

Ugandan Anglican leader has drawn both praise and criticism

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January 11 (ENInews)--He is described as charismatic, intelligent and humble in Uganda and the Global South, but Anglican Archbishop Henry Orombi, who will be leaving office this year, has also been criticized in the Anglican Communion for his hardline stance concerning homosexuality.

Orombi on 7 January told the Church of Uganda's house of bishops to prepare to elect his successor in June. His ten-year term was set to expire in January 2014 before he turned 65. His decision to seek early retirement comes after serving for seven years.

The Christians he serves say Orombi has transformed his church, but his hard-line stand concerning issues within the Anglican Communion also earned him criticisms.

"I think he is the best Archbishop the Church of Uganda has ever had. He has been a faithful servant of God. He had charisma and development-oriented spirit. He will terribly be missed," Bishop Edward Muhima of North Kigezi, who retired last June, told ENInews in a telephone interview on 11 January.

Despina Namwembe, regional coordinator of United Religions Initiative, a Ugandan organization with members from Christianity, Islam, Baha'i and Buddhism, said he was an example for secular politicians. "Most of the political leaders decline leaving power ... but this is a good precedent," she was quoted as saying in the Daily Monitor newspaper on 10 January.

However, Bishop Christopher Ssenyonjo, the Anglican cleric whom the church defrocked in 2006 over his ministry to homosexuals, said he hoped the bishops would elect a leader who is more understanding on issues of human sexuality.

"I love my archbishop and I forgive him. I think he very well educated on matters of the Bible, but he may not have much education on matters of human sexuality," said

Ssenyonjo in an interview with ENInews on 10 January. "But we have hope. I am quietly talking to the bishops about the successor."

Orombi has been encouraging churches in Global South to lead in "biblical faithfulness" in the face of a crisis over greater acceptance of homosexuality.

He has consecrated several former Episcopal priests as bishops to serve congregations in the U.S. that have broken away from the Episcopal Church. The actions known as cross-provincial interventions have been sharply criticized by councils of the Anglican Communion, according to Episcopal News Service.