



The Rt. Rev. Mark J. Lawrence • XIV Bishop of South Carolina
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February 6, 2015

Dear People of God in the Diocese of South Carolina,

"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers...." (Ephesians 1:16)

My last letter to you was shortly after we finished the three-week trial in St. George in order to protect our parish churches, properties, names, diocesan seal and the historic identity of this Diocese of South Carolina.

Now, as many of you have heard, we have prevailed.

In a thorough and closely [reasoned order](#), the Honorable Diane S. Goodstein has ruled in our favor. You can read the [diocesan statement](#) regarding this ruling, as well as an [additional explanation](#) of its significance, at www.dioceseofsc.org.

I hardly need to tell you how grateful I am for this order! I am also:

- Grateful for our legal team which has worked tirelessly on this case;
- Grateful for those lay persons and clergy who took the stand at the trial or interceded through prayer either in the courtroom or from elsewhere;
- Grateful for the generosity of our parishioners, and even those outside the diocese, who have helped us defray the expense of such costly litigation;
- Grateful for the 53 congregations that have stood with us as faithful congregations in this diocese or as named plaintiffs in the case;
- Grateful for the clergy who have sacrificed in untold ways for their stand in honoring the doctrine, discipline and worship of Christ as we have received them;
- Grateful for the many parishioners—some 80% of the 2012 diocesan membership (before the split with TEC)—who have stayed, either with their parish or with us, in the midst of the strain and stress of confusing statements and swirling opinions;
- Grateful for the prayers of so many in North America and around the world who have so often assured us of their intercessions and support;
- Grateful for the Primates of the Global South Steering Committee who have kept us in relationship with the larger Anglican world;
- Grateful for the GAFCON Primates who have written to us acknowledging the people of this diocese as faithful Anglicans and me as an Anglican Bishop;
- Grateful for the prayers of those in The Episcopal Church who tell me they pray regularly for us;
- Grateful for those on the diocesan staff who have worked tirelessly in this demanding season;
- Grateful for my wife, Allison, who has borne the stress of these days in ways known only to a few;
- And, finally, of course, most grateful for the Mighty Hand of God throughout this whole ordeal.

I encourage you to pause on the overlook that this recent lawsuit and ruling has carved out for us in our life together; to gaze back momentarily to the path we've traveled—not just in these recent years but also through the long labors of so many in past decades and centuries—in order to gratefully acknowledge the sovereignty of God over all our affairs—our labors, ministries, and lives.

To do this in corporate worship will of course be timely. To do so in your small groups or at some time of

fellowship, as well as and in your personal prayer is likewise most fitting. The prayer of gratitude, like so much that we have received, is itself a gift from God; a gift that we are to offer back to him.

Take time to engage in it; not with triumphant zeal but with a humble contrite heart.

Then having done so I suggest you turn a steadfast gaze forward.

You may have read in the local media that the national Episcopal Church and its local diocesan representatives have already signaled their intention to appeal Judge Goodstein's ruling. So please note: There is a need for us to persevere. Persevere in defending our identity both as congregations and diocese. Persevere in continuing litigation. But most importantly to persevere in our commitment to move forward with our God-given dreams and mission.

Just over two years ago, we turned the page in our relationship with TEC. I suggested at that time we needed to do this without malice and with abiding charity. For if we are to have the aroma of Christ we must live in his grace with faith, hope and charity; shunning resentment, bitterness and self-pity; always careful not to poison the waters of our communities in our differences with others.

I still try to keep this fact foremost in my mind: Rarely have the spiritually hungry, the seeker after God, the unconverted or unchurched been attracted to Jesus Christ through church conflicts, denominational discord, or ecclesiastical excesses.

So let us press on undeterred with our mission and ministries—grateful for this recent ruling—but most of all grateful for God's grace; and seeking that God's love "*... be poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.*" (Romans 5:5)

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Joseph Lawrence" with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Right Reverend Mark Joseph Lawrence
XIV Bishop of South Carolina

