



## Questions and Answers: The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina



November 2012

**Q. The Bishop and a number of clergy and lay leaders in the Diocese of South Carolina have stated that they are no longer associated with The Episcopal Church. Is my parish required to leave?**

**A.** No. Parishes and Dioceses cannot actually leave The Episcopal Church; only individual people can. The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina has existed since 1789 and continues to exist today as part of The Episcopal Church. Your parish is not required to change its historical identity and affiliation.

**Q. What about the special convention that has been announced for November 17?**

**A.** A meeting of parishes has been requested for November 17. This is not a gathering of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, and no parish is required to attend, participate or vote. On the other hand, if your parish is sending representatives to the meeting, it doesn't mean your parish has "disavowed or realigned." The Episcopal Church still considers all the parishes in the Diocese of South Carolina to be part of The Episcopal Church.

**Q. Since the Bishop and Standing Committee have said they are no longer associated with The Episcopal Church, who is in charge of the Diocese?**

**A.** At this time, there is no functioning ecclesiastical authority in the Diocese. A Steering Committee of committed lay and clergy, representative of the breadth of views and concerns of Episcopalians in this Diocese, has been formed for two purposes. First, it will serve as the communications link to The Episcopal Church during this period. Second, it will immediately take steps in accordance with Church laws and canons so the Diocese can organize and function. The regularly scheduled Diocesan Convention is now set for March 8, 2013. There, clergy and lay delegates will be able to make the decisions necessary to move forward. It's encouraging to know that dioceses elsewhere in the U.S. have faced similar situations in recent years, and we are blessed to have support and advice from Episcopalians who have weathered these difficulties.

**Q. What should I do if I disagree with the direction my parish or my rector are taking?**

**A.** Express your concerns to your Rector, Wardens, and Vestry, as soon as possible. You may do this in person, by phone, or by mail or email. Contact information for each parish in the Diocese can be found at our website, [episcopaldiocesofsc.org](http://episcopaldiocesofsc.org).

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**Q. My church leaders say we have left The Episcopal Church, but I want to remain an Episcopalian. What should I do?**

**A.** Nothing has changed your standing as an Episcopalian. You are encouraged to contact others in your parish who also want to remain in the Episcopal Church. You may be able to continue to worship together and keep your parish active. If that isn't possible at your parish, then you can be assured of a warm welcome at other parishes in the Diocese that are maintaining their ties to the Church. If you aren't sure how to proceed, please get in touch through the contact information below.

**Q. I disagree with some of the social stances and policies in The Episcopal Church. Why would The Episcopal Church want me to stay?**

**A.** Contrary to what you may have heard, there are a lot of diverse opinions in the Church. Here in South Carolina you will find many loyal Episcopalians who feel as you do – but are staying because they believe we should continue to work through our differences together, as Episcopalians have done throughout history. We can respect each other's views even as we disagree, when we remain focused on the mission and ministry that bind us together.

**Q. How many parishes and missions are remaining active in The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina?**

**A.** Some parishes have made it clear they want to maintain their ties to the Church.

Other congregations and clergy are divided, and they have difficult and painful decisions ahead. We hope and pray that, in time, people will choose to remain a part of The Episcopal Church. The Church still sees each individual, parish and mission as a valued and important part of our Diocese.

**Q. How can I contact someone for advice and consultation?**

**A.** Email your questions to [episcopaldioceseofsc@gmail.com](mailto:episcopaldioceseofsc@gmail.com), or use the Contact Tab from this website. Depending on the nature of your question, you will receive prompt, confidential and pastoral advice.

**Q. What about pension plans for clergy and lay staff?**

**A.** These programs are administered by The Church Pension Fund, not by individual diocese. Only Episcopal clergy and staff are eligible to participate. Please contact The Church Pension Group (CPG), [www.cpg.org](http://www.cpg.org), for answers to your questions.

**Q. If I have a question that is not covered here, what should I do?**

**A.** Please email your question to [episcopaldioceseofsc@gmail.com](mailto:episcopaldioceseofsc@gmail.com). A member of the Steering Committee will be in touch to help you get your question answered.