommodation of liberal ideals.*

Further:

*An obsession with unity is blinding Anglican leaders from seeing the truth now facing them. It would be a better, braver and more realistic course of action to separate. It is time for the Anglican Communion to divide up the assets and divorce.*

In anticipation of the Tanzania meeting, the Bishop of Winchester, Michael Scott-Joynt, the Church of England's fourth most senior bishop, declared that if Bishop Jefferts Schori is allowed to attend the Dar es Salaam sessions, "I am in no doubt that this would destroy the authority of the communion ... the Episcopal Church and its new presiding bishop are increasingly departing from basic Christian belief in the lordship and uniqueness of Christ." Similar warnings have been issued by N. T. Wright, the Bishop of Durham, and Michael Nazir-Ali, the Bishop of Rochester.

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