

UNDERSTANDING RE-ALIGNMENT

What is the “re-alignment” issue? The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh is seeking to change its Constitution in order to re-align its connection with the worldwide Anglican Communion, departing The Episcopal Church (TEC/ECUSA) and joining another Anglican Province.

What is the reasoning behind such a change? The Episcopal Church has grievously departed from traditional Christian teaching on the authority of the Bible, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and human sexuality, just to name a few. The Episcopal Church has shown a pattern of exclusion of orthodox (conservative) Episcopalians from the life and witness of the wider church. The orthodox asked for “safe harbor” with alternative leadership (called “alternate primatial oversight” or “APO,” but that was soundly rejected by the Episcopal Church, ignoring unanimous international pleas from all other Anglican primates.

When and how will this change happen? Changing the Constitution requires voting at two successive Diocesan Conventions. The first vote passed in November 2007. The second vote will be taken at the 2008 Diocesan Convention this autumn.

What will happen to the Diocese of Pittsburgh if the second vote passes? It will legally remain “The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh” but will be connected to the leadership of a different Anglican Province. Even if the vote passes with 51%, the entire diocese (all parishes) will have re-aligned.

To which new Anglican Province will we re-align? This will be decided by the Diocesan Convention this autumn, but the diocese has received an invitation from the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone (South America) to become a member diocese on an emergency, temporary and pastoral basis.

What will happen to churches that don’t want to re-align? They will need to choose to leave the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh and rejoin the National Episcopal Church. This will most likely require a Vestry and congregational vote.

What if a parish chooses to re-align? There will most likely be significant legal questions, since the Episcopal Church’s position is that it owns all property and assets of any entity with “Episcopal” in its name. Their position is that “individuals may leave a church but dioceses and parishes (including their property and assets) cannot leave or re-align.” At this point there has been an outright rejection of any negotiated settlement by the Presiding Bishop and the Episcopal Church.

What if a parish chooses to remain in The Episcopal Church? There will likely be a lot of confusion about how a “new diocese” (still connected with the Episcopal Church) may emerge. TEC may form a new diocese (and have a new Bishop election) and/or litigate the re-aligned, departed diocese for all the property, assets and bank accounts.

If you have more questions, do not hesitate to contact a Vestry Member.

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