

PEP Argument Briefing Paper

Title: Some Changes Innocuous
Applicable to: Changes to Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh as recommended by the Committee on Constitution and Canons (Article X and Canons III, VI, VII, XIV, XX, XXI, XXIII, XXV, XXIX)
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Background

Some of the changes being put before the 2007 annual convention by the Committee on Constitution and Canons are simple corrections or relatively innocuous changes. The changes we consider to be in these categories are discussed below. Briefing Paper AC07-C01-01 shows the exact changes proposed, which we describe only briefly below. The numbering shown is that of the Committee's report. It is the view of Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh that none of the changes discussed in this paper are harmful to the diocese, The Episcopal Church, or the cause of the Gospel.

This is not to say that all of these changes are well thought-out. Deficiencies in wording are noted and, in parentheses, we suggest perfecting changes that should be proposed, if possible. Generally, however, it is not worth spending the limited time of the convention arguing about such wording changes when more significant and damaging proposals are on the table.

Proposed Changes of Little Consequence

1. Constitution Article X, Section 1

The change makes explicit that the "five other persons" on the Board of Trustees must be laypersons. The addition of "lay" likely reflects the original intent. The Board of Trustees is largely concerned with financial matters and requires the specialized expertise of lay professionals. ("Lay" should be substituted for "lay.")

2. Canon III, Section 2a

Two things are going on here, only one of which is being acknowledged. The unacknowledged objective is the removal of the reference to the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church (in "upon the forms prepared by the Executive Council of the Church"). In fact, the reference to Executive Council seems too specific anyway, and "standard forms," referring to whatever form or forms are in current use seems adequate. The deadline for submitting parochial reports is being pushed back 44 days, a change likely to be welcomed by parishes, though the rigorous enforcement of the deadline, as suggested in the Committee report, will not be. The change does not address enforcement explicitly, however, so this does not seem worth arguing about. (It would be wise to substitute "standard form or forms" for "standard forms," as the exact nature of the parochial report could change over time, irrespective of the

diocese's relationship to The Episcopal Church.)

3. **Canon III, Section 2b**

The change proposed here, from "March 1st" to "April 15th," simply makes Section 2b consistent with Section 2a.

7. **Canon VI**

This change seems to allow the bishop to enlarge his ordained staff without limit, but expansion can only be done "with the consent of the Standing Committee, Diocesan Council and the Convention." (There are a number of changes being made here, not all of which deserve comment.) Because adding staff must be approved by Convention and because Convention can amend the canons by a simple majority vote anyway, the change does not seem to be of great importance.

9. **Canon XII, Section 2**

The proposed change substitutes "missionary objectives" for "work programs" as one of the bases for the diocesan budget. This hardly seems a wise change, but neither does it appear to be a harmful one. The substitution reflects the rhetoric of the present bishop and destroys the parallelism inherent in "work programs" and "evaluation of program accomplishment" in the present canon. Clearly, the intent of the canon is to suggest that the budget should be informed by rational and realistic planning. Why not just say that? Some perfectly reasonable objectives might not be "missionary" ones. (Replacing a computer, for example, is a reasonable thing for the diocese to do, yet it seems more administrative than missionary in character.) What is "program accomplishment" or, for that matter, "determined priorities"? This is really a badly worded canon made worse by needless tinkering. (It might be better to say the budget should be based on "objectives and priorities, informed by past experience." Assuming that such a change is unlikely to be adopted, "accomplishment" should be made plural and followed by a comma.)

10. **Canon XIV, Section 4**

The proposed change substitutes "the Cathedral Chapter and its corporation" for the current, rather cryptic, "said corporation. The change, presumably, clarifies the original intention.

14. **Canon XX, Section 4**

The proposed change, substituting "a Transitional Parish" for "an Aided Parish," uses current nomenclature.

15. **Canon XXI, Section 4**

The proposed change declares that the compensation guide determines the minimum salary for full-time resident clergy. Currently, that minimum is the minimum "established for Clergy of Aided Parishes." The existing canon is inexplicit and uses the now-replaced "Aided Parish" nomenclature. Although this change could be used to increase clergy compensation, there are, at least in principle, democratic checks against abuse in the suggested wording.

16. Canon XXIII, Section 1c

Again, “Transitional” is being substituted for “Aided.”

17. Canon XXIII, Section 1d

Yet again, “Transitional” is being substituted for “Aided.”

18. Canon XXV, Section 1

The proposal eliminates “be,” whose inclusion appears to be a typographical error.

23. Canon XXIX, Sections 3, 4, and 5

Proposed change #22 would eliminate Section 2 of Canon XXIX. This change only renumbers the following canons. It is, therefore, necessary if #22 is adopted.