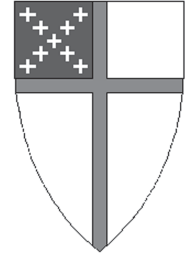


PEPtalk



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PEP deplors affiliation with ‘orthodox’ Network

On Tuesday, February 3, the Diocesan Council voted 16-4 to affiliate the Diocese of Pittsburgh with the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes, the newly formed “orthodox” group headed by Bishop Robert W. Duncan.

Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh (PEP) was quick to repudiate the vote, calling the Network “an organization whose aim is to divide the Episcopal Church, USA, and to create a new fundamentalist church to replace it as the true representative of Anglicanism in the United States.”

PEP, in a statement to news media, noted that the vote was taken with little advance notice “without discussion of its organizational or theological charters and without consultation with churches or parishioners of the diocese.” The statement continued:

“PEP believes that the vote violates the spirit of respect and toleration that

has characterized the Episcopal Church since its founding more than two centuries ago.

“The resolution to join the Network offers flimsy justification for the Council action, repeating the claim that the Archbishop of Canterbury supports the formation of the Network. There is no public documentation of this claim, either from supporters of the Network or from Archbishop Rowan Williams, and statements from the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church suggest that it is either false or misleading.

“Under the guise of purifying the church of sinfulness represented by its ratification of a duly elected, openly homosexual priest as Bishop of New Hampshire, the leadership of our diocese has chosen a course that already has seriously wounded our church and threatens damage that may be irreparable.

“The Council’s vote also repre-

sents a denial of elementary democratic rights to the parishioners of the approximately 70 Episcopal parishes and congregations in this diocese. Although the decision could affect the future of those parishes profoundly, Episcopalians in Pittsburgh were given no opportunity to question diocesan leaders about this decision or to discuss the provisions of the Network’s charter or its accompanying theological statement, which alters church doctrine.”

PEP asserted that the charter adopted by Network leaders on January 20 “violates the constitution and canons of the Episcopal Church, USA, by usurping the authority of the national church as the legitimate representative of Anglicanism in the U.S., by proposing forms of episcopal oversight that are contrary to canon, and by ceding to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to the primates of the worldwide Anglican Communion authority over the U.S. church not acknowledged by the church’s constitution.”

PEP also noted that Council President Battle Brown, in an e-mail message to Diocesan convention deputies, asserted that “The Diocese, not your parish, is a member of the network.”

This statement, apparently aimed at pacifying loyal parishioners, “ignores the fact that the diocese exists only as the sum of the parishes within it,” PEP stated. “Like it or not, all Episcopal parishes in this diocese will be affected by the Council’s action.”

PEP saluted the four Council members who voted against joining the Network. They were Norman (Chips) Koehler, Mark Peelor, Marilyn German and the Rev. Moni McIntyre.

PEP newsletter reports on Episcopal Church issues

In your hands, esteemed reader, you hold the first issue of *PEPtalk*, the newsletter of Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh. *PEPtalk* will be published monthly, providing news and commentary on events and issues in our Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Episcopal Church nationally, and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

We believe that a strong church is the firm foundation to support our work of advancing God’s kingdom. We therefore will promote unity within the Episcopal Church, opposing all efforts to divide the church or to set one group of Episcopalians against another.

We hope you will join us, by reading, commenting, and engaging with us in the search for the truth that makes us free.

Faithfully,

The PEP Publicity Committee: Cynthia Bronson Sweigert, Kathy Connor, Chris Cosby, Reed Powell, Charles Robideau, Carol Ruderer, Diane Styles, Doug Styles, and Christopher Wilkins

PEP finds 'Via Media' allies across the country

PEP has plenty of allies in its efforts to keep the Episcopal Church, USA, and the Diocese of Pittsburgh united and focused on leading church people to worship and work together, laying aside differences over theology.

Across the country, groups like PEP have sprung up in reaction to the divisive actions and statements of the American Anglican Council (AAC) and the new Network of Anglican Commu-

ion Dioceses and Parishes (NACDP). Many have taken the name "Via Media," the Anglican middle way that leads people of differing views to come together in faith.

Recently, many of the groups have joined with PEP to issue joint press releases, such as a January 20 release that called for all Episcopalians to repudiate plans for the new network, which was just that day formally established at an AAC conference in Plano, Texas.

Joining PEP in the statement were Albany (N.Y.) Via Media, Concerned Episcopalians of the St. Lawrence Deanery (upper New York state), Episcopal Forum of South Carolina, Fort Worth Via Media, Remain Episcopal (San Joaquin, Cal.), and Rio Grande Via Media (New Mexico).

The statement focused on a letter written by the Rev. Geoff Chapman, of the Pittsburgh Diocese, to parishes seeking aid from the AAC. The letter outlined plans for a church "realignment" potentially leading to recognition of the new network as the Episcopal Church in the United States.

"We call on loyal Episcopalians throughout the church to defend the traditional 'middle way' by opposing any actions that advance the strategy outlined in the Chapman letter," the statement said.

Four days before, on January 16, PEP and six other groups issued a joint statement praising Bishop Don Johnson of West Tennessee for his leadership in opposing plans for the NACDP.

The joint release noted that Johnson "called upon all within his diocese to disassociate themselves from an organization that he says intends 'to methodically create anarchy in the Church' and 'to destroy' the Episcopal Church as it currently exists."

Earlier, on December 16, PEP, Albany Via Media, and Fort Worth Via Media joined to ridicule the claim of Anglican Mainstream – a British conservative organization – that it had amassed one million signatures on a petition supporting a "Network of Confessing Dioceses and Parishes."

"Don't you believe it!" PEP and the others said, noting that most of the alleged signatures had been registered by bishops signing up all members in their dioceses, with 168,000 names being attributed to just two bishops — Jack Iker of Fort Worth and Stephen Nyorsok of Kitale, Kenya.

Other via media groups include Episcopal Voices of Central Florida, Springfield Via Media in Illinois, and groups in other locations including Washington, D.C., San Diego, Mississippi, North Carolina and Virginia.

PEPtalk

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A powerful teaching on Absalom Jones Day

Absalom Jones Day on Saturday, February 7, was a wonderful and memorable event, even though the morning service in Trinity Cathedral was sparsely attended on a snowy day.

Those who made it downtown heard the best anti-racism sermon we have heard in the seven-year history of the event sponsored by the Racism Commission of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The Rev. Jayne Oasin, social justice officer of the Episcopal Church, USA, delivered a powerful message that we all must be more active in leading our church to be more forceful in social causes.

The choir, composed of volunteers from St. Andrew's, Redeemer, Calvary and St. Stephen's in McKeesport, was small but sang beautifully. The meal prepared and served by members of St. Stephen's, McKeesport, was excellent, as were the workshops, led by the Rev. Helen Milner Burton, the Rev. Cynthia A. Swann, Grace Basham, Lydia Hale, Celeste Taylor and Amy Guthrie.

On Sunday, participants in the Adult Education Class at Church of the Redeemer were fortunate to "sit at the feet" of Rev. Oasin and to hear another powerful teaching.

— Wanda Guthrie

Parishes opt for ECUSA

A number of parishes throughout the Pittsburgh Diocese have adopted resolutions affirming their determination to remain within the Episcopal Church, USA, and to reject affiliation with the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes.

The Vestry of Christ Church, Indiana, at its January meeting, unanimously adopted the following resolution: "We, the Vestry of Christ Church in Indiana, Pa., recognize and honor the many diverse views that we hold as individuals on various subjects. We are also bound to each other in love as brothers and sisters in Christ, despite those differences. We reaffirm our commitment to the "one holy catholic and apostolic church," and we are eager to

remain in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and eager for the Diocese to remain in the Episcopal Church of the USA."

St. Brendan's Episcopal Church in Franklin Park acted to nullify the "nullification" amendment to the Diocesan Constitution that was passed at Diocesan Convention last November and will be voted on again this coming fall. The amendment states that in case of conflict between the Constitutions of the Diocese and ECUSA, the Diocese's will prevail.

St. Brendan's amended the parish by-laws to state: "Notwithstanding any provision of the Diocesan Constitution or Canons to the contrary, in the event of a conflict between any provision of the Constitution or Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh and any provision of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, the latter shall supersede and govern."

Parishioners of Church of the Redeemer,

at the parish's annual meeting on January 25, voted unanimously "that the Church of the Redeemer is a part of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh in the Episcopal Church, USA, and needs no other affiliation; and thus declines to be considered a member of the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes and disassociates itself from any actions or statements of such a network."

The vestry of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Canonsburg, after reviewing the charters of the Network and statements by Bishop Duncan and other Network leaders, "has determined that the Network is schismatic in nature and that its intended functions – as stated by its leaders – may or will violate the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, USA, and the Diocese of Pittsburgh." The vestry resolved that the parish "expressly rejects membership in or any other affiliation. . . with the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes."

*PEP*thought

God's wake-up call

I think that one of the great gifts of this time of controversy in our church is that it has awakened many of us from our comfortable somnolence in the church.

Perhaps we now have to face ourselves and ask some hard questions like, "Just what does the church mean to me?" and "How are our lives in Christ to be understood in the context of the Episcopal Church?"

Many of us were content enough to see conservative evangelicals take over many of the renewal and mission ministries within the church. We were content in our own little parish and perhaps diocesan worlds. We did not hear the voices of prophets, such as Bishop Spong, who tried to warn us of these days. Of course, this doesn't apply to everyone, but I dare say that it does apply to the majority of Episcopalians, including myself. Perhaps this time in the church is God's great wake up call to us all. And for that, I am grateful.

Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.

— *Betsy Adams*

Concerned Episcopalians
of the St. Lawrence Deanery

Episcopal Women's Caucus reviews issues

The Rev. Catherine (Cat) Munz, rector of St. Brendan's Episcopal Church, North Hills, was the speaker at the winter gathering of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, Pittsburgh Chapter, at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Highland Park.

Rev. Munz, a member of the national church's Committee on the Status of Women, recently met with 13 Caucus members representing dioceses from Maine to California, including lay and clergy from ages 23 to 75 years.

She reported that, because of attention on the Rev. Gene Robinson's election as bishop of New Hampshire, many other issues, including the status of women in ECUSA, were not publicized widely. Some of those issues were:

- ◆ Encouragement of positive liturgical education for young women.
- ◆ The push to double Episcopal Church attendance nationally by 2020 (the "20/20 initiative").
- ◆ Childcare for younger women's

children and transportation for older women, especially to evening meetings.

◆ Providing comprehensive salary and benefit packages for lay church employees.

Rev. Munz expressed concern at the small number of women bishops in the church. She explained that ordained women clergy are often overlooked for rectorships at large parishes and instead are offered posts at smaller parishes.

Three dioceses still refuse to ordain women, she said. To enlighten one of those – the Diocese of Fort Worth – the Rev. Barbara Schlechter was engaged by the Women's Caucus for two months to minister in parishes and other places where most parishioners had never experienced ministry by a woman.

— *Diane Styles*

For more information about the Episcopal Women's Caucus Pittsburgh Chapter, contact Beth Stifel at 412-486-8067 or bstifel@nauticom.net.

Calvary lawsuit aims to guard church assets

Four months after Calvary Episcopal Church filed a lawsuit against Bishop Robert W. Duncan and other diocesan leaders to protect church property from possible appropriation by actions of the bishop and governing bodies of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the case remains pending in Allegheny County Common Pleas Court, heading to a possible trial in the spring, following completion of pre-trial pleadings and discovery.

Calvary filed the suit last October 23 in response to the action of the Special Convention of the Diocese on September 27. At that convention, delegates adopted six resolutions aimed at separating the Diocese from the actions of the Episcopal Church's General Convention, which had approved the election of Bishop Gene Robinson.

"Resolution Six," which was approved by a vote of 205 to 74, asserted that property of a parish in the diocese would remain with the parish, even if the parish should leave the diocese. Calvary's suit seeks to enforce provisions of Diocesan and Episcopal Church, USA constitutional and canon law that any parish property is held in trust for the Diocese and would revert to the Diocese if the parish departed.

Subsequently, on December 9, the Diocesan Board of Trustees decided to withdraw Resolution Six. Calvary, however, insists that the trustees cannot ignore convention actions and a court ruling is needed to settle the legal question of property ownership.

In a report on the lawsuit in the January 11 issue of *Agape*, Calvary's newsletter, Philip R. Roberts, the church's senior warden, wrote that Bishop Duncan "apparently continues to be active in organizing a 'Network' of dioceses

and individual parishes supposedly sympathetic with the views which he espouses.

"We believe this is the latest evolution of an effort to use church property and assets in and of this Diocese that were dedicated to the purposes of the Episcopal Church in ways we believe to be inconsistent with, and contrary to, the interests of the Episcopal Church."

As the case heads toward trial, the court docket is accumulating filings and counter-filings by the parties, all of which cost money. Gordon D. Fisher, Calvary's junior warden and PEP's treasurer, reported at the end of January that Calvary's legal fees had exceeded \$100,000.

"Needless to say, it is critical that the outcome of this lawsuit be based on the merits of the case and not on the considerable ability of the Bishop of Pittsburgh and the Diocese of Pittsburgh to out-spend Calvary," Fisher said.

Fisher noted that Pittsburgh was "an especially logical place" to file the suit, given Bishop Duncan's dual role as bishop of the diocese and moderator of the new Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes.

"The outcome of this lawsuit will have an enormous impact upon Episcopalians across the country," Fisher said. "I would like to encourage everyone to give financial support to Calvary's efforts in bringing this suit. We simply are not in a position to do it alone."

Fisher said that contributions, payable to Calvary Episcopal Church, may be sent to him at Three Gateway Center, 20th floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1004.

PEP membership meeting

PEP members and supporters are invited to the next membership meeting, Monday, March 15, at Church of the Redeemer, Squirrel Hill, starting at 7 p.m., following a brown-bag supper at 6:30.

Retired Bishop Walter C. Righter, a PEP member, will give a presentation on events in the Episcopal Church over the last 50 years that have brought the church to its present state of controversy over matters of sexuality, biblical authority, and church governance.

Bishop Righter was accused of heresy in 1995 as the result of his ordination of a homosexual priest in the Diocese of Newark, N.J. After a trial by an Episcopal Church court, he was acquitted in May, 1996. Bishop Righter now serves as an honorary assistant priest at Calvary Episcopal Church. He and his wife Nancy live in Export.

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