

Wales admits women bishops, Church of England lags behind

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CANTERBURY, England (RNS) The decision by the Church in Wales to consecrate women bishops means the Church of England — the mother church of the worldwide Anglican Communion — will be the last in Britain to admit women as bishops.

Cheers erupted in a hall at Lampeter, Ceredigion in Wales, when the 144-member governing body of the Welsh church announced the result of the vote on Thursday (Sept. 12). A similar bill failed narrowly in 2008.

Ireland and Scotland both allow female bishops though none have been elected yet.

“The Welsh vote means that the Church of England will be last to accept the inevitable — women as bishops probably by the year 2015,” said Christina Rees, a member of the archbishop of Canterbury’s advisory council, and a prominent campaigner for women bishops over the last three decades.

“It’s beyond embarrassing to think the Church of England — mother church of millions of Anglicans — will be last in line on this issue that should have been dealt with years ago,” she said.

Rees noted that a woman ordained in the Church of England is about to be consecrated as a bishop — not in the land of her birth, England, but in New Zealand. The Rev. Helen-Ann Hartley, 40, last week was elected the third woman bishop in New Zealand.

The General Synod, the Church of England’s governing body, will meet in London in November and is expected to clear the way for the consecration of women bishops in 2015.