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Anglicans Issue Ultimatum to Episcopal Church

By Wendy Griffith

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CBN.com — World-wide Anglican leaders met in Ireland and have given the Episcopal Church U.S.A. (ECUSA) and Anglican Church of Canada an ultimatum: Stop endorsing homosexuality — or leave the Anglican Communion.

Both the ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada must stop ordaining homosexuals and presiding over same-sex ceremonies by 2008 or the worldwide Anglican body will sever direct ties.

That was the consensus of the Anglican Primates, at a meeting in Northern Ireland last week.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, requested that ECUSA and Canadian churches "voluntarily withdraw" from the governing body of the Anglican Communion.

Archbishop Williams said, "The Anglican Communion does not feel itself free, given Scripture and its theological tradition, to sanction 'same sex' blessing, or the ordination of persons in same sex relationships."

The Archbishop also said the Anglican Communion faces the real threat of a split over homosexuality, and the rift will not be resolved without pain and without someone admitting they were wrong.

A part of the ECUSA precipitated the most serious rift in the Anglican Communion's history when it made Gene Robinson Bishop of New Hampshire in November 2003. Robinson lives with his male partner.

I once asked Robinson how he could reconcile being a homosexual leader in the church with the Bible's clear denunciation of homosexuality.

I asked, "How would you interpret Romans 1:26 which says: 'For even the women exchange the natural use for what is against nature, likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the women, they burn in their lust for one another; man with man committing what is shameful.' How do you reconcile that?"

Robinson suggested that Holy Scripture is out of date.

Robinson said, "Uh, when those Scriptures were written in both the Old and New Testaments, everyone was presumed to be heterosexual, so to act in any other manner would be against one's natural inclinations. The whole notion of sexual orientation is only about a hundred years old. So, to take the concept of homosexuality as a sexual orientation and to read it back into an ancient text, uh, is very shaky ground to be on."

Conservatives say that now the only "shaky ground" is under the ECUSA and Canadian churches.

They must now choose: whether to uphold the authority of Holy Scripture or have their ties severed with the worldwide Anglican Communion.

The ECUSA and Canadian churches have been asked to further explain their views on homosexuality at a meeting in June. But they have been given until 2008 to make the decision on whether they will abide by Scripture or not.