Amended complaint shows growing support for historic fight to defend local faithful against TEC

St. George, SC, January 22, 2013 – Support increased dramatically today for a lawsuit to prevent The Episcopal Church (TEC) from hijacking local property as 15 more parishes joined the suit in an amended complaint filed with the South Carolina Circuit Court, bringing the total number of congregations in the litigation to 31 .

The suit, originally filed on January 4 by the Diocese of South Carolina, the Trustees of the Diocese and 16 congregations, seeks to protect the Diocese's real, personal and intellectual property and that of its parishes. An additional 13 congregations have decided to stay in the Diocese of South Carolina and are considering their own participation in joining the litigation at a later time. The Episcopal Church has eight parishes and eight missions that have elected to stay with them. Nine missions and two parishes are undecided.

One of the parishes joining the amended suit today, Trinity Church of Edisto Island, SC, is one of the oldest continuously operating churches in the United States and was among the parishes that founded the Diocese of South Carolina. Trinity Church was formed in 1774.

"*In 1786, our parish was among the original signers of the constitution for the Diocese of South Carolina,"* said the Rev. Wey Camp, Rector of Trinity Church, Edisto Island, SC. *"Today, we commit the parish to remaining with the only diocese we have ever known. While The Episcopal Church has moved away from the fundamental beliefs of Anglicanism, the Diocese remains unwavering – as do we."*

The suit asks the court to prevent TEC from infringing on the protected marks of the Diocese, including its seal and its historical names, and to prevent the church from assuming the Diocese's identity, which was established before TEC's creation. The national church has already taken steps to seize local property by calling for a "special convention" meeting this week to select new leadership for the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, which the church claims to own.

In fact, the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina helped to create The Episcopal Church in 1789 as a confederation of sovereign dioceses; the Diocese is legally incorporated in South Carolina, as are all the parishes within the Diocese.

"The Diocese chose to disassociate from The Episcopal Church, but we did not leave behind more than $500 million in intellectual, personal or real property that was paid for by members of the Diocese through the 228 years of our existence," said the Rev. Jim Lewis, Canon to the Ordinary. "The Episcopal Church is welcome to establish a new diocese in the Lowcountry to serve those who wish to remain with them, but it may not commandeer our property or our identity."

TEC has attempted to seize the properties of parishes and dioceses across the United States that have disassociated over theological differences with the church. In all, TEC has filed some

81 lawsuits, spending in excess of $22 million.

 “We are saddened that legal action is necessary to protect our members from an organization that uses the threat of legal action as a cudgel to keep its parishes in line,” said Bishop Mark Lawrence, the 14th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina. “
The colonists came to this land seeking freedom to worship in the manner they believed faithful. We seek to be free from the national church’s unorthodox theology which separates it from centuries of Anglican teachings and the fundamental beliefs of the global Anglican Communion.

“Simply put,” Lawrence said, *“we hold a different understanding of the Gospel, the trustworthiness of Scripture and the person and work of Jesus Christ, and we will not deviate from that.”*