

Justin Welby confirmed as new Archbishop of Canterbury

by [Trevor Grundy](#)

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LONDON (RNS) Justin Welby was confirmed Monday (Feb. 4) as the new archbishop of Canterbury at a centuries-old service at St. Paul's Cathedral, six weeks before his formal enthronement inside Canterbury Cathedral on March 21.

Welby, 57, was a banker and oil executive before his ordination as a priest in 1992, and has served as a bishop for less than a year.

He takes over from Rowan Williams, 62, who returned to academic life at Cambridge University after a decade of turmoil throughout the worldwide Anglican Communion over questions of human sexuality and inside the Church of England over the role of women bishops.

The new archbishop had been the bishop of Durham in northern England for eight months when he was ordered by a still unnamed person in the Church of England to apply for the church's top job.

At the end of a Confirmation of Election ceremony at St. Paul's, Welby took an oath of loyalty to the British monarch with the words, "I, Justin Portal Welby, elected Archbishop of Canterbury, do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors according to law. So help me God."

He also promised to promote "unity, peace and love" and to guide the church away from "error."

Until the 17th century, such legal/religious proceedings were conducted in Latin. On Monday, the service was led in English by the church's No. 2 official, Ugandan-born Archbishop of York John Sentamu.

Welby listened intently to the rituals, his poker face a picture of both concentration and concern. "Do not be quick to anger, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools," came advice from the Bible – not unlike Williams' parting advice last year that his successor would need "the constitution of an ox and the skin of a rhinoceros."

Stepping out of a medieval court inside the cathedral and into the bright sunshine of the London cold, Welby was asked by reporters about his and the church's position regarding a contentious bill in Parliament to allow same-sex marriage.

While sticking to the church's position that marriage is a sacred union between a man and a woman, he told a BBC reporter: "The government wants it. We think there are issues around the way it's going forward. But it's not a collision course. ... We've made our views clear and I'm very much with the House of Bishops on this. They have made their views clear."

Welby also praised his predecessor, calling the bookish Williams "breathtaking in his grip and imagination and his intellect and in many other ways."

Welby is a "top drawer" Englishman, educated at Eton College (along with Prime Minister David Cameron and Princes William and Harry) and Cambridge University.

The former oil executive is privately wealthy and holds membership in one of London's most exclusive private clubs. He and his wife, Caroline, have five children aged between 16 and 27.

But despite his closeness to the British establishment, Welby is known to have a strong social conscience and has been – and remains – critical of the banking and financial sectors. Soon after his appointment last year, he raised eyebrows by accusing banks of serving "no socially useful purpose" and for being "exponents of anarchy."

Most recently, he compared parts of modern Britain with the turbulent 1930s, when there was mass unemployment, when fascists and communists clashed on London streets and when poor miners marched hundreds of miles to London to demand government attention to their plight.

Soon after his ordination in 1992, Welby was made a canon at Coventry Cathedral and the co-director for international ministry at the International Center for Reconciliation. He was appointed dean of the cathedral in Liverpool in 2007, and in 2011 consecrated as bishop of Durham, the No. 4 position within the Church of England.

"I know I will disappoint a lot of people in this job," he said in a recent interview with The Times. "The thing about the church is that we are so human . . . I'm just a very, very ordinary Christian," he said.