

Swaziland Gets First Female Anglican Bishop

As the Church of England weighs whether it will allow women to become bishops, the Anglican Church has appointed its first female bishop in Africa.

Ellinah Wamukoya, 61, was consecrated Saturday to serve as the church's bishop in Swaziland, a tiny, impoverished nation surrounded by South Africa that is the continent's last absolute monarchy. Speaking Monday to The Associated Press, Wamukoya said she wanted to bring integrity to the church.

"I am going to try to represent the mother attribute of God," Wamukoya said. "A mother is a caring person but at the same time, a mother can be firm in doing whatever she is doing."

Wamukoya also acknowledged that she represents a historic change for the Anglican church on the continent, where other denominations don't allow women to serve as **bishops**.

"It is also humbling and challenging because I know that the whole world is looking up to me to see if I would deliver and to what level I am going to deliver," she said.

Tuesday, the Church of England will vote on allowing women bishops throughout the church, as some dioceses already do. A majority of the church's governing General Synod is ready to say yes, but a two-thirds majority must approve the measure. An unlikely coalition of advocates and opponents of female bishops may have enough strength to derail the motion.

It has been 36 years since the church's General Synod declared it had no fundamental objection to ordaining women as priests, and 18 years since the first women were ordained. Meanwhile, sister churches of the Anglican Communion in Australia, New Zealand and the United States already have women serving as

bishops.

In Swaziland, the government has yet to congratulate Wamukoya and did not attend the ceremony marking her appointment, despite being invited. However, Swazi feminist and gender activist Doo Aphane said Wamukoya's appointment represented a special moment for women in her country and beyond.

"It is victory for women both in Swaziland and Africa, because she is not given the task because she is a woman but because she is capable," Aphane said.

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