

In Kenya, archbishop calls for focus on missions and evangelism

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#)

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NAIROBI, Kenya (RNS) Amid deep division in the worldwide Anglican Communion, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby on Sunday emphasized the need for mission and evangelism.

“The more seriously we take the Bible, the more effectively we will be able to deal with our divisions,” Welby said.

The archbishop spoke at All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi, where he had been invited to preach ahead of the Oct. 21-26 Global Anglican Future Conference — the second such gathering of theologically conservative Anglican leaders, most of whom are opposed to the ordination of gays and lesbians.

Delegates welcomed these views as an endorsement of GAFCON. The movement held its first meeting in Jerusalem in 2008, five years after the controversial consecration of New Hampshire Bishop Gene Robinson in the Episcopal Church. Robinson, now retired, is openly gay.

“That fills me with much hope,” said Dr. Peter Jensen, the general secretary of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, referring to Welby’s emphasis on the Bible.

The conference convenes amidst fears the communion is sliding towards schism, but Archbishop Eliud Wabukala of Kenya said the communion had moved on, leaving the crisis behind, although factors that shaped it are still there.

“I think there is a wider agenda in the world today that Christians of all sorts need to look at,” Wabukala said. “Our attempt here is to begin to station ourselves in this changed context of the world, whether in the Global South or in America.”

More than 1,300 archbishops, bishops, clergy and lay people from almost 40 countries are attending the conference.