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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DIOCESE ASKS COURT FOR ACCESS TO ASSETS

Request Made in Case Which Defined “Episcopal Diocese”

Pittsburgh – Today the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh asked a court for control of church assets still held by former diocesan leaders who have left the Episcopal Church.

The request was made in the context of an existing court order which stipulated that local Episcopal property must stay in the control of a diocese that is part of the Episcopal Church of the United States.

“We’re not asking for anything the court has not already addressed, or for anything former leaders have not already agreed to,” said the Rev. Dr. James Simons, President of the diocesan Standing Committee, the group currently leading the Pittsburgh Episcopal Diocese.

The original court order was issued in October 2005 as a result of a lawsuit filed by Calvary Episcopal Church in East Liberty. The order prohibits any group that separates itself from the Episcopal Church from continuing to use or control Diocesan property. The order specifically defines the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh as being part of “the Episcopal Church of the United States of America.” In negotiations leading to the 2005 Order, former Pittsburgh Bishop Robert Duncan and his attorneys agreed this stipulation would apply regardless of the circumstances surrounding any separation, even if every parish were to leave.

In October 2008, supporters of Bishop Duncan purportedly attempted to remove the entire Diocese from the Episcopal Church. However, the Episcopal Church maintains that parishes and dioceses cannot leave the church, only individuals may do so. Duncan and his supporters are now attempting to organize a competing church entity. The group continues to call itself the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh.

“Whatever Robert Duncan and his followers may claim to be, they cannot claim to be ‘the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America’,” the Diocese argues in its papers filed today.

At issue in today's request is access to approximately \$20 million in diocesan endowments and bank accounts, as well as other resources, some non-financial, used in conducting day-to-day diocesan business. The use of church buildings is not directly addressed in today's filing, but Diocesan leaders say ownership issues will need to be resolved in the future. Since October, attempts to complete an orderly transition of assets to those who remain in the Episcopal Church have been ignored by those who left it, the Diocese filing contends.

Calvary Episcopal Church joined the Diocese in today's filing with the Court of Common Pleas in Allegheny County. The request was made to the Special Master overseeing the Calvary case.

Approximately 27 congregations, or about 40% of the Pittsburgh Diocese prior to the October separation, remain active in the life of the Episcopal Church.

For more information about the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh, visit www.episcopalpgh.org.

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