

Anglicans to release report October 18 on gays and church unity: How to cope with tensions

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Long-awaited recommendations will be made public October 18 in London on how the Anglican Communion should cope with tensions and threats of schism created by the election and consecration of gay Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire and a proposal in the Anglican Church of Canada to authorize a service of blessing for same-sex unions.

The publication of the recommendations will coincide with a meeting of the joint standing committee of the primates, or leading bishops, and the Anglican Consultative Council, the two bodies that deal with the affairs of the worldwide Anglican Communion between the once-a-decade gathering of all the world's Anglican bishops.

The release date was announced September 10 at the end of the third and final meeting of the commission, chaired by Archbishop Robin Eames, the primate of Ireland.

Noting that commission members had been "greatly challenged" by the task they were given, Eames said: "I have no doubt that their collective insights and recommendations can and must make a profound and practical impact for good in the life and mission of the Anglican Communion. This has been a labor of love in the faith that Christ is our guide and strength in working for peace and healing."

The (London) *Times* reported in early September that the commission was expected to recommend the suspension of the Episcopal Church until such time as it has "repented" of its decision to elect and consecrate Robinson, with similar sanctions being applied to the Anglican Church of Canada if it goes ahead with authorizing a formal liturgy for blessing same-sex unions.

Meanwhile, a report in the Church of England newspaper September 10 indicates that if sanctions are applied against the U.S. church, it will bring existing tensions within the Church of England to a breaking point. "The idea that you can sort things out by scapegoating Americans is absolutely preposterous," said Giles Frathe, a priest and chairman of Inclusive Church, a pro-gay organization.

U.S. church leaders, meanwhile, have lobbied for soft treatment of the Americans. Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, in a sermon September 12 at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, appealed to allow the Holy Spirit to "make room for new realities." A separate delegation of four bishops from Ohio, Massachusetts, Tennessee and Colorado met with the head of the Anglican Communion, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, to discuss "the full spectrum of opinions facing local dioceses in the United States."

Both liberal and conservative leaders have downplayed expectations from the Eames report. The messy work of reconciliation or retaliation, they say, will not come quickly or easily. *-Religion News Service*