

Statement from the Communion Partner Bishops on the South Carolina Situation

We, Bishops of The Episcopal Church associated with the Communion Partner fellowship, are grieved at recent developments in the life of The Episcopal Church, specifically in the Diocese of South Carolina. The way in which the complaint was lodged against Bishop Lawrence and the action of the Disciplinary Board itself under the abandonment canon seem to have derailed a good faith attempt on the part of the Presiding Bishop, the Bishop of Upper South Carolina, and the Bishop of South Carolina to address issues of mutual concern. The reaction of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina in its decision to withdraw the diocese from The Episcopal Church is also a source of grief. We lament these developments as symptomatic of a church that is the servant of its procedures rather than the responsible wielder of its own canonical tools.

We are mindful that our disciplinary canons under Title IV since their revision in 2009 continue to be a subject of concern to many in the church. Among our concerns in this case is the misuse of the abandonment canon. Its application in the complex issues surrounding South Carolina's place in the church have hindered rather than aided the ministry of reconciliation to which we are called. It tragically illustrates the deficiencies in Title IV.

These events remind us "of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith" (BCP, p. 265). They remind us as well that repentance leads to a new beginning. We join with the Standing Committee of Upper South Carolina and call upon all concerned to seek a non-judicial solution to these difficult matters, and not to be limited by our canonical procedures. Our hope, indeed our prayer, is that this painful moment in the life of the church will lead us to new and creative ways to discover Christ's reconciling love, and to live together in one Body in the midst of our differences.

The Rt. Rev'd John C. Bauerschmidt, Bishop of Tennessee

The Rt. Rev'd Gregory O. Brewer, Diocese of Central Florida

The Rt. Rev'd Russell E. Jacobus, Diocese of Fond du Lac

The Rt. Rev'd Edward S. Little, II, Diocese of Northern Indiana

The Rt. Rev'd Bill Love, Diocese of Albany

The Rt. Rev'd Daniel H. Martins, Diocese of Springfield

The Rt. Rev'd Michael G. Smith, Diocese of North Dakota

The Rt. Rev'd Gary R. Lillibridge, Diocese of West Texas

The Rt. Rev'd David Reed, Diocese of West Texas, Suffragan

The Rt. Rev'd John D. Howe, Diocese of Central Florida, retired

The Rt. Rev'd Bill Frey, Diocese of Colorado, retired

The Rt. Rev'd Peter Beckwith, Diocese of Springfield, retired