

Welsh Anglicans Vote to Allow Women Bishops

The Anglican Church in Wales voted on Thursday to allow the ordination of women bishops, putting pressure on the Church of England, the last part of Britain and Ireland to hold on to the men-only rule.

Disagreements over whether women can become bishops and over gay relationships have roiled the 80-million strong Anglican Communion—the world's third largest Christian grouping after the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

The Welsh vote will intensify the spotlight on the Anglican leader, Archbishop Justin Welby, who wants to speed up plans to allow women bishops in England. Scotland and Ireland allow female bishops although none have been ordained.

In Wales, following hours of lengthy debate, each of the church's three electoral colleges voted in favor of the move, with all seven bishops backing the change which will come into force in a year's time.

Women already serve as Anglican bishops in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, but Anglican churches in many developing countries oppose any female clergy and are working together to shield themselves against such reforms.

A Church of England synod will consider draft legislation in November but opposition from traditionalists remains. Its law-making body voted in favor of women bishops in July but it is unlikely that final approval will come before November 2015.

The Church in Wales said there were huge cheers after the bill was passed and Bishop John, who seconded the bill, tweeted, "We can by God's grace ordain women to the episcopate. Thank you Governing Body."

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