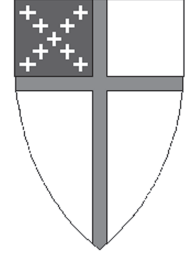


PEPtalk



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Diocese diverts funds from ECUSA to dissident groups

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

(Matthew, 6:21)

As it turns its heart away from the Episcopal Church USA, the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh is diverting its money from the national church, implementing a plan to support dissident organizations like the Anglican Communion Network headed by Bishop Robert W. Duncan.

As reported in the July issue of *Trinity*, the Diocesan magazine, 42 congregations in the diocese have redirected some or all of their assessments for the national church to other ministries of their choosing. Among that group, 22 parishes have authorized the Diocesan Council and Bishop Duncan to allocate their contributions, totaling more than \$26,000.

The redirected funds are a large portion of the total of \$234,024 that

Continued on Page 2

Church awaits Lambeth’s call

During the summer of 2003, Episcopalians anxiously anticipated the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire — it was on June 7 that the Diocese elected Robinson, on August 6 that his election was ratified by the church’s General Convention, and on November 2 that he was finally consecrated.

This summer, Episcopalians anxiously await a report by the Lambeth Commission, the body created by Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams to plot a course through the furor created by Bishop Robinson’s election.

The commission, composed of 17 Anglican prelates and other leaders from around the world, was assigned to report on “the legal and theological implications flowing from the decisions of the Episcopal Church (USA) to elect a priest in a committed same sex relationship as one of its bishops, and of the Diocese of New Westminster (Canada) to authorize a services for use in connection with same sex unions.”

The commission was further charged with proposing “ways in which

provinces of the Anglican Communion may relate to one another in situations where the ecclesiastical authorities of one province feel unable to maintain the fullness of communion with another part of the Anglican Communion.”

Over recent months, Episcopalians and Anglicans on both sides of the issue have bombarded the commission with advice on how it should deal with the conflict.

PEP spoke up early, in a letter of February 10 to the commission.

Bishop Robert W. Duncan and his allies had their say at a mid-June hearing held by the commission at the Kanuga Conference Center in North Carolina.

Archbishop Robin Eames, Anglican Primate of All Ireland and the commission chairman, has said he expects the commission to complete its work by the end of September and to deliver its report to Archbishop Williams prior to mid-October meetings of the other primates and the Anglican Consultative Council. What will follow then is anybody’s guess and/or prayer.

PEP to Lambeth: dissidents threaten church’s ‘integrity’

In a letter to the Lambeth Commission “in witness to the situation of Episcopalians within the Diocese of Pittsburgh,” the Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh advised the commission that dissident groups led by Bishop Robert W. Duncan “threaten the integrity” of the Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

“As you know,” PEP’s letter stated, “leaders of this diocese have been key

in developing the American Anglican Council (ACC) and the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes (NACDP) as proposed replacements for the ECUSA. . . . We believe that the AAC’s and the NACDP’s actions, not those of the ECUSA or the Anglican Church of Canada, threaten the integrity of our provinces and of the entire Communion.”

The letter was signed by PEP Presi-

dent Lionel Deimel, Vice Presidents Joan Gundersen and Christopher Wilkins, and Rachel Nicholson, then chair of the PEP Strategy Committee.

PEP’s February 10 letter addressed specific questions posed by the Lambeth Commission. In reply to a query what legal and theological implications flow from ECUSA’s election of a gay bishop and the decision of the dio-

Continued on Page 3

Diocese diverts funds from ECUSA

Continued from Page 1

parishes in the diocese pledged for their national and international assessments during 2004.

In effect, the redirection plan is the diocese's way of putting its money where its mouth is — shunning any church entity that has supported the decision of last year's General Conven-

tion to ratify the election of a gay priest as bishop of New Hampshire.

According to *Trinity*, Battle Brown, president of the Diocesan Council, said that the funds to be allocated by the council and Bishop Duncan will be divided equally among three groups — “the convocations of the Anglican Communion Network, Anglican provinces in the two-thirds world, and the efforts of Anglican missionary organizations.”

“Each of these ministry areas has a large funding gap due to the changes in the Anglican Communion and individual giving patterns,” Brown said.

The new funding system first took shape in a resolution by the Special Diocesan Convention last September 27. In one of six resolutions challenging the actions of the General Convention, delegates voted:

“As a consequence of the General Convention apostasy and in response to the present pastoral emergency thereby created, this Special Convention also directs that no assessment funds received from parishes for work beyond the diocese any longer be sent to the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (the Episcopal Church in the United States of America), and henceforth be diverted, as Bishop and Council shall see fit, to those Anglican or Episcopal missionary agencies, dioceses, and structures that serve to uphold and propagate the historic Faith and Order, especially to those orthodox missionary works adversely affected by reduced national church resources.”

The resolution was approved by 71 percent of the convention delegates.

The system described by Brown is in line with a resolution slated to come before the Annual Diocesan Convention in November. That resolution, proposed by the council's finance committee, was approved by the full council at its last meeting June 1. The resolution provides the following system for the council to follow in distributing funds that parishes divert to the diocese from the national and international portions of their assessments:

◆ One-third “to the Anglican Communion Network to be used to support the development of the Convocations and the work of the Convocational Deans which will be matched one-to-two by the American Anglican Council. . .”

◆ One-third “to the Anglican Global Mission Partners for the support of mission priorities around the world.”

◆ One-third “to the Replacement Fund of the Anglican Communion Network for support of provincial support structures in the global south imperiled by the current crisis in the Episcopal Church.”

The “convocations” that are to benefit from one-third of the funds are groupings of parishes whose dioceses have not affiliated with the Network. There is one non-geographical convocation: Forward in Faith North America, the ultraconservative group that opposes ordination of women as well as gays.

Anglican Global Mission Partners, beneficiary of the second third of the funds, is the Network's replacement for the Episcopal Partnership for Global Mission, which was created by the Episcopal Church in 2000 to guide global mission efforts that date back to 1835.

The Diocesan Council resolution was adopted with one dissent, by the Rev. Dr. Moni McIntyre, priest-in-charge at Holy Cross Episcopal Church in Homewood.

EWC celebration

The Episcopal Church Women (EWC) Pittsburgh Chapter will hold its fourth annual celebration of Women's Ministries on Friday, September 24, at St. Brendan's Episcopal Church, McAleer and Rochester Roads, Franklin Park.

The Rev. Margaret Rose, director of women's ministries for the Episcopal Church, USA, will speak during an inclusive liturgy celebrating women and their ministries. The program, to begin at 7:30 p.m., opens a continuing recognition of the 30th anniversary of women's ordination.

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Leaders urged: ‘emulate Christ’s love’

Via Media USA (VMUSA), the new nationwide alliance of PEP and 11 other like-minded groups, addressed the Lambeth Commission in a July 16 letter signed on behalf of the group by Christopher Wilkins, PEP vice president and PEP’s delegate on the VMUSA steering committee. The letter stated, in part:

“VMUSA believes that the via media is a powerful part of our Anglican heritage: not a ‘compromise for the sake of peace,’ but, as the collect for the feast of Richard Hooker reads, ‘a comprehension for the sake of truth.’

“Finding the via media requires

that all parties step back from the use of combative language and from precipitate action, especially threats and ultimatums, in order to sit at table with one another. We hear cries of pain and hurt, but the truth is that when they are cloaked with threats, there is almost no chance to resolve the most important question of whether or not people of the same faith can abide with each other through their differences. VMUSA trusts that everyone, in this moment of controversy, believes in and loves Jesus and is seeking to serve him as their hearts, minds, and spirits direct. We would hope that, as the Commission

seeks to find the highest level of possible communion we might share, it might start with such an affirmation.

“The present atmosphere, however, is the worst possible one for making international polity. In the absence of any polity, making one in reaction to specific incidents is counterproductive in the long run. The actions of the U.S. and Canadian Churches may have pushed us to this place, but a reactive single-issue polity decision will not move us to the larger discussion we must have. We would invite the leaders of those who feel aggrieved, especially those who feel aggrieved on behalf of God, to offer leadership by emulating Christ’s sacrificial love.”

PEP to Lambeth

Continued from Page 1

cense of New Westminster (in Canada) to authorize services to bless same-sex unions, PEP’s letter advised:

“Neither decision has any legal implications or threatens core doctrines. Each was taken according to the canons and constitution of the respective province after long, open, and prayerful discussion and debate, and with a majority in favor. Each was generous toward the opposition. The NACDP, by contrast, threatens both governance as well as the core of our faith.”

Duncan to Lambeth: ‘Return ECUSA to Anglicanism’

Bishop Robert W. Duncan, leader of dissident groups threatening to split the Episcopal Church, told the Lambeth Commission that “schism” has already occurred and that “the minority in North America is at one with the majority of the Communion and with the undivided voice of evangelical and catholic Christianity.”

Addressing members of the commission at a June 15 hearing at the Kanuga Conference Center at North Carolina, Bishop Duncan asked “that the minority not be forced to submit to the aggressive and uncompromising innovators who insist, under plans like delegated episcopal pastoral oversight,

that the endpoint is ‘reconciliation’ (i.e., ‘submission’).” Bishop Duncan also called for “some form of discipline of ECUSA sufficient to return it to recognizable Anglicanism.”

Bishop Duncan’s appearance before the commission was reported in a press release from the American Anglican Council and the Anglican Communion Network (formerly named the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes), which Duncan leads with the title of moderator.

Accompanying Bishop Duncan were four other dissident leaders, including Diane Knippers, president of the conservative Institute on Religion

and Democracy, and Hugo Blankingship, legal advisor to the American Anglican Council.

Blankingship was the lawyer in 1995-96 for the group of ten bishops who accused Bishop Walter C. Righter with heresy for ordaining a gay man as a deacon in the Diocese of Newark in 1990. Blankingship and his clients lost that case as the Ecclesiastical Court of nine bishops who would have tried the presentment against Bishop Righter decided — after hearing lengthy arguments from each side — that Bishop Righter’s action violated no Episcopal doctrine or canon, and that the charge of heresy therefore had no merit.

Spiritual Maturity Needed

The following letter originally appeared in the July 25 issue of *The Living Church*.

The gap between the liberal and conservative agendas on the political spectrum in this country is arguably as wide as it has ever been. Yet I hear little talk of splitting the country into two separate countries where each faction could have its one ideological way without opposition from those who disagree.

I find it both interesting and perplexing that so many seem to think that the Episcopal Church is on the verge of collapse because its conservative and liberal factions are continuing to identify theological topics over which to disagree. There is no reconciliation for this “broken church” except Christ, reports one more correspondent with the startling revelation that the opposing sides are never going to agree on the current sexuality issues [*The Living Church*, June 27].

I agree that Christ is the reconciler, but I find it decidedly melodramatic to claim that the current squabble over sexuality is Armageddon — the final confrontation between the forces of good and evil.

Come on, folks! Let’s have at least a semblance of spiritual maturity in our discourse. Since when is agreement the goal?

All theology is speculative. All knowledge of God and God’s wishes for creation is incomplete. All claims to be the only faithful remnant are arrogant. The new ingredient in this modern era of the diversity of Christian theological opinion is the utter arrogance of absolute certainty.

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Anyone who claims that scripture is clear and does not need interpretation is naïve at best. Anyone who claims that he/she doesn’t “interpret” scripture in order to develop her/his theology is being less than candid.

There is an alternative to schism. Its name is humility. There is a richness in Christian theology. It’s called diversity. Let’s begin to honor both humility and diversity.

(The Rev.) Ken Bordner
St. Stephen’s Church
Rochester, N.Y.

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Inside: