

The Standing Committee of the Diocese of Northern Indiana

We, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Northern Indiana strongly protest the failure of the Presiding Bishop, Katherine Jefferts Schori and Chancellor David Booth Beers to follow the Canons of our Episcopal Church in the depositions of Bishops John Schofield and William Cox. Deposition is the harshest punishment that can be handed a bishop. It is essential that both the letter and the spirit of the Canons be followed since, in this case, the rights of the accused are protected, in part, by the extraordinarily high level of involvement and concord called for within the House of Bishops by Canon IV.9.2. As others have pointed out, the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church at various times distinguishes between a majority of the Bishops at a meeting, from a vote by a majority of the whole. Mr. Beers was incorrect in his assertion, reaffirmed by the Presiding Bishop in a letter to the House of Bishops (April 30, 2008), that the Canonical language of “the whole number of bishops entitled to vote” can be taken to mean only “those in attendance at a particular meeting.” This makes deposition an action with no higher standard than any matter of routine business. We agree with the analysis provided by the Bishops and Standing Committees of the Dioceses of South Carolina and Central Florida that the Canons plainly require a majority of all Bishops entitled to vote, not just those in attendance at a particular meeting.¹

We call upon the Presiding Bishop and the House of Bishops to revisit those decisions and make every effort to follow our Church Canons in this and all future House of Bishops decisions.

We note with alarm that the Presiding Bishop has publically stated her intent to begin, at the September meeting of the House of Bishops, deposition proceedings against Bishop Robert Duncan of the Diocese of Pittsburgh for abandoning the communion before the diocese votes to do so in November. We plead for calm and prayer in the face of temptations to escalate abuses of power in this way. We agree with the Standing Committee of Central Florida and others who insist that depositions are an unnecessary and unfortunate way to deal with disagreement, dissension, and even division within our Church. We believe it also borders on unchristian.

This statement was written shortly after Trinity Sunday. The Trinitarian faith we profess in our worship is no mere exercise in divine arithmetic. The Trinity helps us know God’s true character within whose being exists a community of divine self-abasement. Thus understood, the Trinity is the foundation upon which truly human relationships are built. Everything the New Testament has to say about Christian relationships flows from this essential understanding of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nowhere is this clearer than in Philippians 2:1-11.

We believe that when we let the same mind be in us that was in Jesus, other ways of responding to division come into view. Those Bishops (or other clergy) who, for sake of conscience, can no longer minister as part of The Episcopal Church can be transferred at their request, or permitted to renounce their vows and join with other Anglican Provinces without vindictiveness or punitive measures. Confrontation in the Church is an opportunity to show the world how Christians conduct themselves in the midst of serious disagreements. It is an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel.

We urge the House of Bishops to give attention to these matters in the name of mutuality, humility and concord.

We insist that when it becomes necessary to invoke the Canons, that both the letter and the spirit of the law be dutifully followed.

¹ <http://centralflorida.anglican.org/news/news08/0508pblatter.htm>; <http://www.dioceseofsc.org/mt/archives/000337.html>

We encourage the Standing Committees of the various dioceses within The Episcopal Church to investigate these matters for themselves and prayerfully consider an appropriate response.

Peace be to the Church, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Standing Committee of the Diocese of Northern Indiana:

The Rev. Bennett G. Jones II, President

The Rev. James Warnock, Secretary

The Rev. Canon Richard A. Kallenberg

Timothy C. Gray

Cynthia Guzzo

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