

Church of England Names First Female Archbishop Amid Backlash Over Unbiblical Views

The Church of England announced Friday the appointment of Dame Sarah Mullally as its next Archbishop of Canterbury, making her the first woman to hold the position in the church's 1,400-year history.

The decision, approved by King Charles III, drew immediate criticism from conservative Anglican leaders who called Mullally unqualified due in part to her support for abortion rights and same-sex marriage blessings. They accused her of abandoning biblical doctrine in favor of progressive ideology.

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Mullally, 63, currently serves as Bishop of London. She will replace Justin Welby, who resigned last year after an investigation found he mishandled abuse allegations at Christian summer camps.

In a statement, Mullally said she responds "to the call of Christ to this new ministry" in a "spirit of service to God and to others." She vowed to encourage the church "to continue to grow in confidence in the Gospel" and to let it "shape our actions."

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer welcomed the nomination. His office said Mullally "will play a key role in our national life." Starmer wished her "every success."

Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell also praised her, calling

Mullally “a person of huge courage, wisdom, integrity and experience.” He said he looks forward to serving alongside her to make the church “simpler, humbler and bolder.”



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But the appointment sparked sharp opposition from global conservatives, who view Mullally’s theological liberalism as apostasy that disqualifies her from leading the 85-million-member Anglican Communion.

The Global Anglican Future Conference, or GAFCON, which represents conservative churches mainly in Africa and Asia, issued a statement expressing “sorrow” over the choice. It said the decision “abandons global Anglicans” and that Mullally’s appointment “will make it impossible for the Archbishop of Canterbury to serve as a focus of unity within the Communion.”

GAFCON accused Mullally of failing “to uphold her consecration vows” by promoting “unbiblical and revisionist teachings regarding marriage and sexual morality.” The group noted she voted in favor of blessings for same-sex marriages and once said some same-sex relationships “could, in fact, be blessed.”

On abortion, Mullally has described herself as “pro choice rather than pro life.” Critics say this stance contradicts church teachings on the sanctity of life.

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Dr. Calum Miller, an Oxford ethicist and medical doctor, reacted harshly on social media. He quoted Mullally’s abortion comment and declared: “The Church of England has lost all moral credibility. It is over.”

Fr. Calvin Robinson, a conservative Anglican priest and broadcaster, called the appointment a disaster. Robinson argued Mullally prioritizes “secular approval over eternal truth” and embodies “the worst of the liberal tendency.”

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– Fr Calvin Robinson ©️📧 (@calvinrobinson) October 3, 2025

Mullally’s background includes a career as England’s chief nursing officer, where she became a dame for her work. She was ordained in 2001 and made history as the first female Bishop of London in 2018.

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Her installation is set for March 25, 2026, at Canterbury Cathedral. The move comes as the church grapples with declining membership and deepening divides over sexuality and gender roles.

Conservatives warn her leadership will accelerate schisms, leaving traditionalists to seek alternatives outside Canterbury’s authority.

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