

IN THE TITLE IV CASE AGAINST RESPONDENT RT. REV. J. JON BRUNO  
COMMENTS OF COMPLAINANTS ON THE DRAFT ORDER OF THE HEARING PANEL

The Complainants are grateful for all the work of the Hearing Panel and we endorse the excellent draft order. Many Complainants attended a town hall meeting after Sunday services to discuss the draft order; others, including several clergy members, made their views known through emails. This letter reflects combined comments.

Our main concerns are that the St. James the Great congregation is not in the church and that there may be an extended delay before the process of reconciliation starts.

We believe that the sale did not close on July 3 and thus that Corp Sole still owns the St. James church property and Bishop Bruno still controls the property. We agree with the recommendations on page 89 and 90 of the draft: that “the Diocese of Los Angeles, particularly its Standing Committee with the supportive leadership of its newly ordained Coadjutor, must consciously *choose* to take part in a process of self-examination and truth telling around these tragic and unfortunate events” and that the Diocese should “immediately suspend its efforts to sell the St. James property, that it restore the congregation and vicar to the church building and that it reassign St. James the Great appropriate mission status.” The leaders of the congregation stand ready, at any time, to discuss reconciliation and restitution with anyone involved. We are completely committed to the purposes of Title IV, often quoted by the Hearing Panel, including reconciliation, restitution, and justice.

But at this point Bishop Bruno believes that there is *no such thing* as the St. James the Great congregation, and that Canon Voorhees is not the vicar of any such congregation. So it is hard to have much hope that Bishop Bruno is going to reconcile with the congregation, or open the church to the congregation. The language on page 89 seems to recognize this.

One might assume that the new Bishop Coadjutor would soon be Bishop Diocesan because of the three-year suspension of Bishop Bruno. But it seems unlikely that this suspension will start soon. Bishop Bruno will almost certainly appeal the Hearing Panel’s decision to the Court of Review for Bishops. The canons, especially Canon IV.17.6, essentially give Bishop Bruno forty days in which to appeal, and then stay his suspension while his appeal is pending. The appeal could take many months, perhaps one or two years, as in the Bennison case.

Bishop Bruno has indicated that he will retire at some point in 2017, but there is no definite date. He will not reach the mandatory retirement age of seventy-two until November 2018. Bishop Bruno may decide to delay his retirement into 2018 in hopes that it will strengthen his appeal. So again, this route to reconciliation may be far away.

There is a human cost to the continued exile of the congregation. We have toddlers in the St. James congregation who have not been baptized because they were born while the congregation was in exile. Indeed, these toddlers have never seen the inside of the church. We

have no room for Sunday School and our fine Sunday School teacher recently resigned because she was tired of holding school in the open air, tired of being hurt by having herself and her children locked out by her bishop. Diocesan staff recently refused permission for the congregation to use the church for the funeral service of Nancy Knight—a woman who had been a leader of the St. James congregation for more than fifty years. We have received, but not included, many anguished emails from individual Complainants, who cannot understand how the Episcopal Church allows the lock-out to continue.

We suggest that the Hearing Panel indicate that its recommendation on pages 89 and 90 has immediate effect—that the recommendation would not be stayed or affected by an appeal of the Hearing Panel order.

We understand the concerns expressed by the chancellors of two other California dioceses, and we do not object if the Hearing Panel limits its discussion of Corp Soles to the Diocese of Los Angeles. We *agree* with the chancellors when they suggest that “the Hearing Panel may well wish to encourage the Diocese of Los Angeles to adopt canons requiring its corporation sole to submit to proper reporting and oversight.” But we also believe that the Hearing Panel should continue to express its concern about the *lack* of such transparency and oversight in the current structure of the Los Angeles Corp Sole. In other words, we do not believe the Hearing Panel should delete all reference to Corp Sole from the order.

Please know that the people of St. James the Great are grateful for the time and dedication of all concerned. We are very aware of the time, talent and treasure that have been spent on this case and do not take them lightly. We continue to pray for The Episcopal Church, our Bishops, the Diocese of Los Angeles and all those involved or affected by this process. We continue to pray for reconciliation and healing as soon as possible.

Prayerfully and Respectfully Submitted, Walter Stahr and Bill Kroener, for the Complainants