



August 8, 2005

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

In the past year, Progressive Episcopalians of Pittsburgh raised its profile at diocesan convention, increased its educational activities, helped expose the Anglican Global Initiative constitution, and continued to be a source of information for Episcopalians across the nation. I am writing to ask you to renew and deepen your commitment to PEP so we can continue this work, and to reflect on where we are, how we got here, and what the future may hold for us.

As you know, mainstream Episcopalians in southwestern Pennsylvania formed PEP in the wake of the failure to prevent adoption of Resolution One at the 2002 diocesan convention. Our goal was to encourage the diocese to make room for and give voice to people who identified with traditional Episcopalian and Anglican moderation. No one imagined that this task would be accomplished quickly or easily, and no one anticipated how important the existence of PEP would become.

Two and a half years later, our diocese and bishop have become leaders in a worldwide effort that threatens not only to divide the Episcopal Church but also to shatter the Anglican Communion. As the Rev. Susan Russell, president of Integrity, has noted, this is a “well-funded temper tantrum of global proportions,” and one that is very damaging to the church’s ministry and mission. Bishop Duncan boldly teaches that the Episcopal Church is really two churches with incompatible theologies—an “orthodox” theology insisting on the primacy of scripture and the “faith once received,” and a “revisionist” theology espoused by “counterfeit” Christians who have been seduced by modern culture. With support from primates of various Anglican provinces of the “Global South,” our bishop and his allies have sought to have the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes recognized as the “real” Episcopal Church in the U.S., and they have sought formal mechanisms to convert a fellowship of churches into a hierarchical structure with the power to enforce doctrine and discipline. Our bishop has, in other words, labored to impose Puritan doctrine and Roman Catholic polity on our church and communion. We believe that this is a program that, rather than offering a *via media* alternative to the extremes of radical Protestantism and Roman Catholic authoritarianism, combines the worst features of each.

PEP, along with its allied groups in Via Media USA, is doing what it can to address this problem and achieve its stated goal. This has proved more difficult than we imagined at the outset. We are opposing a substantial, well-financed, and determined insurgency. Even with modest resources, we have generated publicity and enthusiasm for efforts to preserve the Episcopal Church in places where our voices are silenced or ignored. We are making the road to power neither straight nor plain for the Network and its followers. PEP’s goals have expanded as we continue to determine how best to preserve our Anglican tradition, provincial autonomy, and Episcopal polity here in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The next twelve months will be turbulent. While Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold continues to speak of reconciliation, Bishop Duncan and his allies speak only of their coming righteous victories over the forces of error. In Pittsburgh, faithful parishes face the threat of being expelled from the diocese for trying to defend Episcopal Church canons. General Convention 2006 will likely neither apologize for the work of General Convention 2003 nor choose a conservative successor to Bishop Griswold. It will be subjected to withering criticism from the right.

Lambeth 2008 may see neither a united Episcopal Church nor a united Anglican Communion. The Network is threatening to separate from the rest of our church if its demands are not met, and it is already organizing as its own province, founding new parishes that are not affiliated with the Episcopal Church. It has created international structures that exclude the Episcopal Church, and it has argued for expulsion of the Episcopal Church from Anglican Communion bodies. We cannot sit by and let this happen.

When the dust settles, we may find ourselves in a smaller Episcopal Church, but a church better able to relieve human suffering, to offer a principled theological perspective to people going forward into the twenty-first century, and to follow the ongoing truth of Christ as revealed in all creation. We may find ourselves in a smaller and leaner Anglican Communion as well, but we will likely remain in communion with Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Mexico, Central America, Japan, and several others.

PEP will continue to be an influence in the Anglican world, but the needs closer to home will become increasingly urgent. A portion of our own diocese is edging ever closer toward leaving the Episcopal Church. Our voices, and through us, the voices of the Episcopal Church, must continue to be heard. If our diocese splits or if its leadership is handed a definitive and crushing defeat, we will need many hands to heal and strengthen those parishes and individuals remaining loyal to the Episcopal Church in the aftermath. PEP and other Via Media groups increasingly need to plan with an eye to the future of our church when the current struggles are behind us.

Now, more than ever, we need you to renew your membership in PEP. Your financial support is also critical. Please complete the enclosed form and return it with a check to the address indicated. Invite your friends to join. Copy the form; tell people how to download a membership application from the Web; or contact me for membership brochures.

We need volunteers now to monitor events in the church and beyond, to carry out particular projects, and to look for activities that advance the mission of the Episcopal Church and advance our understanding of the gospel of love, compassion, and liberation. If you can spare some time, please contact me at [412] 343-5337 or membership chair Wanda Guthrie at [724] 327-2767.

I ask you for your ongoing prayers for PEP, for the Episcopal Church, and for a Christianity that seeks to minister with faith, intelligence, and charity to our modern world. I thank you for your support and wish you God's peace.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lionel Deimel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lionel Deimel
President

Enclosure