

## Frequently Asked Questions About Realignment

- 1) What does it mean to be an Episcopalian? What does it mean to be Anglican?

Episcopalian means “governed by bishops”. Anglican means that we have come out of the Church of England. The words can be and are used interchangeably throughout the world.

- 2) Why are we really considering realignment? Are the differences between the Diocese of Pittsburgh and The Episcopal Church really just about Gene Robinson and sexual morality, like the popular media argues?

Newspapers and mass media are more concerned about sales than theology. As has always been the case, sensational oversimplifications (especially that contain the word “sex”) sell more papers than quiet truths. In actuality, this debate revolves around questions like, “Is Jesus really who he said he is?”, “Can we trust Sacred Scripture?”, and “Are there absolute moral norms given to us by God?” The “big issue” here is what it means to be a Christian, not just one single facet of morality.

- 3) By considering realignment, are we disobeying Christ’s command “to be one” as his Body?

Our goal is not to divide from the church, but to remain with the church. The leadership of TEC is taking the Episcopal Church out of mainstream Christianity. This has broken our relationships with the Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, evangelical Protestants, the large majority of the world’s Anglicans, and many others. The only way we can repair those relationships with our Christian brothers and sisters is to not go on this journey with The Episcopal Church.

- 4) If the Diocese chooses to realign, what would the immediate consequences be for individual a) parishes and b) clergy?

a) There would be few immediate consequences for parishes. No property would immediately change hands. Expected lawsuits would largely target the Diocese.

- b) Clergy would need to enter a new retirement plan and would be clergy of the province that the Diocese joins instead of clergy of The Episcopal Church.
- 5) Can a congregation “opt out” of diocesan realignment? What would happen to the a) parishes who do not wish to realign, and b) clergy who do not wish to realign?
  - a) Parishes would be given time to consider whether to leave the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh by changing the “accession” in their by-laws. The Diocese would work with parishes to make such a decision as conflict-free and charitable as possible.
  - b) Clergy would apply to the Bishop for letters dimissory (transfer letters) from the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh to whatever entity the leadership of the Episcopal Church sets up.
- 6) If a congregation decides to stay with The Episcopal Church, who will be in charge of them and how will this appointment happen? Will they be elected?

We don't know. If what is happening in the formation of the new “Episcopal” Diocese of San Joaquin is any indication, local Episcopalians may be given very little say in how the process proceeds or who leads them.

- 7) What will happen to a parish that chooses not to do anything regarding realignment? Where will they stand with The Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Pittsburgh and Bishop Duncan?

If the convention passes realignment, every parish of the Diocese will be realigned. That means that every parish will no longer be part of The Episcopal Church, but will continue to be part of The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh.

- 8) Is Bishop Scriven in favor of realignment?

Yes. He writes, “I come from having worked in several different jurisdictions in the Anglican Communion. I place a very high value on membership of a worldwide Communion and am very distressed to be in a church (TEC) with which a majority of Provinces of the Communion say they are in ‘impaired communion’. Many attempts

to resolve this issue have ended in the House of Bishops (of which I am a member) saying effectively that TEC will go its own way and they do not really care what others think. I do care. I believe TEC has indeed walked apart. I intend to stay within the mainstream of the Anglican Communion.”

9) Where does the Archbishop of Canterbury stand in all this?

The Archbishop of Canterbury himself is on the record saying that it is the diocese, not the province that is the concrete reality of the communion. If the Diocese votes to realign, we would maintain our relationship to the Archbishop of Canterbury through the Anglican Province with which we have aligned.

10) Have the actions of The Episcopal Church affected our worship in Pittsburgh?

The Episcopal Church constitution and canons control our Prayer Book and our Scripture texts. Over the past few years, we have seen offices of TEC promote worship services modeled on pagan fertility rituals and sell books of spells (see endnote links). It is only a matter of time before content that bears no recognizable connection to Christianity makes its way into common use in The Episcopal Church.

11) If realignment passes at the convention, what is the long-term plan?

To be One Church of Miraculous Expectation and Missionary Grace. We would plan to focus on local ministry, sharing the gospel, building up all of our churches and continuing to plant new congregations. Jurisdictionally, we would expect to work for several years on forming an Anglican province in North America that would bring together the hundreds of parishes that are staying within mainstream Anglicanism.

12) What will happen if Bishop Duncan is deposed by The Episcopal Church? Who will be in charge?

It is our strong belief that the Episcopal Church has no canonical (legal) grounds to depose Bishop Duncan, as was stated in recent letters to the Presiding Bishop’s Chancellor. If he were, illegally, removed from office, then the Standing Committee would become the ecclesiastical authority. An assistant bishop might be hired by

the Standing Committee to serve a sacramental role (confirmations, etc.), but he/she would not fill the role of the diocesan bishop. Regardless, we would hold the scheduled Diocesan Convention this fall and vote on realigning the Diocese.

- 13) How much money is litigation costing the Diocese per year? Is this budgeted? What happens if the courts freeze diocesan assets?

Over the past year and a half, we have been forced to spend approximately \$240,000 defending ourselves from litigation. We have spent almost nothing since July of 2007, when those who brought suit shifted their efforts to The Episcopal Church's ecclesiastical court system. The Board of Trustees has supported and funded our efforts to defend the Diocese. We believe it is unlikely that the court will freeze diocesan assets.

- 14) What about the lawsuits? Wouldn't it be better to spend money on ministry than denominational battles?

Absolutely. We are defending ourselves from lawsuits that we did not initiate or desire. We have repeatedly sought resolution. We are being good stewards by defending the assets of the Diocese so that they may be used for ministry for many years to come.

- 15) If the Diocese chooses to realign, who actually owns the church buildings and endowments?

The church buildings, endowments and other resources of the Diocese are entirely held in either the name of the parish, the Diocese or the diocesan Board of Trustees. It is our contention that, whether or not we realign, the ownership of those assets should not and will not change.

- 16) What would happen to shared diocesan assets, like the Common Life Property at Donegal, if the Diocese votes to realign?

Nothing would change. It would still be available to all members of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh.

17) What about change “from within”? Can’t we just wait for a year or two and see how things are progressing at that point?

Since 2003, the leadership of the Diocese of Pittsburgh has worked tirelessly to find safe haven for orthodox belief within the structure of The Episcopal Church, but none has been granted. Absolute conformity to TEC’s agenda is expected without compromise or exception, and the legal avenues for a diocese to realign out of The Episcopal Church will be closed completely after canonical changes proposed for the 2009 General Convention. We act now, or forever hold our peace.

18) If we vote to realign, who will “The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh” be?

We would continue to be “The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh”, pursuing exactly the same vision with renewed attention and vigor, as One Church of Miraculous Expectation and Missionary Grace.

19) Who exactly would we be realigning with?

Although realignment would not occur unless passed at the 2008 Diocesan Convention, a recent “sense of the council” vote indicated that the Diocesan Council is strongly in favor of realigning with Province of the Southern Cone. This orthodox province of the Anglican Communion occupies the southern portion of South America, and is led by Archbishop Gregory Venables.

20) If we realign with the Province of the Southern Cone, which does not ordain women, what will happen to the practice here, and what does it mean to our women in ordained ministry?

It would not change anything. We would not join any province that would not allow us to continue our witness and our practice of women in Holy Orders. The Southern Cone has said emphatically that they would welcome us under these circumstances, as they have already welcomed the Network in Canada, which continues to ordain women.

21) What about others considering realignment?

Since 2000, some 300 individual congregations have realigned. The entire Diocese of San Joaquin has realigned, and the Dioceses of

Fort Worth and Quincy are also considering realignment this year. Several dozen Anglican Churches in Canada have also realigned.

22) If a church realigns, will the 1979 BCP still be used?

The 1979 BCP is our present prayerbook. We will be able to use it without compromise. The greater danger is if we do not realign. Before many years pass, liturgical changes encouraged by The Episcopal Church will greatly alter our traditional liturgy. The Episcopal Church forced the acceptance of the '79 Book of Common Prayer, as it will with any successors.

23) Because The Episcopal Church has not complied with the Windsor Report, how many bishops may not attend the Lambeth Conference? What percentage of the world's Anglicans do they represent?

A quarter to a third of all Anglican bishops will not be attending Lambeth. Because they come from some of the largest provinces of the Anglican Communion, they represent approximately half of all practicing Anglicans in the world.

24) Why is Pittsburgh being targeted as a diocese that the president of the national Episcopal Women's Caucus called "decidedly hostile to women"?

This accusation is entirely without grounds. To the contrary, the Diocese has not just a goodly number of female clergy members, but is proud that many key clergy positions of leadership are filled by women, including the Canon Missioner and the Cathedral Provost.

25) Have we learned anything by watching events unfold in the Diocese of San Joaquin?

We have learned that little quarter or consideration will be given to the orthodox who choose to stay with The Episcopal Church. We have also learned that The Episcopal Church feels no need to obey its own internal laws regarding disputes with bishops or dioceses. The events in San Joaquin have been followed closely, and the Diocese of Pittsburgh has learned a great deal that can be applied to our situation.

26) Although we disagree on many things, is the Episcopal Church at least following its own rules in this conflict?

The leadership of The Episcopal Church has been relentless in its persecution of individuals who have challenged their direction. They have blatantly ignored their own canons (church laws) in doing so. The purported depositions of Bishops Cox and Schofield and the proposed depositions of Bishops Duncan and MacBurney are cases in point (see endnotes for a link to this story).

27) How would Pittsburgh's international and ecumenical role be affected by realignment?

The actions of The Episcopal Church have left it in a damaged relationship with many of the world's Anglican believers, and with mainstream Christians in general. By realigning, the Diocese of Pittsburgh would be able to preserve and strengthen the valuable ecumenical and international ties that have proven so fruitful in its mission. Locally, the Diocese is held in very high esteem by leaders and people across denominational lines.

28) Since we are the stewards of what they have left us, how would the founders of our churches have felt if presented with a choice between Christian orthodoxy and remaining in a straying Episcopal Church?

Although the decision would have been difficult for them, as it has been for us, they would no doubt have chosen the gifts of Holy Scripture and the Faith of the apostles over the "innovations" offered by The Episcopal Church. Christianity without a unique Christ, a Gospel without truly transforming power, would not have been something our founders could have conceived of, let alone condoned.

29) What Scripture passages can be used in support of realignment?

I Corinthians 5:9-13, Galatians 1:6-9, Titus 3:1-11, II Peter 2:1-22, II John 1:4-11, Jude 1:3-4, 17-23

a. How should we respond to 1 Corinthians 6:1-11?

First read the context (1 Cor 5:9-13 and 6:12-20). Then consider whether it is acceptable to defend yourself. We are not bringing the lawsuit. We continue to work for every other alternative.

b. How should we respond to Matthew 5:21-26?

We have tried repeatedly to settle with our accuser. Is it wrong to stand for what is right? Jesus didn't "settle" with Pilate, or make a deal with the Sanhedrin.

30) In the heat of this controversy, how can we as believers in Christ maintain a love for each other?

We can always pray sincerely and earnestly for one another. When you are tempted to "curse," instead, "bless." This is a powerful aspect of Christian love that should not be overlooked in the midst of conflict. Also, we can continue to work together on projects that impact the entire community, like cooperation at Shepherd's Heart, Seeds of Hope, Uncommon Grounds and many other shared ministries.

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*Links in support of Question 10:*

<http://www.episcopalbookstore.org/wc.dll?main~di~&vt=71883&idx=1SZ16RUNQ&idc=1&idi=118670&ids=&idd=&pn=1>

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/octoberweb-only/10-25-21.0.html>

*Link for Question 26:*

<http://www.livingchurch.org/news/news-updates/2008/4/9/pb-presses-efforts-to-remove-more-bishops>