

Election of lesbian agitates Anglicans: Mary Glasspool of Los Angeles

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The election of a lesbian priest as a bishop in the Episcopal Church is likely to cause further problems in the divided Anglican Communion, said Arch bishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams.

“The election of Mary Glasspool by the diocese of Los Angeles as suffragan [assistant] bishop-elect raises very serious questions not just for the Episcopal Church and its place in the Anglican Communion, but for the communion as a whole,” said Williams, the spiritual leader of the 77-million Anglicans worldwide, in a December 6 statement.

Glasspool, who has served as canon, or assistant, to the bishops of the Diocese of Maryland, has lived in a two-decade partnership with another woman. She is the first gay candidate elected as bishop since the Episcopal Church in July opened all levels of church service to gays and lesbians in committed relationships.

As Williams noted, Glasspool’s election still has “to be confirmed, or could be rejected, by diocesan bishops and diocesan standing committees.” That process could take several months. He said the decision “will have very important implications.”

The election in 2003 of V. Gene Robinson, who lives with a longtime male partner, as bishop of New Hampshire caused a furor in the Anglican Communion, which includes the 2.2-million-member Episcopal Church.

Robinson praised the December 5 election of Glasspool in comments to the *Los Angeles Times*. “This has been an amazing six and a half years, [but] it’s been lonely,” he said.

In a statement from Australia, the Anglican archbishop of Sydney, Peter Jensen, said that confirmation of Glasspool’s election would “make clear beyond any doubt whatsoever that the [Episcopal Church] leadership has chosen to walk in a way

which is contrary to scripture and will continue to do so.”

Many Anglicans, particularly in the Global South, view homosexual intimacy as sinful and unbiblical. A number of congregations in the U.S. and the leaders of four dioceses have broken ties with the Episcopal Church over the issue and aligned themselves with traditionalist bishops abroad.

When the Los Angeles diocese met to elect two assistant bishops, a gay man and Glasspool, 55, were among the nominees. Elected first was Diane Jardine Bruce, 53, a married woman and rector of a parish in San Clemente. She was the first woman ever elected a bishop in the diocese.

Glasspool won the other spot on the seventh ballot, edging out a Latino priest. Afterward she said she believed that delegates did not focus on sexual orientation, but “went beneath the superficial characteristics and boxes into which we put people.”

Williams had urged the Episcopal Church at its triennial convention last July to avoid roiling the waters of dissent. Los Angeles bishop John Bruno, however, said he thought this election would stir only “a little bit of a wave.”