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## Money Looms in Episcopalian Rift With Anglicans

By LAURIE GOODSTEIN and NEELA BANERJEE  
Published: March 20, 2007

### Correction Appended

As leaders of the Anglican Communion hold meeting after meeting to debate severing ties with the [Episcopal Church](#) in the United States for consecrating an openly gay bishop, one of the unspoken complications is just who has been paying the bills.



Enlarge This Image

Courtesy of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma has continued supporting schools and health centers in Uganda despite the Ugandan archbishop's decision to reject money from the church.

Episcopal Church headquarters in New York, and millions more are sent directly from American dioceses and parishes that support Anglican churches, schools, clinics and missionaries abroad.

Bishops in some foreign provinces that benefit from Episcopal money are now leading the charge to punish the Episcopal Church or even evict it from the Communion. Some have declared that they will reject money from the Episcopal Church because of its stand on homosexuality.

But church officials say that their donations continue to be accepted in every province but Uganda, and that they do not intend to shut off the spigot.

"The American church is not a pariah to everybody — some people still like us," said the Rev. Lisa Fischbeck of Carrboro, N.C., in the Diocese of North Carolina, which is setting up a program with a diocese in Botswana. "They think we're nutty, but they still like us."

Episcopalians are now grappling with an ultimatum issued last month by leaders, or primates, of the Anglican Communion's 38 provinces demanding that they promise not to ordain any more openly gay bishops, or to approve any more church blessings for gay couples. If the Episcopal Church does not agree by Sept. 30, the primates threatened "consequences" that will affect the Episcopal Church's participation in the Communion.

The truth is, the Episcopal Church bankrolls much of the Communion's operations. And a cutoff of that money, while unlikely at this time, could deal the Communion a devastating blow.

The Episcopal Church's 2.3 million members make up a small fraction of the 77 million members in the Anglican Communion, the world's third-largest affiliation of Christian churches. Nevertheless, the Episcopal Church finances at least a third of the Communion's annual operations.

Episcopalians give tens of millions more each year to support aid and development programs in the Communion's poorer provinces in Africa, Asia and Latin America. At least \$18 million annually flows from

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But whether the Episcopal Church will comply, and whether its decision puts at risk its financial arrangements with the rest of the Anglican Communion remain up in the air.

Canon James M. Rosenthal, director of communications for the Anglican Communion Office in London, said no one in the Episcopal Church has threatened to cut off money.

But Canon Rosenthal said, "Any default on the total amount of money needed would have serious implications for the Anglican Communion and its work, especially when you are talking about 30 percent or more of its budget."

Many Episcopalians say they have spent years forming relationships with Anglicans throughout the world and would be loath to cut off support, especially for programs that support the developing world's poor.

"I think we need the Communion, and I think most of the Communion would say it needs us," said Margaret Larom, director of Anglican and global relations for the Episcopal Church.

Work at the Episcopal Church's headquarters is so intertwined with the rest of the Anglican Communion that shutting off the flow of money would put a stop to much of the church's mission and evangelism.

Officials estimate that collectively, a quarter of the church's budget goes to international programs. There are ministries for women, for young people and for peace and justice that collaborate with Anglicans overseas, acting as host to and paying for delegations visiting the United States and going abroad.

In addition, Episcopal Relief and Development, a semi-autonomous agency with its own budget, sends \$15 million overseas each year to relieve hunger, provide health care and respond to disasters — mostly by collaborating with Anglican and other churches abroad, said Rob Radtke, its president.

"In places the government can't reach, the church has an infrastructure and delivery system that is second to none," Mr. Radtke said. "We certainly are in partnership with people who disagree with us, and that's just fine. We give out our money based on the need, and not on the basis of some theological discussion."

At least 80 of the 110 dioceses in the Episcopal Church are partnered with one or more foreign dioceses, sending aid, and exchanging priests, lay teachers and missionaries, said Brother James Teets, who runs this "Companion Diocese" program at church headquarters.

After the Episcopal Church consented to the ordination in 2003 of Bishop [V. Gene Robinson](#) of New Hampshire, who lives with his gay partner, bishops in the African provinces declared that their churches would no longer accept money from the Episcopal Church. (One province that would not have been affected by this is Nigeria, whose archbishop has been the most outspoken opponent of the Episcopal Church's approach to homosexuality. The church in Nigeria, the largest in the Anglican Communion with 17 million members, is largely self-supporting, Anglican officials said.)

So far, the archbishop of Uganda, Henry Orombi, is the only primate who has actually turned down money from the Episcopal Church, many church officials said in interviews.

In 2004, Archbishop Orombi's edict led to the shutdown of a community development program financed by Episcopal Relief and Development that worked with families affected by [H.I.V./AIDS](#).

"We were just devastated by that," Mr. Radtke said. "No one won, and everyone was a loser."

But this rupture was the rare exception, and most financing is still getting through. For example, the diocese of Oklahoma has continued supporting three secondary schools and



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10 health centers in its companion diocese in Uganda by sending the money to a separate organization, said the Rev. Canon Charles Woltz, assistant to the Oklahoma bishop.

The Rev. Titus Presler, professor of mission and world Christianity at the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church, in New York, said, "It is very striking that in the midst of all these tensions, the missionary relations and Companion Diocese relationships have been able to flourish."

The Rev. Bill Atwood, the general secretary of the Ekklesia Society, a theologically conservative aid organization in Texas, accused the Episcopal Church of using its money to buy off opponents in poor countries. "It's a pretty lousy thing to do: to try and use money to weaken the philosophical position of people overseas," Dr. Atwood said.

Ekklesia also disburses grants overseas and has helped to finance strategy meetings between conservative Episcopalians and their foreign Anglican counterparts, but Dr. Atwood would not divulge any financial information and it is not publicly available.

Conservative Episcopalians in the United States who disagree with their church's course have set up their own smaller aid agency parallel to Episcopal Relief and Development. The Anglican Relief and Development Fund has disbursed \$2.7 million in grants in the last two and a half years, said its executive director, Nancy Norton.

American resentment at their role as the Communion's deep pockets emerged last year when the Episcopal Church's executive council was asked to increase its contribution to the Anglican Consultative Council, the Communion's central coordinating body, by 10 percent each year for the next three years from \$661,000 in 2007.

At the council's last meeting, in England in 2005, the Episcopal Church's representatives were asked to look on as observers, and not participate in decision making — a measure promoted by some conservative primates.

Mrs. Larom, the Episcopal Church's director of Anglican relations, said some members of the executive council bristled at the budget request, saying, "Why should we give money when we're not at the table?" Nevertheless, the executive council approved the 10 percent increase and the Episcopal Church gave the money out of loyalty to the Communion, she said.

One of the most urgent questions ahead is whether the Americans will continue to underwrite the Lambeth Conference in London, the large gathering of Anglican bishops that happens every 10 years. The next one is in 2008. In past conferences, each American bishop who attended has paid the expenses of a bishop from overseas who needed help, Mrs. Larom said.

Anglican officials said that they were not assuming the Americans will contribute at the same rate for the 2008 conference, and that they were now looking for alternative sources.

#### **Correction: March 23, 2007**

*A front-page article on Tuesday about possible financial consequences for the Anglican Communion if it severs ties with the Episcopal Church in the United States for consecrating an openly gay bishop misspelled the surname of a priest who said the American church "is not a pariah to everybody." She is the Rev. Lisa Fischbeck, not Fishbeck.*

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