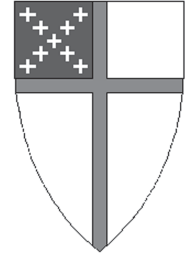


PEPtalk



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Diocese braces for convention showdown

On November 5-6, Pittsburgh Episcopalians will decide their future in the Episcopal Church.

Delegates to the 139th annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh will be asked to vote on crucial resolutions, including a second — and final — reading of a constitutional amendment that would assert the diocese's independence from the authority of the Episcopal Church, USA.

The amendment, first voted at last year's convention, states:

"In cases where the provisions of the Constitution and Canons of the Church in the Diocese of Pittsburgh speak to the contrary, or where resolutions of the Convention of said Diocese have determined the Constitution and Canons of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, or resolutions of its General Convention, to be contrary

to the historic Faith and Order of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, the local determination shall prevail."

Another constitutional amendment due for second and final reading would delete a requirement that clergy, to be eligible to vote in diocesan conventions, must be "actually" resident in the diocese, as well as "canonically" resident. This change would grant voting power to local clergy who might be on assignment outside the diocese, such as missionaries in other parts of the world. It would also allow clergy located in other dioceses to participate and vote in Pittsburgh conventions if they were accepted as canonically resident, which could be achieved if their parishes sought to affiliate with this diocese under the "alternative oversight" plan promoted by the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes, led

by Bishop Robert Duncan.

Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh opposes both changes as contributing to the breakup of the Episcopal Church and fostering division in the Pittsburgh Diocese.

Continued on Page 2

PEP sets meetings to prep for convention

In preparation for the diocesan convention November 5-6, PEP is organizing meetings to prep participants in pre-convention hearings and delegates to the convention itself.

The diocese has scheduled three pre-convention hearings to air proposed resolutions and other issues. Dates and locations are:

Thursday, Oct. 7 — St. Martin's Church, Monroeville.

Tuesday, Oct. 12 — St. Stephen's Church, Sewickley.

Sunday, Oct. 17 — Christ Church, Greensburg.

All hearings begin at 7 p.m.

PEP's prep meeting for the pre-convention hearings will be Thursday, Sept. 30 at Church of the Redeemer, Squirrel Hill, beginning at 7:30 p.m.

The prep meeting for the convention itself will be Wednesday, October 27, at St. Andrew's Church, Highland Park, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Convention deputies and church vestry members are invited to the meeting, along with PEP members and supporters.

'Communion is God's gift'

Griswold urges 'ready patience'

On Monday, October 18, the Lambeth Commission is scheduled to release its report, in which it is to say how the Anglican Communion should deal with divisions aroused by events such as the consecration of a gay bishop in the Diocese of New Hampshire.

Anticipating the Commission's report, Bishop Frank Griswold, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, USA, wrote all Episcopal bishops "to offer you some thoughts on how we might hold ourselves in ready patience to receive the fruit of the Commission's work." In his September 17 letter, Griswold quoted remarks by Barry

Morgan, Archbishop of Wales and a member of the Lambeth Commission. In an address to his church's governing body, Archbishop Morgan said of the Commission report:

"It is not a report giving definitive answers to the issue of homosexuality in the church, as many people believe. The Commission was not charged with that task. Rather, the Commission was asked to find ways of keeping the Communion intact when some provinces had moved ahead on particular issues (and those issues did not necessarily have to be issues to do with human

Continued on Page 3

Showdown near

Continued from Page 1

What other resolutions will be considered at the convention is presently in doubt, as a result of recent decisions by the Diocesan Council.

The Council, charged with reviewing all proposed convention resolutions, took up this task at its meeting Septem-

ber 14. With 10 resolutions before it, the Council approved only two, at the request of Bishop Duncan. One would launch a five-year partnership for mission and ministry between the Diocese and the Uganda Christian University. The second expresses "thanksgiving to Almighty God" for the accomplishments of the Diocese's five-year partnership with the church in Rwanda.

Other resolutions, including a resolution asserting the Diocese's loyalty to the Episcopal Church and another supporting the ordination of women clergy, were referred as a group to the convention with the recommendation that they not be taken up.

Council President Battle Brown, in urging this action, said that none of the resolutions was vital to the life of the diocese and that they might be "divisive" if brought up at the convention.

Before a vote was taken on Brown's recommendation, two resolutions were separated from the group.

A resolution calling for establishment of a "non-geographical province" to comprise churches that reject decisions involving sexuality by the 2003 General Convention was withdrawn at the request of one of its sponsors, the Rev. Jay Geisler, rector of St. Stephen's Church, McKeesport. Geisler is a mem-

ber of the Diocesan Council, along with the resolution's other two sponsors, the Rev. Stan Burdock, of Christ Episcopal Church, Brownsville, and the Rev. Dan Crawford, of St. Thomas-in-the-Fields, Gibsonia.

An anti-racism resolution submitted by Nancy Bolden, chair of the Diocesan Commission on Racism, was excluded from the blanket vote at the urging of Assistant Bishop Henry Scriven, who noted that the anti-racism efforts had been mandated by the 2003 General Convention.

As soon as that change was voted by the Council members, Rev. Crawford moved that the remaining six resolutions be referred to the convention with the recommendation that they not be acted on. The motion was seconded and the question was immediately called by John Morgan, president of the Diocesan Board of Trustees and an ex officio member of the Council.

Council member Mary Roehrich, a member of PEP and St. Andrew's, Highland Park, asked to speak on the motion but was ruled out of order by President Brown, who said that the question having been called, the vote had to be taken. The motion carried with two dissents, by Roehrich and Marilyn German, of St. Paul's, Mt. Lebanon.

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Via Media USA grows in size and vigor

Via Media USA, the nationwide alliance of groups dedicated to preserving the Episcopal Church, USA as the American expression of Anglicanism, has grown to comprise 13 organizations with the addition of Tennessee Via Media and The Widening Circle, in Rhode Island.

"The Via Media movement is beginning to fulfill its promise as a truly national organization," said Christopher Wilkins, PEP vice president and facilitator of the Via Media USA Steering Committee. "We have made amazing progress, given that the alliance was created less than six months ago."

The Via Media alliance was formed in March when leaders from PEP and similar groups met in Atlanta. The groups are in the dioceses of Albany,

South Carolina, Central Florida, Fort Worth, San Joaquin (Calif.), Southwest Florida, Springfield (Ill.), Tennessee, Dallas, Rio Grande (N.M.- SW Texas), Rhode Island and Pittsburgh.

In its short life, Via Media USA has spoken out on many issues confronting the church. Most recently the alliance voiced support for Bishop Jon Bruno's opposition to the attempt of three parishes to separate from the Diocese of Los Angeles and to affiliate with an Anglican diocese in Uganda.

"As a nationwide alliance of Episcopal groups dedicated to preserving the unity and integrity of our church, Via Media USA is particularly grateful for your ministry as a bishop in the face of these events," Via Media facilitator Wilkins wrote Bruno on August 24.

Council finds resolutions ‘divisive’

The following resolutions, including several sponsored by PEP members, were referred by Diocesan Council to the Diocesan Annual Convention, with the recommendation that they not be brought up for action, on grounds they are not vital to the life of the Diocese and could be “divisive.”

Relationship to the Episcopal Church and Anglican Community

Resolves that the Diocese “recognizes that it is a constituent and inseparable part of the Episcopal Church,” thereby “within the Anglican Communion,” and that the diocese “accepts that it is bound by, and will operate according to, the constitution and canons of the Episcopal Church.”

Sponsors are John and Cathie Koepke, St. David’s, Peters Township; Mary Roehrich and Conrad Seamen, St. Andrew’s, Highland Park; and Nancy Lapp, Jennie Leghart and Jon Hunt, Christ Church, North Hills.

Episcopal Relief and Development

Resolves that the diocese affirm United Nations Millennium Development Goals that pledge “to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental stability, and develop a global partnership for development.”

It reaffirms General Convention resolutions challenging all dioceses and parishes to contribute 0.7 percent of their annual budgets to international outreach efforts.

The resolution is submitted by Mary Sweeney, diocesan coordinator for Episcopal Relief and Development.

In Support of Women Priests

Resolves that the diocese “commends women clergy in the diocese; affirms its intent to continue raising up, ordaining, and supporting women as priests in this diocese; and commits to witnessing to the benefits of women’s

ministry to those who have not yet experienced the grace and gifts brought to the Church by women priests.”

Sponsors are Joyce Magee, Christ Church, Indiana; John Rogers, St. Mark’s, Johnstown; the Rev. Les Martin, St. Martin’s, Monroeville; the Rev. Cynthia Bronson Sweigert, Church of the Redeemer; the Rev. Michael Ruk, Trinity Cathedral, and Linda Getts, Church of the Good Shepherd.

Canonical Amendment

Resolves that vestry members must be confirmed Christians who are “members and actual communicants” in the parish. Canon XV, Section ii currently states that vestry members must be confirmed members “wherever practical” and actual communicants “when possible.” Sponsor is the Rev. Vicente Santiago, St. James, Penn Hills.

Prayer and Work for Revival in North America

Resolves that the Convention “declares afresh that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and that a revival of true repentance and faith in Christ is needed in North America.”

Sponsors include more than two dozen clergy and lay members in the diocese.

Anti-Violence and LGBT Individuals

Resolves that the diocese “condemns any violence, hatred, or persecution shown towards LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) persons,” calls on Christians and Anglican primates in the Global South to oppose such persecution in their countries, and calls on all parts of the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion “to minister pastorally and sensitively to all persons irrespective of sexual orientation.”

The resolution notes that in many countries of the Global South, LGBT activity is punishable by prison terms of 10 years or more, life in prison (Bangladesh, South India, Uganda), or death (Pakistan, Sudan).

Sponsors include PEP members Jane Banning, Susan Boulden, Kathleen Connor, Lionel Deimel, the Rev. Lynn Chester Edwards, Joan Gundersen, Wanda Guthrie, Nancy Lapp, the Rt. Rev. Walter Righter, Linda Shadgett, Jennifer Sinclair, Christopher Wilkins, the Rev. Cynthia Bronson Sweigert, and William P. Smith.

Griswold urges ‘ready patience’

Continued from Page 1

sexuality, although those were the presenting issues at present), which other provinces regarded as controversial and problematic. In short, how do we make decisions as a Communion? How do we govern our common life? What means do we have for either consultation or restraint?”

Then, Griswold noted, the Archbishop asked why the Anglican Communion matters, and he answered:

“It matters because Communion is God’s gift to us, and what God has given we should not, dare not spurn. God has given us in this Communion people who are very different from ourselves. They are however His gift to us, as we, hopefully, may be his gift to them. Gifts are means of grace and as such are to be cherished and nourished, not rejected and cast aside.”

Griswold continued: “Re-grounding ourselves in the knowledge that communion is a gift from God is another way of living in ready patience during these days. . . .

“At the end of the day, whatever word the Lambeth Commission has to give to the Communion, I hope we will see in it an invitation to become more than what we have been. As the churches of the Anglican Communion live and proclaim the gospel — in the midst of our different perspectives — I believe we are all called to see how the circumstances of our lives invite us to become an authentic sign to a broken and divided world of Christ’s power to reconcile in the force of his deathless love.”

Bus aims to roll over poverty

The "Rolling to Overcome Poverty Bus Tour," led by the Rev. Jim Wallis, will roll through Allegheny County on October 15-16, with stops at the University of Pittsburgh and churches in East Liberty and McKeesport.

"How did the faith of Jesus come to be known as pro-rich, pro-war, and pro-American?" questions Wallis, the editor of *Sojourners* magazine. "How do we get back to a historic, biblical, and genuinely evangelical faith rescued from its contemporary distortions?"

The tour begins October 6 in Minneapolis/St. Paul and will stop in eight other cities before reaching Pittsburgh and its final stop in Philadelphia. Pittsburgh events are:

Members enjoy PEP picnic

PEP held its first-ever picnic on Saturday, August 21, as several dozen members enjoyed pot-luck treats and good conversation during a bright and sunny afternoon at Townsend Park in Murrysville.

A number of members were accompanied by small children, who frolicked gaily as their parents chatted. As mementos, picnickers received gifts including smiley-faced mugs, candy, and towelettes to "wipe away sin." The picnic concluded with an outdoor Eucharist celebrated by PEP's chaplain, the Rev. Lynn Chester Edwards.

The picnic was planned by Wanda Guthrie, PEP membership chair, who unfortunately missed the event, as she was called away to Chicago due to an illness in the family. In Wanda's absence, her daughter, Leona Dunnett, made sure that everything ran smoothly.

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<http://progressiveepiscopalians.org>.

Friday, Oct. 15:

3-4 p.m. — Rally at the University of Pittsburgh Student Union. Wallis will present the "Isaiah Platform," a political mandate to overcome poverty. Contact Suzannah Paul, 412-682-1118 or suzannah@bellefield.org.

7:30 p.m. — East Liberty Presbyterian Church: gathering with the Rev. James Forbes of Riverside Church, New York City; Wallis and the bus entourage. Contact Wanda Guthrie, 724-327-2767 or jwguth45@adelphia.net.

Saturday, Oct. 16:

8 a.m. — St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, McKeesport: prayer breakfast for advocates, families and clergy. Contact Gladys Hunt-Mason, 412-672-8490 or ghmason@webtv.net.

9:30 a.m. — St. Stephen's Church: community-wide service and message from Wallis, plus an advocacy fair.

For more information, check the bus tour flier at www.episcopalunity.org/documents/bustour.pdf

Interested in learning more about PEP?

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Inside:

Diocese braces
for convention showdown

Diocesan Council snubs
'divisive resolutions'