

South Africa's Anglican bishops take first step toward LGBT inclusion

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [March 30, 2016](#) issue

South Africa's Anglican bishops have taken an initial step toward allowing partnered lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in their congregations to be full members.

The bishops passed a resolution when they met recently in the Grahamstown Diocese. That resolution now goes to the Provincial Synod, the church's top decision-making body, which meets later this year, said Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of Cape Town.

"I believe that its adoption by Provincial Synod would be an important first step signaling to the LGBT community that we in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, through our top deliberative and legislative body, see them as welcome members of our body as sisters and brothers in Christ," Makgoba wrote in a pastoral letter dated February 22.

If the synod adopts the resolution, the South African church will be the first African province of the Anglican Communion to welcome LGBT people as full members, including those in same-sex civil unions recognized by South African law.

According to Makgoba, the resolution would open the doors for the baptism and confirmation of children of same-sex couples.

"No child brought for baptism should be refused merely because of the sexual orientation of the parents," said Makgoba, while warning that particular care should be taken against stigmatizing the parents or the children.

Michael Kimindu, president of Other Sheep Africa, a multicultural ministry for sexual minorities, said he thinks other churches in African nations may follow.

At the same time, Makgoba said the bishops did not reach agreement on "guidelines for clergy wanting to bless couples in same-sex unions, or who want to enter same-sex unions themselves."

In this way, the bishops did not differ from a resolution made at the Lambeth Conference, a gathering of bishops from the global Anglican Communion.

Makgoba said the bishops were determined to avoid splits in the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

“We overcame deep differences over the imposition of sanctions against apartheid and over the ordination of women, and we can do the same over human sexuality,” he wrote. —Religion News Service; added sources

This article was edited on March 15, 2016.