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Episcopal Church USA, Elects Female Presiding Bishop

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The anguish of orthodox Anglicans and evangelical Episcopalians intensified Sunday as the ECUSA elected the Right Reverend Katharine Schori, Bishop of Nevada, as the denomination's first woman to serve as Presiding Bishop. The move is being hailed as a victory for the liberal wing of the church, and it comes even as the church is embroiled in yet another controversy over its election of an openly-homosexual bishop in 2003.

As Stephen Bates, religion correspondent for *The Guardian* [London] reports:

The US Episcopal church stunned Christians across the world last night by unexpectedly electing the first woman primate in the Anglican church. The Rt Rev Katharine Jefferts Schori, 52, Bishop of Nevada - one of the smallest dioceses in the US - for only five years and ordained for only a decade, may well be the highest placed woman priest in church history.

The truly shocking portion of Bates' report is found here:

But her election as the US Episcopal church's leader creates a new headache for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, the nominal head of the 77 million-strong Anglican communion, on top of the church's turmoil over gay people. Many Anglican provinces across the world do not accept women's ordination or acknowledge that they can become priests. In both the US church 30 years ago and the Church of England more recently, theological conservatives have fought lengthy actions against the principle.

A statement from Lambeth Palace last night expressed no congratulations, stating that the Archbishop of Canterbury would be sending a letter to the new primate this morning. It added: "There will be nothing released this evening."

The Anglican Communion was already moving headlong toward schism over the issue of homosexuality. The election of a woman as Presiding Bishop poses a direct challenge to those who want to see the communion break with the ECUSA over its liberalism.

Ruth Gledhill, reporter for *The Times* [London], got to the heart of the issue:

Yesterday the Bishop of Rochester urged the Archbishop of Canterbury to take firm action against the liberal leadership of the Episcopal Church. Matters were so serious that "fudge won't do", Bishop Nazir-Ali said. "Sometimes you have to recognise that there are two irreconcilable positions and you have to choose between them. The right choice is the line with the Bible and the Church's teachings down the ages, not some new-fangled religion we have invented to respond to the 21st century," he told The Daily Telegraph.

And from *The Telegraph*:

The Church has been given until the end of the convention on Wednesday to toe the conservative line on homosexuality or face expulsion.

It has been asked to express regret for defying the official policy of the 75-million strong Communion by consecrating Gene Robinson as the first openly gay bishop in 2003. It has also been asked to impose a moratorium on public blessings

of same-sex "marriages".

But Bishop Nazir-Ali said that, whatever the outcome, the Americans had already become detached from the roots of Anglicanism.

"Nobody wants a split, but if you think you have virtually two religions in a single Church something has got to give sometime," he said.

He suggested the point of no return had been passed, and effectively challenged Dr. Williams to recognise the fact.

Bishop Schori is identified with the liberal wing of the ECUSA and voted for the approval of Gene Robinson's election as the openly-homosexual Bishop of New Hampshire. The fact is that hermeneutical decisions link the issues of female ordination and the ordination of homosexual persons. We will talk about that today on *The Albert Mohler Program*, live at 5:00.

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