



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on February 21, 2023

Conservative Anglican Leaders Denounce Archbishop of Canterbury After Church of England Allows Blessing of Same-sex Unions

In a move that could portend a permanent split in the Anglican Communion, a group of conservative Anglican archbishops from around the world announced Monday that they no longer recognize the Archbishop of Canterbury as their leader after the Church of England decided earlier this month to [allow the blessing of same-sex unions](#).

The [Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches \(GSFA\)](#) “is no longer able to recognize the present Archbishop of Canterbury, the [Right Honorable and Most Reverend] Justin Welby, as the ‘first among equals’ Leader of the global Communion,” 12 GSFA archbishops, or primates, declared in a statement. “He has sadly led his House of Bishops to make the recommendations that undergirded the General Synod Motion ... knowing that they run contrary to the faith & order of the orthodox provinces in the Communion whose people constitute the majority in the global flock.”



AP Images
Justin Welby

The General Synod’s decision was an attempt to mollify both conservative and liberal elements within the Anglican Communion with regard to homosexuality and same-sex marriage, an effort that has consumed much of Welby’s decade-long tenure as Archbishop of Canterbury. As usual with such gambits, it satisfied no one. Conservatives were pleased that the church continued to prohibit priests from performing same-sex weddings but thought it went too far in permitting the blessing of same-sex marriages and civil unions conducted outside the church. Liberals believed it hadn’t gone far enough.

For the members of the GSFA, whose commitment to the Scriptures and the historic faith does not allow them to bend with the prevailing winds, it was certainly a bridge too far.

“As the Church of England has departed from the historic faith passed down from the Apostles by this innovation,” they wrote, “she has disqualified herself from leading the Communion as the historic ‘Mother’ Church. Indeed, the Church of England has chosen to break communion with those provinces who remain faithful to the historic biblical faith.”

“As much as the GSFA Primates also want to keep the unity of the visible Church and the fabric of the Anglican Communion, our calling to be ‘a holy remnant’ does not allow us [to] be ‘in communion’ with those provinces that have departed from the historic faith and taken the path of false teaching,” they explained.



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Given their belief that the Church of England has lost its authority, the GSFA archbishops said they “will expeditiously meet, consult and work with other orthodox Primates in the Anglican Church across the nations to re-set the Communion on its biblical foundation.” “Only then,” they averred, “will the Anglican Church as a whole be able to be God’s channel of light and transformation in a dark and broken world.”

The primates also urged Welby to accept their withdrawal of support as “an admonishment of love.”

If, as expected, additional Anglican leaders endorse the GSFA statement, “the worldwide federation of Anglican churches is in danger of collapse,” reported the [Daily Caller](#). This would be unfortunate in the short term but beneficial in the long term, allowing factions with irreconcilable differences to go their separate ways rather than constantly battling for supremacy.

“The deep disagreements that exist across the Anglican Communion on sexuality and marriage are not new,” a Welby spokesperson said in a [statement](#). “The 42 member Churches of the Anglican Communion are independent and autonomous, but at the same time interdependent. It is a fundamental principle of the Anglican Communion that no province can bind another province, and no Instrument of Communion has any jurisdictional authority over any province.”

While also calling for continued unity, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, the Right Reverend Anthony Poggio, said in a [statement](#) that he was “grateful” for the “frankness and candor” of the GSFA. He acknowledged the primates’ consistency in upholding biblical doctrines regarding sexuality and marriage, which, he noted, “are held by the vast majority of Anglicans around the world.”

Sadly, these doctrines are no longer held by the leaders of the Church of England — or indeed of most mainline Western denominations — with the result that, as the Anglican Archbishop of Nigeria [put it](#), “Christianity and the Church have experienced a terrible decline, loss and irrelevance in the secular and post-Christian Western world.”



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