

# **Pittsburgh diocese votes to exit Episcopal Church: Aligns with Anglican Province of the Southern Cone**

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The Episcopal Church's Diocese of Pittsburgh, as expected, has voted to split from the national church. In the October 4 balloting, clergy and laypeople voted 240 to 102 for secession and realignment with the Argentina-based Anglican Province of the Southern Cone.

Alluding to contentions over homosexuality and biblical interpretation, Peter Frank, a spokesperson for the diocese, said "this diocese could not in good conscience continue down the road away from mainstream Christianity."

Last December, the Diocese of San Joaquin, based in Fresno, California, became the first diocese to secede and join the more conservative Southern Cone. Two more dioceses—Quincy, Illinois, and Fort Worth, Texas—are scheduled to hold similar secession votes in November.

Conservatives form a majority in the 77 million-member Anglican Communion but a minority in the Episcopal Church, which has 2.2 million members and 110 dioceses.

Episcopal presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said that there is room in the church for dissent, and that schism has "frequently been seen as a more egregious error than charges of heresy."

Added Jefferts Schori: "I believe that the vast majority of Episcopalians and Anglicans will be intensely grieved by the actions of individuals who thought it necessary to remove them[selves] from the Episcopal Church."

At least 17 of the 74 congregations in the Pittsburgh diocese want to remain part of the Episcopal Church, according to the denomination. Jefferts Schori said the

national church will help to rebuild the diocese in Pittsburgh, as it has in San Joaquin. A lengthy battle over church property and assets is expected. -*Religion News Service*