

A Quantitative Study of Lay Ecclesiology: An analysis of research across five Anglican Provinces.

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Abstract: Using research conducted across five Anglican Provinces this paper examines the strength of lay attachment to being 'Anglican' and how that is related to current controversies over women's ministry and homosexuality.

A strong affirmation of Anglican denominational identity emerges, (Brazil 65%, England 70%, Japan 64%, Uganda 79% and the United States 81%). It is clear that laypeople value the shared history and ethos that characterises the Anglican Communion. A majority of lay people 'approve' or 'strongly approve' of the ordination of women as priests, generally by a substantial margin, (Brazil 85%, England 82%, Japan 69%, Uganda 54%, the United States 94%).

Consensus breaks down on the issue of ordaining homosexuals (whether celibate or practising) to the priesthood. Only in the USA is there a clear majority in favour and even here by just 51%. In Uganda 70% 'strongly disapprove'. Other countries are less hostile, but in every country surveyed it is clear that there is still some way to go before a majority of the laity might be willing to accept clergy homosexual relationships.

However, in none of the countries surveyed does the laity see this single issue as justifying schism. There is broad acceptance of the desirability of continuing within existing Anglican structures and 'seeking consensus through dialogue' is the overwhelmingly preferred way of resolution.