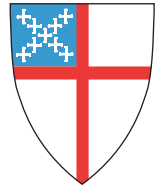


PEPtalk



June 2007 — Published by Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh — Vol. 4 No. 1

Church update

Church reaches turning point

by Lionel Deimel

It has been nearly four years since the decision to consecrate Gene Robinson as the first openly gay bishop of The Episcopal Church (TEC) set in motion a campaign to rein in the “liberal” church and restore it to “orthodoxy.” Right-wing elements within TEC that had pursued this agenda for years with little success discovered that allies within the Anglican Communion could be enlisted to pressure TEC to change. While Frank Griswold was Presiding Bishop, this plan worked well, and it seemed that TEC eventually would be overwhelmed by the alliance of Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics both within and outside TEC. Under new

Presiding Bishop, Katharine Jefferts Schori, however, the dynamic is changing.

Even before the 2006 General Convention was over, the Diocese of Fort Worth—one of three dioceses that still does not ordain women—was repudiating the election of the first female PB and asking Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams for “alternative primatial oversight.” This was an odd request, given that the PB ordinarily exercises little “oversight.” (See “The development of the role of Presiding Bishop,” page 3.) A handful of dioceses, including Pittsburgh, eventually made such requests.

(Continued on page 6)

Diocese asks: What next?

Leaders of the Diocese of Pittsburgh experienced an extraordinary retreat May 20–21 at Antiochian Village. Equally extraordinary was the frank news release, “Sober Leadership Retreat Considers Future of Diocese” posted the next day on the diocesan Web site (see “Web references” on page 8).

The retreat left the future direction of the diocese uncertain. Options will next be discussed at district meetings to be held in June and to which all parishioners are invited. The diocese will begin implementing whatever plan is chosen at the November annual convention.

At the retreat, Bishop Robert Duncan expressed his disappointment at the failure to achieve alternative oversight for the diocese, and he described his shock at the outcome of the March House of Bishops meeting, which advised the Executive Council to reject the “pastoral scheme” urged on the church by the primates in February. (See “Church reaches turning point” at left.)

Participants discussed four alternatives that the diocese might pursue. These included: (1) Continuing on the present course, “remaining on the periphery of The Episcopal Church,” (2) “submitting” to the will of The Episcopal Church, (3) attempting to leave The Episcopal Church as a diocese, and (4) “Dissolving” the diocese—negotiating the departure of parishes intent upon leaving the church, after which the diocesan leadership would resign.

Bishop Duncan indicated that he could not remain bishop under either of the first two options, and he would leave eventually under the fourth. Option three would remove

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Late-breaking news

Executive Council reasserts GC authority

The Executive Council met in New Jersey and New York City on June 11–14. The church’s governing body between General Conventions responded to challenges from within and outside the church.

The Council passed a resolution admonishing dioceses that any changes to their constitutions purporting to weaken the required accession to the constitution of the General Convention are null and void. The resolution, NAC023, named the dioceses of Pittsburgh, Fort Worth, Quincy, and San Joaquin.

In a statement, the Council asserted that only the General Convention “can give binding interpretations of General Convention resolutions” or “make an ‘unequivocal common commitment’ to denying future decisions by dioceses or Gen-

eral Convention.” This message to the primates is that the House of Bishops cannot make the promises demanded of it regarding gay bishops and same-sex blessings. The Council also rejected the “Pastoral Scheme” advocated by the primates, agreeing with the House of Bishops that it violates church polity.

The Council reiterated the desire of The Episcopal Church to remain in communion and concluded a statement on its relationship to the Anglican Communion as follows: “It is our most earnest hope that we continue to walk with our Anglican brothers and sisters in the journey we share together in God’s mission. We believe The Episcopal Church can only offer who we are, with openness, honesty, integrity, and faithfulness, and our commitment never to choose to walk apart.”

(Continued from page 1)

What next?

the diocese—and, presumably our current bishop—from The Episcopal Church.

Little support was expressed for options one or two; participants favored option three by a small margin over option four.

Each of the options was seen as having pluses and minuses, and none resembled the victory sought by the bishop. “We thought we would prevail,” Bishop Duncan admitted ruefully. Litigation and loss of property seemed likely prospects. Moreover, the possible destination of anyone leaving The Episcopal Church was unclear, although an attempt will be made in the fall to unite the Common Cause Partners—newer groups such as the

Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes, as well as older “continuing Anglican” groups such as the Reformed Episcopal Church—into something more closely resembling an Anglican province.

PEP perspective

Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh, The Episcopal Church, and the church’s constitution all agree that, although individuals can leave the church, neither parishes nor dioceses can. This makes the third and fourth options presented at the retreat problematic, although the church has not objected to departing parishes’ negotiating to buy their property at something like fair market value.

PEP intends to argue vigorously that the “big tent” of The Episcopal Church can comfortably accommodate most of the “orthodox,” as well as moderates, liberals, and less-easily-labeled Christians.

The session was advertised widely throughout the diocese. About 50 people were in attendance, representing not only St. Andrew’s, but also several other parishes. After the formal session in the church, a reception was held in the parish hall, which provided opportunities for continued discussion. The tone of the meeting was friendly and non-confrontational.

The second session, which was publicized only within St. Andrew’s, used an open mike format. About 25 people attended, seated in a circle in the parish hall. Deacon Jean Chess served as moderator. Participants were invited to offer their personal views within a three-minute time limit, intended to give everyone an opportunity to speak. Participants’ statements largely came from an inclusive point of view. Most speakers felt that homosexuality should not be an issue for either membership in the church or for ordination, and that the church should practice openness, rather than set restrictions based on sexual orientation. Participants differed in the extent to which they felt their own parish should take a formal stand on the issues. The Vestry of St. Andrew’s is on record as declaring that the parish intends to remain loyal to The Episcopal Church and will not participate in the Network.

A highlight of the second session was the reading of an impassioned letter from a long-term and respected gay parishioner who was unable to attend. His main point was that he has always been graciously accepted as a key member of the parish, but he is greatly concerned about the loss of freedom should some proposed restrictive actions be taken by the diocese or by others.

St. Andrew’s tries in every way to be an inclusive parish, so there was dismay among parishioners that some of their more conservative members were said to have chosen not to attend because they felt that they would not be heard.

Nonetheless, the two programs held in Highland Park can be said to have modeled respectful discussion of contentious issues that would be welcome elsewhere.

PEPtalk

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Issues explored at St. Andrew’s

by Al Mann

On two Sunday afternoons in March, the Adult Programs Committee of St. Andrew’s, Highland Park, sponsored a forum on issues facing the diocese and the wider church.

The first session featured 20-minute presentations by the Rev. Jim Simons, Rector of St. Michael’s of the Valley, Ligonier, and the Very Rev. George Werner, retired Dean of Trinity Cathedral and former President of the House of Deputies. The priests spoke from the perspective of the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes and of The Episcopal Church, respectively. The Rev. Bruce Robison, Rector of St. Andrew’s, served as moderator.

The session was billed as a friendly dialogue on the future of the church and the Anglican Communion, not as a debate on homosexuality. Opening statements were followed by a question-and-answer period featuring questions submitted in writing from the audience.

The development of the role of Presiding Bishop

by Joan Gundersen

Katharine Jefferts Schori, our new Presiding Bishop, made history simply by being elected. That The Episcopal Church has a Presiding Bishop, rather than an Archbishop, is one of the distinguishing features of our church. But what is a “Presiding Bishop”? The answer has varied over time.

When Episcopalians first met in General Convention in 1785, there were no bishops present. The convention had a single house of clergy and laity. Samuel Seabury, who had just returned from Scotland after being consecrated bishop, boycotted the convention, in part because laity were playing such prominent roles in it. Priests served as the presiding officers in 1785 and 1786 at General Convention. In July 1789, the General Convention acknowledged both Samuel Provoost and William White as duly consecrated bishops, and it elected White the presiding officer of General Convention. He is considered the first Presiding Bishop, but what he presided over was a one-house General Convention. The 1789 convention approved a constitution and took a break, agreeing to reconvene in September. This was to allow negotiation with the Connecticut leaders, including Bishop Seabury, so that they would join in forming the new church, rather than going their separate way.

Negotiations were successful, and Bishop Seabury and Connecticut were seated at the September session of the convention after certain changes were made to the constitution. The constitution provided for a House of Bishops if the church had three or more bishops. If there were fewer than three bishops, those bishops would be seated as clergy in their state deputations and vote as part of the clergy order. A bishop would preside whenever the convention met as a single house. (Hence,

White’s role as presiding officer of convention.)

At the September 1789 session, Seabury and White withdrew to form a House of Bishops; Provoost was supposed to show up but did not. Bishop White yielded the honor of presiding to Bishop Seabury, who was the senior bishop present. Seabury also presided over the meeting of bishops at the 1792 convention, when White, Provoost, and Seabury were joined by Virginia’s new bishop, James Madison. Together, the four consecrated a bishop for Maryland during the convention. Thus, Seabury became the second Presiding Bishop.

At the 1792 House of Bishops meeting, the bishops decided to rotate the duty of presiding, beginning with the bishop from the northernmost jurisdiction and moving south. Thus, Bishop Provoost assumed the chair on the second day of the 1792 convention and turned over duties to White at the 1795 convention. The 1798 General Convention was cancelled because of a yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia, and a special convention was convened the next year. When Bishop Claggett did not attend, White was asked to continue presiding, and, when a question arose in 1801 about the rotation rule, Bishop White was chosen to preside again.

In 1804, the House of Bishops changed its rules so that the senior bishop present would preside, allowing White to serve as Presiding Bishop until his death in 1836. Seniority continued to determine who would preside at sessions of the House of Bishops throughout the nineteenth century. Leadership styles differed among Presiding Bishops, whose primary role remained that of diocesan bishop.

At the 1903 General Convention, it was proposed that the Presiding Bishop be elected, a change not completed until 1922. Even under this scheme, however, the most senior bishop assumed the leadership role should an elected Presiding Bishop fail to complete his term. The first elected Presiding Bishop was John Gardner Murray, who served a three-year term, 1926–1929. In

1937, Bishop Henry St. George Tucker of Virginia was elected Presiding Bishop for a lengthened eight-year term. In 1943, the General Convention passed a canon requiring the Presiding Bishop to resign his see and to serve full-time, thereby allowing the assumption of more administrative duties. Tucker complied with the new requirements. Henry Knox Sherrill, his successor, was the first Presiding Bishop elected under these terms and the first elected for 12 years.

The canons were altered in 1976 to require that a new Presiding Bishop take office within 90 days of election, rather than at the start of the new calendar year, a provision twice changed since then.

The 1976 convention also authorized the Presiding Bishop to appoint a Chancellor. This proved prudent, as prayer book revision and the approval of women’s ordination led to the secession of some traditionalists and a period of increased litigation.

Two years later, Archbishop of Canterbury Donald Coggan called the first primates’ meeting. The American church was the only province not headed by an archbishop or primate. In 1982, therefore, a proposal was brought to convention to make the Presiding Bishop an archbishop. Instead, the convention changed the description of the Presiding Bishop from “Chief Pastor” to “Chief Pastor and Primate.”

With women’s ordination a reality and the possibility that a woman might be elected bishop, the 1988 General Convention began the process (completed in 1991) of rewriting the canons concerning the Presiding Bishop to make them gender-neutral.

The General Convention has continued to tinker with the term of office and the duties of the Presiding Bishop. The Presiding Bishop has been assigned administrative tasks requiring executive oversight. While General Convention retains ultimate authority to change the duties of the Presiding Bishop, and while the President of the House of Deputies also has an executive role, the Presiding Bishop is the de facto CEO of the church.

Budget Adjusted

At its June 5 meeting, Diocesan Council approved major adjustments in the 2006–2007 budget. This was necessitated by high litigation costs and lower than expected assessment income. Because of renewed activity in the Calvary lawsuit and other potential legal actions, the diocese is now estimating legal expenses of \$500,000 for the year. The new counsel hired in December is much more expensive than the old, and the court has allowed Calvary to place its assessment in escrow, reducing realized assessment income by about \$130,000.

The revised budget raises income by \$476,429 by transferring \$220,000 from diocesan reserves, and \$350,000 from funds managed by the Board of Trustees. Another \$60,000 realized from a special fundraising appeal augments the income shown in the budget approved by convention in November.

Expenses for the rest of 2007 are reduced by eliminating the position for Bishop Scriven's secretary. Budget projections for 2008 show big cuts in the categories supporting ministry and outreach. The lines for New Initiatives, new churches, urban outposts, Happening, the Commission on Racism, Absalom Jones Day, and hospital chaplaincies were reduced, saving more than \$35,000. In 2008, the publication budget for *Trinity* will be cut, and rent costs for offices are shown as reduced by \$21,000 from 2007.

The Council did not touch the raises that it awarded from the \$59,000 in unallocated salary lines. Bishop Duncan has received a \$25,000 raise (which also increases the pension line); Bishop Scriven, Canon Hays, and the office administrator all received a base raise of about \$5,500; and some of the other staff (communications, archivist, and receptionist) received small raises totaling \$4,520. The draft budget for 2008 shows neither an unallocated pool nor raises for anyone in the diocese except for the diocesan administrator.

“Somewhere near you ...”

Thus begins the commemorative essay, reproduced below, that The Episcopal Church placed on the op-ed page of *The New York Times* on May 12, 2007. The church was celebrating the 400th anniversary of the landing of English settlers—and An-

glicans—at Jamestown, Virginia, on May 14, 1607. The settlement was, of course, the first permanent English settlement in America.

The publication of this essay was widely celebrated within our church. It reminds us of who we are as Episcopalians and why we value The Episcopal Church.

We reproduce the essay here by permission.



The Episcopal Church Marking a Milestone, Moving Forward

Somewhere near you, there's a blue-and-white sign bearing the familiar slogan: *The Episcopal Church Welcomes You*. It represents some 7,400 congregations that trace their beginnings in North America to a small but hopeful group of English Christians who arrived May 14, 1607 at a place they called Jamestown — the first permanent English settlement in the New World.

You may know us as Washington's monumental National Cathedral, site of historic services and ceremonies, or the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, still unfinished, but already the largest cathedral in the world.

But the Episcopal Church is also Boston's Old North Church, founded in 1723 and made famous by serving as the beacon for Paul Revere's revolution-spurring "midnight ride." And Philadelphia's Christ Church, home parish of 15 signers of the Declaration of Independence, host to the first General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1785.

It's Trinity Parish on Wall Street in New York, formed in 1698, and St. Paul's Chapel just down the street, frequented by George Washington and the spiritual healing center of Ground Zero since September 11, 2001.

It's also Epiphany Church in Los Angeles, where Cesar Chavez rallied the United Farmworkers. And Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Cumberland, Maryland, whose basement was a major stop on the Underground Railroad to freedom for enslaved African-Americans. And St. John's Church in Greenwich Village, a meeting place for gay and lesbian action following the 1969 Stonewall uprising.

It's a parish in Iowa. A campus ministry in Georgia. A mission in *Dinéétah* — the Navajo Reservation. A cathedral in Utah. Even a house church in Vermont.

Wherever you find us, you'll find the *Book of Common Prayer* and a Christian faith that honors and engages the Bible, the tradition of the Church, and God-given human reason.

Joined in prayer, you'll find people with many points of view — Christians who are progressive, moderate, and conservative — yet who value the diversity of their faith community.

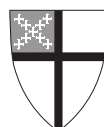
That's a heritage drawn from our deep roots in nearly 2,000 years of English Christianity, and shared by a worldwide Anglican Communion that unites nearly 80 million people in 164 countries through prayer and ministries committed to caring for "the least of these," as Jesus commanded, by reducing poverty, disease, and oppression.

Episcopalians struggle with the same issues that trouble all people of faith: how to interpret an ancient faith for today... how to maintain the integrity of tradition while reaching out to a hurting world... how to disagree and yet love and respect one another.

Occasionally those struggles make the news. People find they can no longer walk with us on their journey, and may be called to a different spiritual home. Some later make their way back, and find they are welcomed with open arms.

Despite the headlines, the Episcopal Church keeps moving forward in mission — in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, as well as congregations in Belgium, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Guam, Haiti, Honduras, Italy, Micronesia, Puerto Rico, Switzerland, Taiwan, Venezuela, and the Virgin Islands. We're committed to a transformed world, as Jesus taught: a world of justice, peace, wholeness, and holy living.

We've grown a lot in 400 years, since that 1607 worship service from the *Book of Common Prayer* was held in Jamestown — inside and out. Come see for yourself. Come and visit... come and explore... *come and grow*.



The Episcopal Church welcomes you

www.episcopalchurch.org
www.comeandgrow.org

Legal update

Calvary suit status

by Ken Stiles

After Bishop Robert Duncan led a protest of like-minded bishops at the 2003 General Convention over the consecration of Gene Robinson, he called a special convention of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Resolution 6 passed at that convention asserted that (1) all property held by a parish or by the diocese in trust for a parish belongs solely to the parish and (2) The Episcopal Church (TEC) has no claim on such property or on diocesan property. The resolution was intended to negate TEC's "Dennis Canon," which provides that all property owned by a parish or a diocese is held in trust for TEC. That canon dates from 1979, but it merely codified what had always been understood. Resolution 6 was intended to allow a parish to deed its property to a new religious entity and to leave TEC, taking its building and other assets with it.

In response to this development, Calvary Church filed suit against Bishop Duncan and other officials of the diocese to protect Calvary's and the church's interest in diocesan property. For whatever reason, TEC declined to join or assist Calvary.

The Anglican Communion Network was formed shortly thereafter, and a confidential letter from St. Stephen's, Sewickley, Rector Geoff Chapman made it clear that plans were being made to separate Network dioceses and parishes from TEC. The judge in the Calvary lawsuit called this letter the "smoking gun" that discredited denials made by the defendants.

In its December 29, 2003, answer to Calvary's complaint, the diocese claimed that Resolution 6 had been withdrawn on December 9 and was void from the beginning. However, at the November annual convention, the diocese had begun amending its constitution so as to make the resolution unnecessary. (See "Executive Council reasserts GC authority" on page 1.)

After much legal wrangling and the publication of many documents showing that Bishop Duncan was

trying to separate himself and the Network from TEC, the parties negotiated a settlement in October 2005. It provided that diocesan property held in trust would stay with the diocese, even if an affected parish tried to leave TEC, and it set out a clear and public process for the treatment of parish property in such an eventuality.

After the 2006 General Convention, the Network appeared to be positioning itself to be recognized as a separate Anglican province (i.e., church). At the November convention, Pittsburgh ratified the earlier resolution of the Standing Committee declaring that it was no longer a member of Province III of TEC and asking that a new province be created for it and other like-minded dioceses within TEC. The diocese had made appeals to the "Global South" primates to "protect" it from TEC, and it appeared that the primates might prove sympathetic at their upcoming February meeting. Calvary became concerned that precipitous action was imminent, and it returned to court, requesting that the judge take action to uphold the terms of the settlement. Calvary also asked for and received from the judge expedited discovery to obtain the internal diocesan documents that could help prove its case.

On January 29, just before the discovery deadline, the diocese publicly released its request to the Global South primates secretly sent three months earlier. The document asked that a separate ecclesiastical structure be created to give the Network cover while it continued its legal and property battles with TEC. This would include its own House of Bishops, presided over by a sympathetic primate. This parallel House of Bishops would have the power to consecrate bishops, legislate new canons, and handle all disciplinary matters. Among the documents turned over as a part of the discovery were apparent pledges from the participants at a November 16 meeting with the Global South Steering Committee indicating that Bishop Duncan had been chosen as the leader of the petitioners, who would submit to his leadership without reservation.

On February 7, the defendants replaced their team of Pittsburgh lawyers with a new group from Philadelphia that had been representing David Moyer in his lawsuit against the Bishop of Pennsylvania. Moyer, who had been inhibited by Bishop Bennison, is now a priest resident in the Upper Shire of Malawi, Province of Central Africa; is President of Forward in Faith/North America; and is a bishop in the Anglican Church in America. This case has been distinguished by its endless legal motions and great cost to all parties.

Bishop Duncan's new lawyers immediately asked the court to dismiss Calvary's action, primarily because TEC's property rights were the main issue, yet TEC was not a party to the lawsuit. Both sides were ordered to submit briefs on the issues, and oral arguments were made on April 25. The judge denied defendants' motion without comment on May 9. Their new lawyers returned to court May 23 to ask permission to amend the answer to Calvary's enforcement petition filed by their predecessors to include all the arguments they had made in their unsuccessful motion to dismiss. Calvary's lawyer has consented to this, so the matter will continue to move forward slowly.

Mark Your Calendar

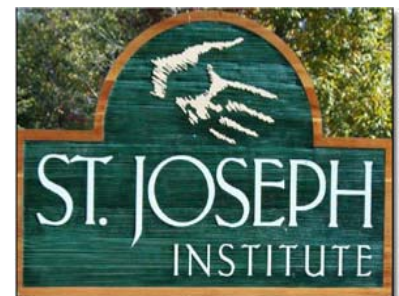
Province III Retreat

"Be Still and Know"

September 14-16, 2007

St. Joseph Institute
Port Matilda, Pennsylvania
(near State College)

For more information, contact Barbara Seras at
p3coordinator@earthlink.net



Turning point

Three significant meetings took place in the month of September. A group of so-called “Windsor Bishops” met at Camp Allen, and 21 of them (including many Network bishops) signed a letter to their colleagues expressing support for the Windsor Report and dissatisfaction with the General Convention’s response to it.

At the urging of Archbishop Williams, Bishops Griswold and Jefferts Schori met with bishops asking for alternative oversight, including Bishop Robert Duncan. The meeting was inconclusive. At a follow-up November meeting, the new PB offered a compromise plan, but the gathering was boycotted by the petitioners, and the plan was swiftly rejected.

Although all the Anglican primates would not gather until February, the so-called “Global South” primates met in Kigali, Rwanda, in September. In their communiqué, they expressed admiration for Bishop Duncan’s Network and disappointment with TEC. They warned that “some of us” could not recognize the new PB as a primate and declared that “the time has now come to take initial steps towards the formation of what will be recognized as a separate [i.e., from TEC] ecclesiastical structure of the Anglican Communion in the USA.” The primates also received a report called “The Road to Lambeth” that demanded the removal of Bishop Robinson and hinted at a boycott of the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

Meanwhile, the idea of an Anglican covenant that would somehow bring peace to the Communion moved forward. A March 2006 Communion report acknowledged that enthusiasm for a covenant was not universal, but it recommended that a Covenant Design Group (CDG) be established to write a draft. Just after the General Convention, Rowan Williams suggested that accepting a covenant might be necessary to be a full member of the Communion, with churches not accepting the covenant being consigned to a non-decision-making

“associate” status. The archbishop created a CDG group under the leadership of West Indies primate Drexel Gomez, who had been critical of TEC and favored limits on provincial autonomy. A subset of the CDG’s members met for four days in January and produced a draft for consideration by the primates.

Despite the attendance of the new PB, the February primates’ meeting was not boycotted by the Global South. Although a pre-meeting session was created that gave Bishop Duncan an opportunity to address the primates directly, the meeting seemed surprisingly free of hostility toward TEC, and it appeared, for a time, that the General Convention resolutions of the previous summer would be judged to have been an adequate response to the Windsor Report and to the primates. At the last minute, however, Archbishop of Nigeria Peter Akinola pressured the group to take a tougher stance and to provide more of what his American allies had demanded.

On February, 19, the primates issued a communiqué treating a number of topics and asking the provinces to provide comments on the draft covenant from the end of 2007. It also contained two provisions that were especially problematic for TEC. One looked very much like “alternative primate oversight,” recommending creation of a “Pastoral Council,” to deal with disaffected Episcopal dioceses. The other provision requested that the House of Bishops provide, by September 30, assurances that there would be no same-sex blessings or consecration of partnered gay bishops in TEC.

When the House of Bishops met in March, it discussed the communiqué and received a report from a committee headed by Lexington’s Bishop Stacy Sauls that documented the traditionalist plans to leave TEC with church property. The bishops passed three resolutions, rejecting the Pastoral Council idea and leaving little doubt that it would not comply with the primates’ requests at its September meeting. The lopsided votes reputedly left Bishop Duncan in a state of shock.

It cannot be a coincidence that our diocese is rethinking its future. (See “Diocese asks: What next?” on page 1.) The House of Bishops meeting and the recently concluded Executive Council meeting (see “Executive Council reasserts GC authority” on page 1) have made it clear that a turning point in the ongoing Anglican conflict has been reached, and TEC is increasingly willing to stand up for what it says it believes. The church’s course will be clearer after bishops meet in September.

PEP facilitates covenant response

In April, the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church issued “A Short Study Guide to Aid the Episcopal Church in Responding to the Draft Anglican Covenant as Prepared by the Covenant Design Group.” This document asked Episcopalians to provide answers to 14 specific questions about the draft Anglican covenant by June 4.

To encourage responses, PEP developed a “worksheet,” a Microsoft Word form for entry of demographic information (name, parish, etc.) and answers to the 14 questions. This non-partisan resource was offered to the church on the PEP Web site.

PEP also assembled a PDF file of relevant background materials useful for studying the covenant. Called “Evaluating the Draft Covenant,” the goal of this collection was primarily to make it easy to access existing documents. Joan Gundersen helpfully annotated the report containing the proposed covenant, however, which greatly enhanced the value of the collection. “Evaluating the Draft Covenant” was also made available to the church on the PEP Web site.

PEP hosted a panel discussion of the proposed covenant at its May meeting and, at the request of members, presented its own responses to the Study Guide in June.

Sadly, PEP found the draft Anglican covenant wanting, and it was not convinced that it was either necessary or helpful. PEP’s official responses to the Study Guide can be found on the PEP Web site.

A time for talking

We welcome the current discussion about the future of the diocese. (See "Diocese asks: What next?" on page 1.) For too long, the Diocese of Pittsburgh has followed its leaders and avoided discussion of the course that they have set.

With few exceptions, people do not go to church to fight. Indeed, laypeople often view controversies outside their parishes as distractions. Some clergy have deliberately kept information from parishioners, however, and have discouraged discussion of wider church issues, whether to stifle dissent, to avoid controversy, to protect their parishes from perceived threats, or to keep people's focus on mission.

The time for ignorance, blissful or otherwise, is now past. Indifference to the future of our diocese could lead to loss of friendships, loss of our buildings, loss of our common assets, and loss of our place in The Episcopal Church.

But hasn't The Episcopal Church abandoned the Christian faith, substituting a gospel of inclusiveness for one of biblical faithfulness? Most Episcopalians don't think so. To be sure, some Episcopalians question parts of the creeds, but our church is also the spiritual home of people who seem to fit Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Southern Baptist, or Pentecostal stereotypes. The vast middle of the church embraces the creeds but refuses to be bound to a single explanation of their meaning.

From its beginnings in sixteenth-century England, Anglicanism has always been a Christian movement divided, not united, by doctrine. It has been the prayer book and a willingness to approach the Lord's table without the need to judge the worthiness of communicants on one's left or one's right that has been the glue holding Anglicanism—and The Episcopal Church—together.

Is The Episcopal Church the right spiritual home for all Christian people, or even all Christian Americans? Surely not. Those who reject virtually all Christian dogma

do not belong in what is decidedly a Christian church. Those who cannot associate with anyone whose theological views differ from their own would be happier in an exclusive Christian tradition. Those who dislike the prayer book liturgies but come to church for the preacher or for the potluck suppers might be happier elsewhere.

What The Episcopal Church provides is a structure that gives us a voice in how we order our common life together and that furnishes us with our prayer book, hymnals, and other worship materials. It helps us set goals for how we will use God's creation and minister to our neighbors. Within broad limits, it does not tell individuals what to believe, how to worship, or how to spend their funds. If you are looking for a church to support and nourish you on your spiritual journey, then The Episcopal Church welcomes you.



Join us for the
**Annual PEP
Picnic**
6:00 PM
Monday, August 6
Fireman's Park,
Aspinwall

Check our Web site later this summer
for complete details.

Via Media USA News

by Christopher Wilkins
VMUSA Facilitator

As you know, PEP is one of thirteen church groups, all in dioceses similar to Pittsburgh, that joined together in 2004 to form Via Media USA (VMUSA).

Each of the dioceses with a VMUSA group has its own challenges, and there are many signs of hope for continuing Episcopalians in each of them. Here is a selection of news from these groups.

Remain Episcopal San Joaquin will hold an event called "Common Prayer, Uncommon People: The Episcopal Church" in Fresno, California, on June 23, 2007. It will fea-

ture presentations from faculty at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Sessions will focus on the history of The Episcopal Church and the Book of Common Prayer, on Holy Scripture and faith, and on the Millennium Development Goals.

The Episcopal Forum of South Carolina continues its series of diocesan events celebrating The Episcopal Church and its ministries. Through these programs, EFSC gives hope and encouragement to Episcopalians in their journeys in faith—especially to those people who have been isolated from and negatively informed about The Episcopal Church.

Members of *Fort Worth Via Media* (FWVM) continue to keep their fellow Episcopalians informed about the goings-on in the diocese and in the rest of The Episcopal Church. It continues to oppose Fort Worth's strenuous efforts to separate itself from The Episcopal Church. At the end of May, FWVM published a detailed critique of the diocese's request for alternative primatial oversight. The essay notes: "Fort Worth Via Media recommends that our diocesan leadership work within the polity of The Episcopal Church to solve our evident problems. It might be found that The Episcopal Church is more accommodating than can be imagined."

Via Media Rio Grande is participating in diocesan meetings in June concerning the diocese's future with respect to The Episcopal Church. These meetings are similar to the district meetings being held in Pittsburgh. The group hopes that all Episcopalians, no matter their theological convictions, will remain in The Episcopal Church.

VMUSA continues to lay the groundwork necessary to help Episcopal parishes that have suffered a split in recent years. We hope to help them heal their spirits, overcome their divisions, and focus their energies on the church's mission.

VMUSA is also working with The Episcopal Church to develop programs and resources to help Episcopalians, particularly in our most troubled dioceses, connect more fully with the church they know and love.

Web references related to *PEP*talk stories

Church reaches turning point

Kigali Communiqué, September 2006:

http://globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/comments/kigali_communique

Primates endorse pastoral council, primatial vicar in closing communiqué:

http://dfms.org/79901_82721_ENG_HTM.htm

Bishops' 'Mind of the House' resolutions: http://dfms.org/79901_84230_ENG_HTM.htm

Executive Council reasserts GC authority

Executive Council puts disaffected dioceses on notice about constitutional changes:

http://dfms.org/79901_86899_ENG_HTM.htm

Diocese asks: What next?

Sober Leadership Retreat Considers Future of Diocese:

<http://www.pgh.anglican.org/news/local/leadershipretreat052207>

Calvary suit status

Links to Calvary Lawsuit Information: http://progressiveepiscopalians.org/html/calvary_lawsuit.html

“Somewhere near you ...”

New York Times ad notes Episcopal Church history, mission:

http://dfms.org/79901_85948_ENG_HTM.htm

PEP facilitates covenant response

PEP Offers Own Answers to Study Guide Questions:

<http://progressiveepiscopalians.org/html/sganswers.html>

The logo for PEPtalk, with 'PEP' in blue and 'talk' in red, both in a stylized, cursive font.

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Issue Highlights

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**The development of the role
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A time for talking (editorial)