

# **Election of lesbian bishop 'regrettable,' says Williams: Archbishop of Canterbury discusses implications**

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Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has called the confirmation of a second openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church “regrettable” and said it will have “important implications” for the U.S. church’s role in the wider Anglican Communion.

Despite warnings from Williams, U.S. bishops and regional committees ratified the election of Mary Douglas Glasspool, an open lesbian, as an assistant bishop in Los Angeles. The Episcopal Church announced her confirmation by its bishops March 17 after a majority of regional committees had earlier affirmed her election.

Many Episcopalians hail Glasspool’s election as a move toward the full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the Episcopal Church. Glasspool said she is “aware that not everyone rejoices” in her election but pledged to “extend my own hands and heart to bridge those gaps.”

Within the U.S., 12 active and retired Episcopal Church bishops, along with six rectors and deans, joined in a statement saying they “disassociate” themselves from the wider church’s consent to the ordination and consecration of its second openly gay and partnered bishop.

But many leaders in the 77-million-member global Anglican Communion, already disturbed by the consecration of Bishop V. Gene Robinson in New Hampshire in 2003, are interpreting the endorsement of Glasspool, a priest from Maryland, as demonstrating the defiance of the Episcopal Church.

“It is regrettable that the appeals from Anglican Communion bodies for continuing gracious restraint have not been heeded,” Williams’s London office, Lambeth Palace,

said in a statement. "Further consultation will now take place about the implications and consequence of this decision."

Williams lacks the authority of a pope to summarily excommunicate churches or members who stray from the fold, but he has proposed a two-track system that could significantly reduce the Episcopal Church's role in the Anglican Communion. A number of Anglicans are pushing Williams to expel the Episcopal Church and recognize a conservative splinter group in its place. *-Religion News Service*