



## Episcopals Halt Gay Ordinations to Prevent Anglican Split

By [GayWebMonkey.com](http://GayWebMonkey.com)

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New Orleans, LA - On Tuesday, US bishops agreed to roll back liberal policies regarding gays in the Episcopal Church, the American branch of the Anglican Church, to prevent a split in among Anglicans over the issues of homosexuality. The decision was reached after a six day summit in New Orleans attended by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

The consecration in 2003 of Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire, who is openly gay, became a rallying point on both sides of the issue—sparking debate, controversy and the eventual threat of a split within the Anglican Communion, especially in Africa. In addition, in recent years some Episcopal churches have relaxed their policies to allow the blessings of same-sex marriages, which has added to the outrage of more conservative sects.

More liberal policies toward homosexuality within the Episcopal Church have strained the Anglican community to the point of breaking apart the 77 million-member worldwide communion. The decision to cease ordination of gay bishops and to step back from the blessing of same-sex marriages came only days before a September 30th deadline imposed by Anglican leaders in Tanzania to resolve the issue or face a "a damaged at best" relationship with the US branch of Anglicanism.

BBC's religious affairs correspondent, Robert Pigott, says the agreement, pushed by Williams to move US churches more in line with the Communion's main positions, will help defuse the crisis triggered by the US Church's consecration of Robinson in 2003.

The resolution adopted at the meeting calls for the Episcopal House of Bishops to "exercise restraint by not consenting to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion," according to a report on the Episcopal Church's official web site. Church leaders also vowed "not to authorize or use in our dioceses any public rites of blessing of same-sex unions until a broader consensus emerges in the Communion or until (the) General Convention takes further action."

However, the resolution did not specifically forbid clergy from presiding over unauthorized same-sex unions, instead saying that they should "respond with love and understanding to the people of all sexual orientations... (and) maintain a breadth of private responses to situations of individual pastoral care." The Episcopal House of Bishops also pledged opposition to any "actions or policies that does violence to them [homosexuals], encourages violence towards them or violates their dignity as children of God."

According to the New York Times, Bishop Martyn Minns, of the conservative Convocation of Anglicans in North America, responded to the bishops' resolution by stating: "They're offering business as usual. The communion asked them to make a change, to embrace the teaching of the communion about homosexuality, and there's no change at all."

The resolution is thought by many to only be a stop-gap measure in preventing a breakdown between branches of the Anglican Church. Conservatives within the Anglican Church, according to the London Telegraph, are working on plans that would allow dissenting US dioceses to affiliate with African diocese that shares their views on homosexuality.

*Written By Laura Vess*