

With Openly Gay Bishops in Ministry and Muslims in the Sanctuary, Conservative Anglicans Make This Vow

Widely viewed as a schismatic movement, the Global Anglican Future Conference, or GAFCON, a grouping of conservative Anglicans, says it is not leaving the worldwide Anglican Communion.

Instead, the movement says it is committed to renewing the 85 million-member communion from within.

GAFCON members from Africa, Europe, America and Asia, met in London last week where they discussed the future of global Anglicanism.

“The members of our churches stand at the heart of the communion, which is why we are committing to its renewal,” the GAFCON Primate Council said in a statement at the end of the April 13-17 conference. “We belong to the mainstream, and we are moving forward.”

The movement started in Jerusalem in 2008 as a response to the consecration of openly gay Bishop Gene Robinson by the Episcopal Church.

It has gained ground, planting 483 new congregations in North America since 2009, Archbishop Foley Beach of the Anglican Church in North America reported at the meeting.

Beach, who heads a rival group to the Episcopal Church, was elected to the GAFCON Council, the top decision making organ of the movement. Fellowships of Anglicans in Australia, England and Ireland are affiliated with GAFCON.

According to the statement, the movement says it has prioritized clear theological education and training of leaders, especially bishops.

At the London meeting, the primates said they are concerned the mother church has drifted away from biblical faith. African bishops criticize the Church of England for championing women priests and bishops and being supportive of gays and lesbians.

And they added a new concern: interfaith relationships with Muslims.

"We do not regard the recent use of a Church of England building for a Muslim service as a minor aberration," the council said. "These actions betray the gospel and discourage Christians who live among Muslims, especially those experiencing persecution."