

African Traditionalists Reject Anglican Dialogue to Reconsider Anti-Gay Laws

An African-led traditionalist group opposed to growing acceptance of homosexuality in the worldwide Anglican Communion has rejected a **Church of England** plea to review its Bible-based condemnation of gays.

Kenyan Archbishop Eliud Wabukala, chairman of the group, said it was “deeply troubling” that Anglicanism’s mother church was trying to project a British debate about “that which God calls sin” onto world Anglicanism.

Church of England bishops agreed in London on Monday to hold a mediated dialogue throughout the 80-million member Communion to reflect on biblical passages about gays in a way that could make Anglican churches more welcoming to them.

The Communion, which links Anglicans across and beyond the English-speaking world, has been split for years over **gay rights** and biblical authority, especially since its U.S. branch—the Episcopal Church—ordained a gay bishop in 2003.

Several of its large African member churches have put up determined opposition to any reform and helped unite traditionalists in a large faction that at times has seemed ready to break away from the more liberal churches in Britain and North America.

“We cannot ... allow our time and energy to be sapped by debating that which God has already clearly revealed in Scripture,” said Wabukala, chairman of the primates’ council of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON).

“Such dialogue only spreads confusion and opens the door to a

false gospel,” he said in a statement on Wednesday.

Church of England bishops debating ways to accommodate **same-sex marriage** could not agree on allowing church ceremonies to bless such unions, which it has opposed until now.

Parliament legalized gay nuptials in England and Wales last year and the first are to take place in late March.

The Church’s proposal for “facilitated conversations” on homosexuality came after an intense debate on women bishops broke a 20-year impasse last November and paved the way for the first female ordinations in England by late this year.

New Anti-Gay Laws in Africa

While the mother church inched toward more openness to gays, Nigeria outlawed same-sex relationships this month and Uganda voted for life imprisonment for some same-sex acts in December.

President Yoweri Museveni has delayed signing the Ugandan law, saying it should be shelved pending further study.

Britain and some other Western countries have threatened to cut aid to governments that pass anti-gay laws. Homosexuality is taboo in Africa and illegal in 37 countries there.

Anglican leaders in those countries have strongly supported the tougher laws. Nigerian media quoted Archbishop Nicholas Okah as saying on Monday that legalizing same-sex marriage would lead to “nothing but disaster.”

Nigeria and Uganda have the Communion’s second and third largest churches after England, according to Church statistics, but are probably ahead in terms of regular churchgoers.

Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, head of the Church of England and spiritual leader of the whole Communion, sent a

message on Wednesday to Anglican church leaders around the world and to the presidents of Nigeria and Uganda urging them not to victimize homosexuals.

He and Archbishop of York John Sentamu recalled a 2005 statement by Anglican primates, or member church heads, saying gays are “children of God, loved and valued by Him and deserving the best we can give—pastoral care and friendship.”

Welby left on Thursday for a five-day visit to Africa focused on promoting conflict resolution in South Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo.

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