

# Episcopal summit finds no solution: "Difficult conversation" on divisive issues

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A three-day summit of Episcopal bishops was not able to resolve their church's intense disputes over its new top prelate and the role of gays and lesbians in the church.

"We recognized the need to provide sufficient space, but were unable to come to common agreement on the way forward," the bishops said in a joint statement following the closed-door meeting September 13 in New York City.

The 11 participating bishops—including Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold and Presiding Bishop-elect Katharine Jefferts Schori— met at the behest of the archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams.

Williams is the spiritual leader of global Anglicanism, which includes the 2.1-million-member Episcopal Church. Representing Williams at the meeting was Kenneth Kearon, secretary general of the Anglican Communion. "It's a positive sign that these difficult conversations have been taking place in a frank and honest way," Williams said afterward in a statement.

The dispute between liberals and a vocal conservative minority have intensified since an openly gay man, V. Gene Robinson, was elected bishop of New Hampshire in 2003. Both Griswold and Jefferts Schori, who will become presiding bishop in November, voted to approve Robinson's consecration.

Since Jefferts Schori's election in June, seven dioceses have asked Williams to allow them to be put under the guidance of someone else instead. Bishops representing four of those dioceses—Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh; Edward Salmon of South Carolina; James Stanton of Dallas; and Jack Iker of Fort Worth, Texas—participated in the New York meeting.

Duncan, who heads a conservative network of 10 dioceses and some 900 parishes, said at the conclusion that “it was an honest meeting.” However, “it became clear that the division in the American church is so great that we are incapable of addressing the divide, which has two distinctly different groups both claiming to be the Episcopal Church.”

Jefferts Schori said that another session may be called later this year, possibly with additional participants.

Another bishop attending, John Lipscomb of southwest Florida, was hopeful. “Both sides laid down the masks and the pretenses and were as honest with each other as they could possibly be,” he said. – *Religion News Service*