

This Denomination Could Split Over ‘Watering Down Biblical Teaching’

Several parishes are preparing for the beginnings of what could be a formal split from the Church of England (CofE), over growing concerns about the diluting of its teaching on marriage and other issues.

A number of CofE members who identify as evangelicals within the Anglican body say they are setting up “embryonic” structures, that could be used were a split to take place.

Representatives from a dozen congregations, from the Dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester and Chichester, are to meet later this week in Tunbridge Wells for discussions.

Watering Down Biblical Teaching

The new group believes that the leadership in the Church of England is “watering down” biblical teaching on issues such as the area of sexuality as well as the authority of the Bible.

Members say that they would not rule out a schism in the event of bishops offering ‘blessing’-style services for same-sex couples. This is likely to be discussed in Synod in the coming months.

Disagreements over marriage and sexuality have already caused separations within the Anglican Communion, including formal splits with the U.S. and Canadian churches due to the ordination of clergy in openly same-sex relationships.

‘New Anglican Jurisdiction’

The Rev. Dr. Peter Sanlon, vicar of St. Mark’s Church in

Tunbridge Wells, who is hosting this week's meeting, said: "If senior leaders of the Church of England water down the teaching of the Church of England on key issues like homosexuality, then this synod could easily evolve in to a new Anglican jurisdiction in England.

"The Archbishop of Canterbury has signaled that he is aware of the possibility that a significant proportion of the church will not accept a change in the church's teaching.

"This could be the beginning of that playing out."

Safeguarding Church Integrity

The Rev. Canon Dr. Gavin Ashenden, a royal chaplain, said: "The energy behind this new jurisdiction comes from a growing perception that the CofE is so desperate to remain chaplain to a country that is turning its back on Christian ethics, that there comes a point when it fails to be faithful to Christ and in particular his teaching on marriage.

"At that point, and it may already have arrived, there will be a rupture, and the orthodox will make arrangements to safeguard the integrity of the Church for the future."

GAFCON 'Warmly Commends' Initiative

The Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), a group of Anglican members who are committed to upholding biblical teaching, has sent a statement to say that it "warmly commends" the initiative.

It said:

"This is a grass-roots initiative by local congregations which is representative of the views of many across the country, and is in line with the concerns of Anglicans from the GAFCON movement worldwide as expressed in the Jerusalem Declaration of 2008 and subsequently.

“The message being clearly conveyed is that: there are Church of England churches that hold to the unchanging truths of the gospel and the formularies of the Church of England; these churches oppose the relentless slide towards revisionism in the Church of England structures; these churches are prepared to take action to protect their congregations.”

Justin Welby Asked About Same-Sex ‘Blessings’

Over the weekend, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby was asked if or when the church would allow ‘blessing’ services for same-sex civil partnerships.

He replied: “I don’t have a good answer to it.”

“If we were the only Church here and [there were] no other Churches, and if division didn’t matter it would be much easier to answer,” he added.

“Do I know when there will be a point when the blessing [of the civil partnership] will happen? No. I don’t and I can’t see the road ahead.” {eo}

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