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Together: the Archbishop of the Anglican Church in North America, the Most Revd Foley Beach, after preaching at Lagos Cathedral on Sunday before the meeting of GAFCON Primates in the Nigerian capital this week

PRESS WATCH - GAFCON considers a missionary bishop for UK

The consecration of a “missionary Bishop” for Anglicans who want alternative oversight in the Church of England is being considered by Primates meeting in Lagos this week, GAFCON UK confirmed on Monday, The Church Times reports.

In a response clarifying a report in the *Mail on Sunday*, GAFCON UK, a conservative Evangelical grouping, said that some of the language in the report was misleading. GAFCON Primates were not “plotting” to create such a bishop: “This implies subterfuge and deceit, and that foreign church leaders plan to impose a solution on British Anglican churches, which is not the case.”

Discussions were taking place “in response to requests from Anglicans in the UK”.

The statement, provided by the Executive Secretary of Anglican Mainstream, on behalf of GAFCON UK, explained: “The GAFCON Primates recognise the existence in England, Scotland and Wales of faithful Anglicans who are already distanced from their local structures because of revisionist teaching and practice in the Church of England leadership, and they are ready to provide assistance. One option is to

consecrate a missionary Bishop to give oversight if necessary.

“That the GAFCON Primates are considering consecrating a bishop with particular responsibility for these Islands is not a secret and should not come as a surprise. . . Many of the world’s senior Anglican leaders, including the Archbishops who lead the GAFCON movement, have for some time been concerned about the Church of England’s drift from orthodox, Biblical Christianity.”

A spokesman for GAFCON said: “The situation in the UK is not uniform. Within England there is troubling ambiguity from diocese to diocese in their teaching and pastoral practice as it pertains to human sexuality and biblical church order. However, the situation in the Scottish Episcopal Church is of immediate concern.

“There has been a clear rejection of biblical truth by the Scottish Episcopal Church, and they are expected to finalise this rejection of Anglican teaching and apostolic order in the upcoming June meeting of their Synod. Alternative structures and oversight will need to be in place should that unfortunate reality come to pass. At their meeting this week, the GAFCON Primates will be considering a range of options for how to

care for those who remain faithful to Jesus' teaching on marriage."

Six of the seven diocesan synods of the Scottish Episcopal Church have voted in favour of a proposal to amend canon law to allow clerics to conduct marriages for same-sex couples in church ([News, 17 March](#)).

GAFCON is already facilitating activity outside the structures of the C of E. The Anglican Mission in England (AMiE) comes under its oversight through a small panel of retired English bishops.

Tensions between GAFCON and the C of E hierarchy intensified last year when the secretary-general of the Archbishops' Council, William Nye, condemned a briefing paper produced by the group as "significantly misleading".

But efforts to hold the Anglican Communion together continue. Last week, the task group established by the Archbishop of Canterbury in January 2016 met again in London. Set up at the request of the Primates, it has the task of "restoring relationships, rebuilding mutual trust and responsibility, healing the legacy of hurt and exploring deeper relationships" ([News, 22 January](#) 2016).

The Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Richard Clarke, who chaired last week's meeting, said: "We have been seeing the many, many areas of commonality". Among the topics of discussion were "marriage practices and relationships in different parts of the Communion", and "how the authority of Primates and bishops was practised in different parts of the Communion".

Items on GAFCON Primates' agenda include the growth of its Bishops Training Institute, and whether the Primates will attend the meeting in October called by Archbishop Welby ([News, 10 February](#)). GAFCON is due to hold a full conference, including clergy and laypeople, in Jerusalem next year.

A communiqué from the Lagos meeting is expected next week.

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