

Pittsburgh begins exit from Episcopal Church: Dissident diocese

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The Diocese of Pittsburgh has taken a big step out the door of the Episcopal Church, declaring itself at odds with the denomination's more liberal view of scripture and homosexuality and paving the way to join a more conservative Anglican branch.

By a tally of 227 to 82, lay and ordained delegates to Pittsburgh's annual convention on November 2 voted to change their diocese's constitution, removing language that requires "accession" to the national church.

"As a diocese we have come to a fork in the road," Pittsburgh bishop Robert Duncan told delegates. "Indeed, it has become clear that our understandings are not only different, but mutually exclusive, even destructive to one another."

Pittsburgh is the third U.S. diocese to take that step, following San Joaquin, California, and Quincy, Illinois. Constitutional changes require the approval of two consecutive diocesan conventions. San Joaquin is scheduled to hold its second vote on the constitutional change in December.

Duncan said Pittsburgh's action "announces an intention without actually making a change. . . . Of course, in another sense, adoption signifies an intention, gives warning, opens a possibility."

Episcopal presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori publicly warned Duncan before the convention not to lead his diocese from the church. Duncan, who heads an effort to realign U.S. Anglicans upset with the liberal drift of the national church, responded defiantly to Jefferts Schori.

"Here I stand, I can do no other," the bishop said, quoting Martin Luther's famous declaration. "I will neither compromise the faith once delivered to the saints, nor will I abandon the sheep who elected me to protect them." -*Religion News Service*