

You might also look up the statement supporting the new Archbishop of Canterbury from the Canadian bishops.
Bruce.

Little evidence so far that Anglican leaders plan to join GAFCON in leaving Anglican Communion

By David Paulsen

[Facebook](#)[WhatsApp](#)[Email](#)[Share](#)

(From [Wikipedia](#):

GAFCON: The Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans is a communion of conservative Anglican churches aligned with the Confessing Movement that formed in 2008 in response to ongoing theological disputes in the worldwide Anglican Communion)

[Episcopal News Service] The GAFCON statement's potential impact was evident [as soon as it landed Oct. 16](#). It immediately provoked intense reactions in Anglican circles around the world.

The conservative Christian network, a mix of leaders from recognized Anglican provinces and breakaway groups, had announced that its primates, as the heads of their respective churches, were effectively leaving the Anglican Communion. They would reject the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury and no longer participate in, contribute to or receive assistance from the structures that have long bound together the [Anglican Communion's 42 autonomous, interdependent provinces](#).

The statement, titled [“The Future Has Arrived,”](#) accused senior leaders of the Anglican Communion of “the abandonment of the Scriptures” and said GAFCON’s member primates had “resolved to reorder the Anglican Communion.”

Some conservative supporters of GAFCON [rejoiced](#) at the apparent split. Other Anglicans, particularly in provinces like The Episcopal Church that have been more welcoming to LGBTQ+ Christians, reacted variously with dismay, confusion, ambivalence and uncertainty.

A week later, one lingering question is how many – if any – Anglican primates and their provinces plan to follow through with GAFCON’s call to leave the Anglican Communion? The statement outlining that plan was signed by one person, Rwanda Archbishop Laurent Mbanda, who serves as chair of GAFCON’s primate council.

Of the GAFCON council’s other 12 members, eight represent provinces that are recognized as members of the existing Anglican Communion. One, the Church of Nigeria, [shared the text of the letter online](#) without additional comment. Episcopal News Service could find no evidence of any statements from the other seven provinces supporting the new GAFCON plan for disengagement outlined by Mbanda.

All efforts to reach leaders of those provinces were met with silence, except for one: The [Province of the Anglican Church of Congo](#) is still part of the Anglican Communion, one of its top bishops told ENS.

“The call to disengage from the Anglican Communion needs to be made collegially through debate,” Archbishop Zacharie Masimango Katanda, who served as Congo’s primate from 2016

to 2022, said by email in response to an ENS inquiry. “The Church of Congo will not follow that call and remains a full member of the Anglican Communion, and also a member of the Global South.”

Mbanda’s Rwanda province is one of three Anglican provinces that have long boycotted Anglican Communion meetings over theological disagreements on human sexuality, same-sex marriage and the ordination of gay and lesbian priests and bishops. Likewise, Nigeria and Uganda had already disengaged with much of the Anglican Communion’s structure, including the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops, the Primates’ Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council. The exit of those three provinces, therefore, would signify little change in participation with what the Anglican Communion calls its Instruments of Communion.

The other six Anglican provinces that are represented on GAFCON’s primates’ council are Alexandria (Egypt), Chile, Congo, Kenya, Myanmar and South Sudan. Until now, conservative primates in those provinces, though affiliated with GAFCON, have continued to engage with their peers across the Anglican Communion at its meetings.

In addition to seeking comment from those six provinces by email and WhatsApp, ENS also reviewed their websites and social media accounts for any references to the GAFCON statement in the week since its release, but found none.

Nor has there been any public reaction from the [Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches](#), many of whose conservative leaders overlap with GAFCON’s leadership. The latest information posted to the Global South Fellowship’s website and

Facebook page has been solely focused on a [formation retreat underway this week in Uganda](#).

GAFCON, on the other hand, has been regularly promoting Mbanda's statement on its Facebook account, with daily posts since last week.

"We give thanks for the joyful announcement approved last week by the Gafcon Primates' Council that the Anglican Communion has been reordered as a fellowship of autonomous provinces bound together by the Scriptures and the Reformation Formularies," an [Oct. 22 Facebook update says](#). "We rejoice that we have not left the Communion... we are the Communion!" (The Oct. 16 statement said GAFCON would name the new entity the "Global Anglican Communion.")

ENS sought comment and clarification from GAFCON's general secretary, the Rt. Rev. Paul Donison, who is a leader in the breakaway Anglican Church in North America. ACNA was founded in 2009, and many of its early members were former Episcopalians who objected to The Episcopal Church's stances on women's ordination, LGBTQ+ inclusion or both.

Donison, based at [an ACNA church in Plano, Texas](#), had not yet responded to an Oct. 22 phone message by the time this ENS story was published. He has spoken about Mbanda's statement in other venues. On Oct. 17, he [published an article](#) on the Christian website the Gospel Coalition explaining the reasons for GAFCON's split with the Anglican Communion.

"Over the last several decades, some of the most senior leaders in the communion — particularly in the Church of England and The Episcopal Church (USA) — have embraced revisionist teachings," Donison wrote. "These include the rejection of biblical authority in

matters of marriage, sexuality and the uniqueness of Christ. Evangelicals across traditions will recognize the dynamics here: when leaders abandon Scripture as the final authority, the gospel itself is at stake.”

Mbanda’s statement did not specify the reason for timing this decision now, though it was issued two weeks after the Church of England announced that London Bishop Sarah Mullally would become the first female archbishop of Canterbury. The position represents a “focus of unity” for the 85-million-member Anglican Communion in recognition of the 42 provinces’ roots in the Church of England. She is scheduled to take office in January.

Some of the more conservative Anglican leaders have increasingly [spoken of “impaired” communion](#) since the Church of England’s General Synod voted in 2023 to allow same-sex couples to receive blessings in England’s churches. Mullally [co-chaired the group that helped draft that policy](#).

London Bishop Sarah Mullally was announced Oct. 3 as the archbishop of Canterbury-designate. Photo: Anglican Communion News Service

Separately, in July 2025, Archbishop Cherry Vann was elected to lead the Church in Wales, becoming the [first LGBTQ+ primate in the Anglican Communion](#). At the time, Mbanda [released a statement](#) saying Vann’s election “shatters the communion.”

On Oct. 17, Mbanda alluded to Mullally’s selection as archbishop of Canterbury in a discussion of his latest GAFCON statement with the Christian interview program, [“The Pastor’s Heart.”](#) He suggested GAFCON has been building to this moment since its founding in 2008 as the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglican Leaders.

“As we knew that we were anticipating this announcement of the archbishop of Canterbury, and knowing that we had been on a journey since 2008 with GAFCON ... I think it was time to start thinking, OK, so what do some of these founding fathers think?” Mbanda said. “It was also time to say, OK, we have talked a lot. Is it a time to walk the talk?”

Mbanda did not specify who was involved in those conversations or how they may have registered their assent to his statement.

Yet even some conservative leaders within the Anglican Communion have questioned the legitimacy and prudence of declaring a break with the communion to establish a rival network with a similar name.

“To my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ in GAFCON: You have broken my heart,” the Rev. Matthew Olver, an Episcopal priest who serves as executive director and publisher at the Living Church Foundation, [wrote in an essay on the Living Church’s website](#).

“Your communiqué of October 16 sounds as though you are rejecting all of us who confess the apostolic faith and are committed to a traditional witness within the Episcopal Church and in provinces throughout the communion — my heart is crushed.”

Others have affirmed their commitment to the Anglican Communion, emphasizing the importance of walking together as Anglicans despite persistent differences on individual theological questions. The Episcopal Church places “great value on our continuing relationships in the Anglican Communion and on the historic role of the archbishop of Canterbury as first among

equals,” Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe said [last week in a written statement to ENS](#).

Bishop Helen Kennedy of the Canadian Diocese of Qu’appelle, as liaison to The Episcopal Church’s Executive Council, called GAFCON’s statement “heartbreaking” in her remarks to Executive Council on Oct. 22 at its recent meeting.

“Making outrageous statements is not helpful,” Kennedy said. Instead, she emphasized the “very clear, very strong” response [issued by the top bishops in the Anglican Church in Canada](#).

The Rt. Rev. Anthony Poggo, secretary general of the Anglican Communion and a bishop from South Sudan, said last week the Anglican Communion “is ordered by historic bonds, voluntary association” and that any changes “should be made through existing structures.” Some such reforms, known as [the Nairobi-Cairo proposals](#), are scheduled to be discussed next year at a meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Mullally has emphasized “working together in mission.” On Oct. 3, in her [first address as archbishop of Canterbury-designate](#), Mullally said she has witnessed local expressions of the faith in her travels around the Anglican Communion that “echoed with familiar grace” in their shared Anglican context.

“I saw something deeply distinctive, coupled with mutual understanding: a shared inheritance of history, of family of worship, sacrament and word — made real in global diversity,” Mullally said. “Anglican Churches and networks around the world working together in mission, joining their voices in advocacy for those in need.

“In an age that craves certainty and tribalism, Anglicanism offers something quieter but stronger: shared history, held in tension, shaped by prayer, and lit from within by the glory of Christ. That is what gives me hope. In our fractured and hurting world, that partnership in the Gospel could not be more vital.”

– *David Paulsen is a senior reporter and editor for Episcopal News Service based in Wisconsin. He can be reached at dpaulsen@episcopalchurch.org.*