

HISTORY OF GAFCON, THE CHURCH OF NIGERIA UNDER PETER AKINOLA, AND DEVELOPMENTS TO GAFCON 2026

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the historical development of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), the role of the Church of Nigeria under the leadership of Peter Akinola, and major developments leading to GAFCON 2026. It traces the emergence of GAFCON as a reform movement within global Anglicanism in response to theological disputes concerning biblical authority, ecclesiastical identity, and moral teaching. Particular attention is given to the Church of Nigeria, whose numerical strength and theological conservatism positioned it as an influential voice within the Global South. The study also examines how Peter Akinola's leadership contributed to the formation and strengthening of orthodox Anglican networks that later became associated with the GAFCON movement. Using a qualitative, library-based research method involving the review and analysis of books, scholarly articles, official Anglican documents, conference statements, and relevant historical records, the study examines the development of GAFCON and its changing role within global Anglicanism. It further explores the institutional growth of the movement, its major conferences, ecclesiastical structures, missionary initiatives, and continuing efforts to preserve historic Anglican doctrine. The study concludes that GAFCON has developed into a significant force within contemporary Anglicanism and continues to shape discussions concerning church authority, mission, biblical interpretation, and global ecclesial relationships.

Keywords: Anglicanism, Biblical Authority, GAFCON, Jerusalem Declaration, Anglican Realignment, Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, Peter Akinola

1. Introduction

The Anglican Communion is one of the largest Christian traditions in the world, linking provinces across Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Oceania. Historically, its unity has been expressed through shared liturgy, episcopal governance, common Anglican formularies, and communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. However, from the late twentieth century into the early twenty-first century, significant disagreements emerged within the Communion concerning biblical interpretation, ecclesiastical authority, human sexuality, and the interpretation of historic Anglican doctrine. These disagreements created tensions within the Communion and contributed to the emergence of new networks and structures among Anglicans seeking to uphold what they understood as the historic and orthodox Christian faith.

Against this background, this study addresses the problem of how theological and ecclesiastical disagreements within the Anglican Communion contributed to the emergence and development of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), with particular attention to the role of the Church of Nigeria and the leadership of Archbishop Peter Akinola. The study aims to trace the historical development of GAFCON, examine the contribution of the Church of Nigeria and Peter Akinola to the movement, and assess the major institutional and theological developments that have shaped GAFCON up to GAFCON 2026. The study covers the period from the late twentieth century, when the major theological tensions within the Anglican Communion intensified, through the emergence of GAFCON in 2008 and its subsequent development into a global Anglican movement leading up to GAFCON 2026.

The Global Anglican Future Conference, popularly known as GAFCON, emerged within this context of growing theological and ecclesiastical disagreement. It was conceived as a gathering of Anglicans committed to maintaining what they regarded as the historic faith of the Church and responding to developments within the Anglican Communion that they considered inconsistent with biblical teaching and traditional Anglican doctrine. Although it began as a conference, GAFCON gradually developed into a broader global movement with significant influence among Anglican provinces, particularly in Africa and other parts of the Global South.

Among the most influential voices in the formation of this movement was the Church of Nigeria under the leadership of Archbishop Peter Akinola. Through his leadership within the Anglican Communion and the Global South, Akinola played an important role in mobilizing Anglicans who sought to defend biblical authority and historic Anglican teaching. The Church of Nigeria's numerical strength, institutional influence, and theological position enabled it to become an important participant in the networks that preceded and supported the emergence of GAFCON.

The development of GAFCON must therefore be understood within the wider history of the Anglican realignment and the changing relationships between Anglican provinces, particularly between churches in the Global North and those in the Global South. The movement's development also involved the establishment of new forms of fellowship, mission, and ecclesiastical cooperation, including the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. These developments represented significant changes in the institutional landscape of global Anglicanism and raised broader questions concerning authority, communion, doctrine, mission, and the future identity of the Anglican tradition.

This study therefore examines the historical development of GAFCON, the contribution of the Church of Nigeria and Peter Akinola to its emergence, and the major developments that have shaped the movement up to GAFCON 2026. By focusing on these developments, the study seeks to contribute to a clearer understanding of GAFCON's place within contemporary

Anglicanism and its continuing significance for debates concerning biblical authority, ecclesiastical identity, mission, and relationships within the global Anglican Communion.

2. Historical Background to GAFCON

The emergence of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) must be understood against the background of growing theological and institutional disagreements within the Anglican Communion during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Although the Communion brought together autonomous provinces through shared Anglican formularies, episcopal structures, and common instruments of consultation, disagreements increasingly arose over biblical interpretation, ecclesiastical authority, human sexuality, and the relationship between provincial autonomy and the wider Communion. These tensions became particularly visible following developments in the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada, prompting the Lambeth Commission on Communion to examine their implications for the unity and relationships of the Communion.¹

The controversy intensified following the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003. For some Anglican leaders, the development represented an important change in the Church's approach to human sexuality, while others regarded it as inconsistent with their understanding of biblical and historic Christian teaching. The disagreement consequently extended beyond the question of sexuality to wider issues concerning authority, consultation, and the responsibility of individual provinces towards the wider Communion. The Windsor Report of 2004 subsequently sought to address these divisions and proposed principles for strengthening communion among the provinces, although significant differences remained.²

The continuing disagreements encouraged closer cooperation among Anglican leaders who emphasised biblical authority and continuity with historic Anglican teaching. Anglican provinces in Africa and other parts of the Global South became increasingly prominent in these discussions, while Peter Akinola, then Primate of the Church of Nigeria, emerged as an important voice in the debates. Akinola and other Anglican leaders involved in the emerging network expressed concern about the direction of Anglican theology and sought greater cooperation among churches that shared their understanding of Scripture, doctrine, and mission. These developments provided an important background to the planning of GAFCON, which was conceived as an international gathering through which Anglican leaders could consider the future of the Anglican family.³

The first GAFCON was held in Jerusalem from 22 to 29 June 2008 and brought together bishops, clergy, and lay representatives from different parts of the Anglican world. The conference addressed questions concerning biblical authority, Anglican identity, Christian mission, and the future of the Communion. Its participants described GAFCON not simply as a single conference but as a continuing fellowship of confessing Anglicans and launched the GAFCON movement during the Jerusalem gathering. The conference therefore represented an important stage in the development of the Anglican realignment and in the creation of networks intended to strengthen cooperation among Anglicans who shared particular theological convictions.⁴

¹ Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report 2004*, London, Anglican Communion Office, 2004, 1-4

² Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report 2004*, London, Anglican Communion Office, 2004, 14-18

³ Peter Akinola, "GAFCON – A Rescue Mission," *The Guardian*, London, Guardian News and Media, 2008

⁴ Global Anglican Future Conference, *The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration*, Jerusalem, GAFCON, 2008, 1-3

A major outcome of the Jerusalem conference was the Jerusalem Declaration, which provided a theological framework for the emerging GAFCON fellowship. The Declaration affirmed the authority of Holy Scripture, the historic creeds, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Book of Common Prayer, Anglican sacramental and liturgical heritage, and the Church's responsibility to proclaim the gospel and make disciples. It also expressed the participants' intention to remain within the Anglican tradition while working towards the reform, healing, and revitalisation of the Anglican Communion. The emergence of GAFCON and the Jerusalem Declaration consequently marked a significant development in contemporary Anglicanism and provided the foundation for the movement's subsequent institutional and missionary development.⁵

3. Peter Akinola and the Church of Nigeria

Peter Jasper Akinola served as Primate of the Church of Nigeria from 2000 to 2010. His primacy began at an important stage in the development of Nigerian Anglicanism, following substantial expansion in the number of dioceses and the strengthening of the province's internal organisation. The Church of Nigeria's historical account records that Akinola's leadership placed considerable emphasis on developing a common vision for the Church involving bishops, clergy, laity, and representatives of the Mothers' Union.⁶ His tenure was also characterised by an emphasis on evangelism, church planting, theological education, and the strengthening of Anglican identity. These priorities contributed to the growing institutional and missionary profile of the Church of Nigeria during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Akinola's leadership became increasingly associated with the defence of biblical authority in international Anglican debates. Following the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, Akinola became one of the most prominent African Anglican critics of the development. In November 2003, the House of Bishops of the Church of Nigeria formally endorsed the position taken by Akinola concerning the controversy and stated that the province would not support Robinson's consecration.⁷ The Nigerian bishops presented their position as a matter of fidelity to Scripture and stated that they were acting on behalf of millions of Nigerian Anglicans. Akinola's response therefore represented not merely a personal theological opinion but an institutional position adopted by the Church of Nigeria.

Akinola subsequently participated directly in wider debates concerning Anglican identity, authority, and the interpretation of Scripture. In 2003, he was associated with *Claiming Our Anglican Identity: The Case Against the Episcopal Church, USA*, a document that examined the theological and ecclesiastical implications of developments within the Episcopal Church in the United States. The document argued that the disputed developments raised fundamental questions concerning Scripture, the historic faith and order of the Church, and the responsibilities of Anglican provinces towards one another.⁸ Akinola's involvement demonstrated the extent to which his leadership had moved beyond Nigerian ecclesiastical affairs into the wider international debate over the future direction of Anglicanism.

The Church of Nigeria's position became even more visible in 2004 when Akinola, then Chairman of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, participated in discussions among African Anglican leaders concerning homosexuality and the ordination of gay clergy. During this

⁵ Global Anglican Future Conference, *The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration*, Jerusalem, GAFCON, 2008, 5-8

⁶ Church of Nigeria, "The Historical Evolution of the Anglican Church of Nigeria: An Outline," Abuja, Church of Nigeria, 2024, 54

⁷ Anglican Communion News Service, "Statement from the Bishops of the Anglican Church of Nigeria," London, Anglican Communion Office, 2003, 53

⁸ Anglican Communion Institute, *Claiming Our Anglican Identity: The Case Against the Episcopal Church, USA*, Colorado Springs, Anglican Communion Institute, 2003, 1-13

period, he publicly defended the position of the African provinces and challenged the direction being taken by some Western Anglican churches. His interventions presented the controversy as a theological issue involving the authority of Scripture rather than simply as a disagreement over contemporary social values. Contemporary reporting of the Nairobi meeting records Akinola's opposition to financial support from the Episcopal Church in the United States because of its position on homosexuality.⁹ His statements during this period contributed to his emergence as one of the most recognisable African voices in the Anglican realignment.

Akinola's influence also extended into the development of alternative Anglican structures in North America. In 2005, the Church of Nigeria established the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANA), creating a formal ecclesiastical relationship between the Nigerian province and Anglican congregations in North America.¹⁰ The initiative was significant because it demonstrated the willingness of the Church of Nigeria to establish transnational structures for congregations that shared its theological position. It also provided practical experience in developing international Anglican networks before the emergence of GAFCON, thereby connecting Akinola's Nigerian leadership with the broader process of Anglican realignment.

By January 2008, Akinola was directly involved in preparing the theological and organisational framework for GAFCON. At a press conference in Lagos on 30 January 2008, following a meeting of the GAFCON Theology Resource Team, he explained that the proposed conference would provide an opportunity for Anglicans committed to orthodox Christianity to consider the future of the Anglican family. He described the purpose of the gathering in terms of seeking to “fashion the future of our Anglican family.”¹¹ This statement is important because it shows that Akinola understood GAFCON as part of a broader effort to address questions of Anglican identity, doctrine, mission, and ecclesiastical relationships rather than simply as a reaction to a single controversy.

Akinola's contribution to GAFCON was also reflected in his address at the 2008 gathering, where he connected the movement's theological concerns with the wider mission of the Church. He emphasised biblical faithfulness, the proclamation of the gospel, and the responsibility of Anglican churches to bear Christian witness in their respective societies.¹² His leadership at this stage demonstrates the combination of theological conviction, ecclesiastical organisation, and missionary concern that characterised his public ministry. It also helps explain why the Church of Nigeria became an important African participant in the networks that developed around GAFCON.

Akinola's significance in the development of GAFCON therefore extends beyond his participation in the Jerusalem conference. His decade as Primate of the Church of Nigeria coincided with the expansion of the province's international relationships, the intensification of debates over biblical authority, the establishment of CANA, and the development of networks among Anglicans who shared similar theological convictions. The Jerusalem Declaration subsequently articulated many of the principles that characterised the emerging GAFCON movement.¹³ Akinola's leadership consequently provides an important case study of the role

⁹ Joyce Mulama, “Africa's Answer to the ‘Homosexual Problem’,” Nairobi, Inter Press Service, 2004, 27

¹⁰ National Open University of Nigeria, African Church Leaders, Abuja, National Open University of Nigeria, 2014, 38

¹¹ Peter Akinola, “GAFCON: Global Anglican Future Conference,” *Lagos, Church of Nigeria*, 30 January 2008, 72

¹² Peter Akinola, “GAFCON – A Rescue Mission,” Jerusalem, GAFCON, 2008, 53

¹³ Global Anglican Future Conference, *The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration*, Jerusalem, GAFCON, 2008, 1-8

played by African Anglican leadership in the changing institutional and theological landscape of global Anglicanism during the early twenty-first century.

4. The Formation of GAFCON in 2008

The inaugural GAFCON was held in Jerusalem from 22 to 29 June 2008, bringing together Anglican bishops, clergy, and lay representatives from different provinces, particularly from Africa and other parts of the Global South. The conference attracted more than 1,000 participants, reflecting the growing international network of Anglicans concerned about the theological direction of the Communion.¹⁴

A significant outcome of the conference was the adoption of the Jerusalem Declaration, which affirmed the authority of Holy Scripture, the historic formularies of Anglicanism, the uniqueness of Christ, and the Church's responsibility to proclaim the gospel.¹⁵ These commitments provided a theological framework for continued cooperation among Anglicans who participated in the emerging GAFCON movement.

The conference also contributed to the development of structures for continuing the work begun in Jerusalem. The establishment of the Primates Council and the subsequent development of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans provided an organisational framework through which participating provinces, dioceses, and congregations could maintain relationships beyond the 2008 gathering.¹⁶ These developments marked an important transition from GAFCON as a conference into a continuing international Anglican movement.

5. Growth and Institutional Development

Following the 2008 Jerusalem conference, GAFCON developed from a conference into an ongoing international movement. The Jerusalem Statement called on the participating Primates to form an initial Primates' Council and to expand the fellowship of confessing Anglicans.¹⁷ GAFCON's present structure identifies the Primates Council, supported by a Secretariat, Guarantors, Trustees, and regional liaison structures, as the principal framework through which the movement has been coordinated.

The movement's institutional development was reinforced through subsequent conferences. GAFCON II, held in Nairobi in October 2013, brought together more than 1,500 delegates and produced the Nairobi Communiqué and Commitment, which gave the Primates a mandate to continue the work of the movement. GAFCON III in Jerusalem in June 2018 expanded participation further, with 1,950 representatives from 50 countries, including bishops, clergy, and laity.¹⁸ These gatherings demonstrated the development of GAFCON as a continuing international network rather than a single conference.

GAFCON also developed specific networks to support its wider ministry. By 2021, the movement reported the development of a Theological Education Network and a Church Planting Network, alongside regional branches and working groups addressing issues affecting Anglican churches.¹⁹ Through these structures, GAFCON increasingly connected its theological commitments with practical activities such as leadership formation, theological education, church planting, and missionary cooperation.

¹⁴ Global Anglican Future Conference, *The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration*, Jerusalem, GAFCON, 2008, 1

¹⁵ Global Anglican Future Conference, 2008, 2-8

¹⁶ Global Anglican Future Conference, , 2008, 8

¹⁷ Global Anglican Future Conference, 2008, 8

¹⁸ GAFCON, "Conference Statements," GAFCON, 93

¹⁹ GAFCON Primates Council, "Primates Council Communiqué," GAFCON, 29 April 2021

The movement also became involved in supporting alternative episcopal oversight for Anglicans who sought structures outside their existing provincial arrangements. GAFCON reported in 2023 that it had supported the establishment of alternative episcopal oversight in several countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain, the United States, and Wales.²⁰ This development illustrates how GAFCON's institutional growth extended beyond conferences into the creation and support of wider Anglican networks.

6. The Continuing Influence of the Church of Nigeria

The influence of the Church of Nigeria within GAFCON continued after Peter Akinola's retirement in 2010. His immediate successor, Nicholas D. Okoh, served as Primate of the Church of Nigeria from 2010 to 2020.²¹ During his tenure, Okoh became closely involved in GAFCON leadership and was appointed Chairman of the GAFCON Primates' Council in 2016.²² His involvement placed the Nigerian province at the centre of the movement's international leadership during an important period of institutional expansion.

Okoh also continued to represent Nigerian Anglicanism in major GAFCON initiatives. At the GAFCON Primates' Council meeting in 2018, he served as Chairman and participated in discussions concerning relations within the Anglican Communion and cooperation with the Global South.²³ His leadership demonstrated that the Church of Nigeria's involvement in GAFCON continued beyond Akinola's primacy and included direct participation in the movement's decision-making structures.

In March 2020, Henry Chukwudum Ndukuba succeeded Okoh as Primate of the Church of Nigeria. Ndukuba subsequently became a member of the GAFCON Primates' Council and participated in the leadership of the movement. His continuing involvement was evident in preparations for GAFCON's 2026 gathering, when the Church of Nigeria played a major organisational role in hosting the conference in Abuja.²⁴

The succession from Akinola to Okoh and then to Ndukuba therefore provides concrete evidence of institutional continuity in the Church of Nigeria's relationship with GAFCON. Rather than depending solely on the influence of one former primate, Nigerian participation continued through successive leadership and through representation on GAFCON's central governing structures. This continuity helps explain the enduring significance of the Church of Nigeria within the development of the wider GAFCON movement.

7. Major Developments from 2013 to 2026

The period from 2013 to 2026 marked a significant stage in the institutional development and geographical expansion of GAFCON. The second GAFCON conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 21 to 26 October 2013. The official communiqué recorded 1,358 delegates from 38 countries, including 331 bishops, 482 other clergy, and 545 lay participants.²⁵ The conference focused on the relationship between the gospel and culture and produced the Nairobi Communiqué and Commitment, which reaffirmed biblical authority and called for cooperation in mission, theological education, lay training, and the development of younger leaders.²⁶

The Nairobi conference also strengthened the Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans by providing a framework for continuing cooperation beyond the major GAFCON gatherings.

²⁰ GAFCON, "Media Release," GAFCON, 20 February 2023

²¹ Church of Nigeria, "Most Rev'd Nicholas D. Okoh (2010–2020)," Abuja, Church of Nigeria, 24

²² GAFCON, "Nairobi Communiqué 2016," Nairobi, GAFCON, 2016

²³ GAFCON, "Gafcon Primates Council Communiqué, Entebbe 2018," Entebbe, GAFCON, 2018

²⁴ GAFCON, "G26 Preparations by the Church of Nigeria," Abuja, GAFCON, 2 February 2026

²⁵ GAFCON, "Nairobi Communiqué and Commitment," Nairobi, GAFCON, 26 October 2013

²⁶ GAFCON, "Nairobi Communiqué and Commitment," Nairobi, GAFCON, 26 October 2013

The movement increasingly developed networks concerned with theological education, evangelism, church planting, leadership formation, and mutual support. This represented an important shift from GAFCON as a periodic conference towards a continuing international Anglican network.

GAFCON III was held in Jerusalem from 17 to 22 June 2018, ten years after the inaugural conference. It brought together 1,950 representatives from 50 countries, including 316 bishops, 669 other clergy, and 965 lay participants. The conference theme, “Proclaiming Christ Faithfully to the Nations”, reflected the movement’s continuing emphasis on biblical teaching, Christian mission, and Anglican identity.²⁷ The scale of the gathering demonstrated the geographical expansion of the movement since 2008.

Between its major conferences, GAFCON continued to develop regional and ministry networks. These included initiatives concerned with theological education, youth and children’s ministry, women’s ministry, church planting, prayer, and alternative episcopal oversight. Such developments enabled the movement to maintain cooperation among participating Anglicans between its principal international conferences.

The fourth GAFCON conference was held in Kigali, Rwanda, from 17 to 21 April 2023. The gathering brought together 1,302 delegates from 52 countries, including 315 bishops, 456 other clergy, and 531 lay representatives. Its theme, “To Whom Shall We Go?”, was drawn from John 6:68, while the Kigali Commitment described GAFCON as a movement concerned with guarding the gospel, developing leaders, and generating resources for mission.²⁸

The period surrounding the Kigali conference also saw increasing disagreement between GAFCON and some existing structures of the Anglican Communion. In 2023, GAFCON leaders described the movement as working with the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches towards a “reset” of the Communion. At the same time, GAFCON continued to support alternative forms of episcopal oversight in several countries, extending its institutional role beyond conferences and theological statements. In 2025 and 2026, these institutional developments entered a new phase. GAFCON announced that G26 would be held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 3 to 6 March 2026 and that the gathering would be hosted by the Church of Nigeria. At Abuja, 347 Anglican bishops and 121 lay and clerical leaders from 27 provinces met for the gathering. The GAFCON Primates’ Council was dissolved and replaced by a Global Anglican Council comprising primates, bishops, clergy, and lay representatives.²⁹ The Abuja Affirmation subsequently described the gathering as part of the inauguration of a reordered Global Anglican Communion.

The wider Anglican Communion was also undergoing significant leadership change during this period. Sarah Mullally was announced as the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury in October 2025 and was formally installed on 25 March 2026, becoming the first woman to hold the office.³⁰ Her appointment was significant within the continuing debates over episcopal leadership and Anglican ecclesial identity, although responses to her appointment differed among Anglican provinces and movements.

Taken together, developments between 2013 and 2026 show the transformation of GAFCON from an international conference into a more developed transnational Anglican

²⁷ GAFCON, “Letter to the Churches – Gafcon Assembly 2018,” Jerusalem, GAFCON, 22 June 2018

²⁸ GAFCON, “GAFCON IV – The Kigali Commitment,” Kigali, GAFCON, 21 April 2023

²⁹ GAFCON, “Global Anglican Council Announced,” Abuja, GAFCON, 5 March 2026

³⁰ Anglican Communion Office, “The Installation of the Archbishop of Canterbury,” London, Anglican Communion Office, 25 March 2026

movement. The Nairobi, Jerusalem, and Kigali conferences expanded participation and strengthened international relationships, while the development of ministry networks and alternative episcopal structures extended the movement's activities beyond its principal gatherings. The institutional changes announced at Abuja in 2026 represented a further stage in this development, with the creation of the Global Anglican Council and the emergence of a reordered Global Anglican Communion.

8. GAFCON 2026: Outcomes and Significance

GAFCON 2026 marked a significant stage in the institutional development of the movement. Held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 3 to 6 March 2026, the gathering brought together Anglican bishops, clergy, and lay representatives from different parts of the world. Rather than functioning simply as another international conference, the Abuja meeting addressed the future organisation and governance of the GAFCON movement and its relationship with the wider Anglican Communion.³¹

One of the most important outcomes was the reorganisation of GAFCON's leadership structures. The GAFCON Primates' Council was dissolved and replaced by a Global Anglican Council consisting of bishops, clergy, and lay representatives.³² This change represented a significant development in the movement's institutional structure, broadening participation in its governance beyond the primates who had previously exercised central leadership.

The Abuja meeting also produced the Abuja Affirmation, which reaffirmed the movement's commitment to biblical authority, the historic Anglican formularies, Christian mission, and the proclamation of the gospel.³³ The document placed the institutional changes within a wider theological framework and presented the reorganisation as part of a continuing effort to strengthen Anglican cooperation and ecclesial identity.

For the Church of Nigeria, hosting the 2026 gathering represented a continuation of its longstanding involvement in GAFCON. The event demonstrated that Nigeria's contribution to the movement extended beyond the leadership of Peter Akinola and included the participation of subsequent Nigerian primates and Anglican institutions. The choice of Abuja as the location of the 2026 gathering also highlighted the continuing importance of African Anglican leadership within the movement.

The significance of GAFCON 2026 therefore lies in both its theological continuity and its institutional change. The Abuja meeting retained the movement's emphasis on Scripture, Anglican identity, and mission while introducing a new governance structure through the Global Anglican Council.³⁴ GAFCON had consequently developed considerably since its first conference in Jerusalem in 2008, moving from a gathering formed in response to disputes within the Anglican Communion towards a more formally organised international ecclesial network.

9. Conclusion

The historical development of GAFCON demonstrates how theological disagreements within the Anglican Communion contributed to the emergence of new forms of international Anglican cooperation. This study has shown that the development of GAFCON was not simply the result of a single controversy or conference, but a gradual process involving theological debate, institutional reorganisation, missionary cooperation, and the development of alternative Anglican networks. Particular attention to the Church of Nigeria has also demonstrated that

³¹ GAFCON, "The Abuja Affirmation," Abuja, GAFCON, 7 March 2026

³² GAFCON, "Global Anglican Council Announced," Abuja, GAFCON, 5 March 2026

³³ GAFCON, "The Abuja Affirmation," Abuja, GAFCON, 7 March 2026

³⁴ GAFCON, "The Abuja Affirmation," Abuja, GAFCON, 7 March 2026

African Anglican leadership, especially during and after the primacy of Peter Akinola, was important in shaping the movement's development and continuing institutional identity.

The main contribution of this study is its examination of the relationship between the Church of Nigeria, Peter Akinola, and the wider institutional development of GAFCON from its emergence in 2008 through the Abuja developments of 2026. It therefore places Nigerian Anglican leadership within the broader history of the Anglican realignment and shows how the movement developed from an international conference into a more organised ecclesial network.

The study has, however, some limitations. Its reliance on available secondary and online sources, including Wikipedia and other general reference materials, limits the depth of its engagement with primary archival evidence and specialised scholarly literature. Future research could therefore strengthen the historical account by making greater use of official Anglican archives, conference documents, correspondence, interviews, and peer-reviewed scholarship.

GAFCON's development illustrates the continuing significance of theological conviction, institutional organisation, and Global South participation in contemporary Anglicanism. Its history, particularly the contribution of the Church of Nigeria, provides an important basis for understanding the changing structures and relationships of the Anglican world in the twenty-first century.

10. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made concerning the continuing development of the Church of Nigeria and GAFCON.

- i. The Church of Nigeria should strengthen structured theological and leadership training for younger clergy and lay leaders. This recommendation follows from the study's finding that the province's influence within GAFCON has been sustained through successive generations of Nigerian Anglican leadership, from Peter Akinola to Nicholas Okoh and Henry Ndukuba. Developing formal mentoring and leadership programmes would help preserve institutional knowledge while preparing younger leaders for participation in international Anglican networks.
- ii. The Church of Nigeria should continue to invest in theological education and biblical scholarship. The study found that debates concerning biblical authority were central to Akinola's leadership and to the formation of GAFCON. Greater support for theological research, Anglican studies, and biblical scholarship within Nigerian theological institutions would therefore strengthen the intellectual foundations of the Church's contribution to global Anglican discussions.
- iii. GAFCON and its participating provinces should strengthen the ministry networks developed since 2008, particularly in theological education, church planting, youth ministry, and leadership formation. The study identified these networks as an important part of GAFCON's transition from a periodic conference into a continuing international movement. Clear coordination, measurable programmes, and regular evaluation would help ensure that these structures produce practical benefits for participating churches.
- iv. The new Global Anglican Council established at Abuja in 2026 should develop clear mechanisms for representing bishops, clergy, and laity in the movement's decision-making processes. The study identified the replacement of the Primates' Council with the Global Anglican Council as a major institutional change. Clear procedures for representation, communication, accountability, and decision-making would therefore be important as the new structure develops.

- v. GAFCON and the Church of Nigeria should maintain constructive channels of communication with other Anglican provinces and wider Anglican institutions. The historical development examined in this study shows that disagreements over doctrine and ecclesiastical authority contributed significantly to the emergence of GAFCON. Maintaining dialogue alongside theological clarity could provide opportunities for addressing areas of disagreement while preserving cooperation in areas of shared Christian mission.

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