

Episcopal bishops hope Anglican tent is wide: Waiting for the shoe to drop

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The Episcopal Church bishops, waiting for the shoe to drop in London, ended their fall meeting expressing confidence that “our household of faith is large enough to embrace us all” despite acknowledged divisions over the majority’s approval of a gay bishop and tolerance of same-sex unions.

Several bishops, including conservative leader Bishop Robert Duncan of Pittsburgh, boycotted the meeting in Spokane, Washington. Some 130 bishops attended it, far fewer than the 160 bishops who met last spring in Texas.

In addition, the bishops were informed at the close of the meeting September 28 that Duncan had announced the same day the creation of the Anglican Relief and Development fund to rival a similarly named Episcopal relief agency. The ARD would accept funds that traditionalists want handled by the dissident Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes, of which Duncan serves as moderator. Eight of the church’s 112 dioceses have joined the network.

The bishops met just weeks before a high-level report will be issued in London that examines divisions in the larger Anglican Communion after the U.S. church voted last year to approve the election of an openly gay man, V. Gene Robinson, to be bishop of New Hampshire.

In their collective statement, the bishops said they would receive the October 18 report by Irish Archbishop Robin Eames “in a spirit of humility and a willingness to learn how we might best be faithful and responsible partners in the Anglican Communion.”

The bishops noted the “anger, anguish and division” within their own church and strained relations with other Anglican churches. Yet the bishops also appeared to hint that they and other Episcopal leaders are unlikely to abandon their earlier stances, speaking of “God’s reconciling love for all of creation” and of “Anglican

comprehensiveness and its capacity to make room for difference.”

In a sermon to other bishops, Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold said, “At the end of the day, all that really matters is not who wins or loses but faithfulness. And faithfulness is required of us all, wherever we stand on any number of questions, none of which admit easy answers and can only be lived patiently and in a spirit of mutual respect.” *-compiled from Religion News Service*