



**A Joint Statement of  
The Bishop and Standing Committee  
of  
The Diocese of South Carolina**

**A STATEMENT BY THE BISHOP:**

November 21, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is with the weight of decision but conviction of heart and mind that I write to tell you the Standing Committee, after prayerful deliberation, and with my full support, has voted unanimously to proceed with a petition for a writ of certiorari with the United States Supreme Court. I remind you that this long process first began with our stand for Gospel truth—holding firmly to the faith once delivered to the saints. All too soon, we were thrust into a battle for Religious Freedom. As Justice Kitteridge has aptly stated about the State Supreme Court’s recent denial for rehearing “...to disallow a full court from considering the rehearing petitions is deeply troubling and, in my opinion, raises constitutional implications as the Court has blocked a fair and meaningful merits review of the rehearing petitions.” So we have before us our commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ to which we are unwaveringly wedded; a civil concern for religious freedom for ourselves and others; and a public duty to petition for constitutional due process to be upheld. Any of these might justify taking the next step down this legal road. Together they make a three-fold cord not easily broken.

I hasten to add a further point. The Episcopal Church in South Carolina has frequently stated that they, TEC, has always been seeking reconciliation in this present legal conflict. However, one should be aware of what their words suggest. I would paraphrase it thusly—“*Of course, you may remain worshipping in your Church buildings. All you have to do is surrender to the national Episcopal Church and we will receive you back.*” Frankly, I believe a more honorable goal would be a charitable parting of the ways enabling each diocese to get on with its mission to a needy world. In the absence of this, we are compelled to move forward with a petition for the higher court’s review.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark J. Lawrence".

The Right Reverend Mark J. Lawrence  
XIV Bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina

**A STATEMENT BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE:**

Today the Standing Committee of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of South Carolina, after prayerful deliberation, voted unanimously to petition for a writ of *certiorari* from the United States Supreme Court. The request is for review of the recent final ruling by the state supreme court. We believe, as former Chief Justice Toal said in her dissent, "The lead opinion in this case is nothing less than judicial sanction of the confiscation of church property masquerading as an attempt to promulgate a new deference rule for determining title in this matter." We further believe the nature and consequences of this ruling strongly merit review. Several congregations have already voted affirmatively to join in this petition. We encourage the other parish parties to the case to consult with their legal counsel to address their vestry's desire to join.

The Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina



The Rev. David Thurlow, *President*



Mrs. Anne Walton




The Rev. Karl Burns, *Vice-President*



Mrs. Susan McDuffie



The Very Rev. Peet Dickinson



Mr. Foster Smith



The Very Rev. Craig Borrett



Mr. Alonso Galvan



The Rev. David Dubay



Mr. Gerry Graves



The Rev. Marcus Kaiser