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21 July 2008

Mr. Bradford S. Babbitt, Esquire  
Robinson & Cole, L.L.P.  
280 Trumbull Street  
Hartford, CT 06103-3597

Mr. Hamilton Doherty Jr., Esquire  
Bulkley, Richardson and Gelinas, L.L.P.  
1500 Main Street, Suite 2700  
Springfield, MA 01115-5507

Members of the Ecclesiastical Court:	The Right Rev. Andrew D. Smith (Chair)
The Right Rev. Bruce E. Caldwell	Ms. Maria B. Campbell
Ms. Jane R. Freeman	Rev. Marjorie A. Menaul
Rev. Karen B. Montagno	The Right Rev. Gordon P. Scruton
The Right Rev. George Wayne Smith	The Right Rev. Catherine M. Waynick

Dear Mr. Babbitt, Mr. Doherty and Members of the Court,

Enclosed please find my victim impact statement.

As you may imagine, the cost of participating in this trial process has been heavy. The emotional, spiritual and fiscal burdens have been difficult to handle. I am asking if the Church and Court can find it in its power to assist me in defraying the expense in two areas.

First, the cost of therapy that has been necessary to deal with the emotional pain of opening up these wounds again.

Secondly, the cost of having to sacrifice a week of vacation time from my job as an oncology nurse in order to attend the trial in Philadelphia. It is my hope that the Church can be of help to me in shouldering these expenses.

Respectfully yours,

Johanna Alexis Oslovar

cc: The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori  
Rev. Margo Maris

I was a victim of Charles E. Bennison. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I AM a victim of Charles E. Bennison. As much as I would like to believe that I am free from being victimized, my present reality tells a different story. I am still fighting for justice and accountability. I still have to tend old and new emotional wounds, and I am still hostage to the abuse that John Wm. Bennison perpetrated, and that Charles E. Bennison allowed to continue. As a hostage of sexual abuse and cover up by the Bennisons, I long for freedom, wholeness and restoration.

Over the years, I've had a great deal of counseling; most of it good, some of it very bad. I've had scripture thrown at me, been admonished to "forgive and press on", told that my struggles with depression are because of unconfessed sin in my life, and finally, that I was misdirected in my fervor for justice – that I should be only concerned about John Bennison's crimes, not the conduct of Charles Bennison. Indeed, John Bennison was the abuser – he did unspeakable damage to my body, mind and heart, but Charles Bennison, by his inaction and subsequent cover-up of the abuse, wounded my soul. While John is clearly guilty of sins of commission, Charles is responsible for sins of omission. By choosing inaction when faced with the evidence of his brother's sexual relationship with me, Charles Bennison sentenced me to a lifetime of captivity – in bondage to guilt, shame, betrayal, deceit and powerlessness.

I often wonder how different my life could have been if Charles Bennison would have chosen to act with courage and integrity when he was first told that I was "John's woman." I would have been spared the unspeakable sexual degradation that took place during the last two years of John's abuse. I would have learned that I was loved, cared for and protected by my pastor and my Church. I would have known that I had worth and value in the kingdom of God, that God and His people would protect the innocent and vulnerable, and that my Church was a place of justice.

I am well aware that this statement will be a matter of public record. What is so painful to remember will be scrutinized in every detail and subject to commentary and opinion. Unable to protect myself from the Bennisons in those painful years at St. Mark's, I've had 30 years since to learn that I still cannot assume others will protect my dignity. For this reason I am guarded in this statement and will not reveal specific details of the harm done to me by Charles Bennison's conduct.

Because of the behavior of Charles Bennison, John Bennison was enabled to continue his degradation, exploitation and abuse of my body. I learned that my body was something to be used for someone else's satisfaction; it did not belong to me. I was not a person of dignity, created by God in His image; I was a sexual toy,

useful and easy to manipulate. The fact that my body responded to the abuse was a reality that caused me great humiliation and disgust. My body was a shell, something that I loathed. Charles Bennison's failure to intervene and stop John's abuse sentenced me to years of self-destructive behaviors that spoke volumes of the sense of shame I had over my body and my God-given sexuality.

When Charles Bennison chose not to investigate or intervene in his brother's abuse of me, he sentenced me to remain in emotional bondage to John Bennison. I was told what to think, what to do and how to do it. When I rebelled, my arguments were snuffed and I learned that saying "no" led to untold heartache. I was not to tell anyone of "our special love, part of God's divine plan" – I would be disowned by my family. I was consumed with guilt and shame over what was happening, yet soon learned to internalize these intense emotions as a means of coping with what I knew to be wrong, yet was powerless to stop. Because I was young, I had no coping tools or protective shields. I learned to disconnect from my emotions – trying desperately to appear normal on the outside, yet tormented by demons within. This pattern of emotional survival persisted long after the abuse ended. The more damaged I felt, the more I tried to be perfect – if I just worked harder, perhaps I could prove that I wasn't weak and shameful after all.

Early in my freshman year at UCLA, I told John Bennison that I never wanted to see or hear from him again. I wanted so badly to have a fresh start, to be a person without secrets or shame. For the next 16 months I struggled to make sense of what had happened at St. Mark's Church, but was unable to even name what had been done to me by John Bennison. I was anxious, depressed, and regularly abusing alcohol as a means of numbing my profound anguish. On the infrequent occasions when I returned home for the weekend and joined my parents for Sunday services at St. Mark's, I felt acutely uncomfortable, aware that there were rumors among the congregation that I had done something unseemly with John Bennison. I felt that I had lost my church; it was no longer a place where I felt loved and accepted. Despite what he knew about his brother's behavior, Charles Bennison did not contact me to see if I needed pastoral care or psychological support, nor did he tell my parents what he knew.

By the spring of 1978, I had reached a point of absolute despair, having lost all hope of being normal. My life was without passion, vigor or truth – I no longer knew who or what I was, only that I wanted the pain inside me to end. I was completely alone; humiliated by gossip and unable to find solace in my church, too ashamed to call upon my God, whom I no longer understood or knew as a consequence of John's lies and distortions of truth, unable to make friends at college for fear that they would discover the truth about me, and finally, alienated from my parents. I was afraid that my family would condemn me for immorality

if they knew the ugly details of what had happened between John Bennison and me. The only way I knew to keep the turmoil secret was to stay away from home. Having lost my faith, the comfort of family and friends, and the hope of a life worth living, I began to plan ways to end my life.

A UCLA crisis hot line led me to a therapist who helped me begin to look at the heartache in my body, mind, heart and soul. It was at his urging that I finally revealed the abuse to my parents, who were devastated with the news. When confronted by my mother in 1978, Charles Bennison acknowledged that he knew what my revelation was about. But instead of reaching out to me, Charles again chose to focus his concern on the possibility of scandal, ignoring my torment. My parents and I were left to suffer in silence, realizing that Charles Bennison would protect his own brother, but not his parishioners, his flock.

As a consequence of Charles Bennison's behavior, I lost any sense of self-worth. When something or someone is precious and of value to you, you do everything in your power to protect and guard it. When I was a child in Sunday school at St. Mark's, I learned about Jesus the Good Shepherd, who would leave the 99 sheep to find the one that wandered off, not willing that any of his sheep be lost. Not only did Charles not rescue or protect me, his failure to do so prevented those who loved me from safeguarding their child. Without the protection of my pastor or family, I soon understood that I was not worth protecting. This painful view of self was lived out in ways that I cannot describe.

Whereas John Bennison broke my tender heart, Charles Bennison embittered my heart. John brutalized my body and mind, but Charles Bennison hardened my heart. He didn't protect me or rescue me when he had the opportunity, nor did he tend to my heartache in the 30 years after the abuse ended, nor did he tell me that John's behavior was wrong. There were no actions or words on the part of Charles that showed me God's love. I trusted him to be my pastor, and he abandoned me. John distorted and perverted my understanding of God, but Charles stole the Church from me. He was ordained to build up the family of God, but chose to betray my innocent trust. Instead of using his power and authority to seek comfort and justice for my family and me, he used his influence to shelter his brother and protect his own reputation. The Church that had been a place of sanctuary, comfort and hope for me became the "scene of the crime" – where I was used, discarded and forgotten. When Charles Bennison stood by silently as John Bennison was reinstated to the priesthood, any hope that my pastor would be a voice for my sorrow was abandoned.

In 1993, I felt emotionally strong enough to begin to investigate what could be done within the Episcopal Church to find justice and healing. I did so with the

help and support of my mother and the Rev. Margo Maris. When Rev. Maris informed Charles Bennison of the intervention process, he declined to participate. Again, Charles did not contact me to see what he could do to assist in my healing, nor did he make any acknowledgement of his role in perpetuating the abuse. It is true that I did not specifically detail exactly what I wanted from him. I naively hoped that he would have the integrity to respond, knowing the part he played in my pain.

In the summer of 1993, I met with John Bennison and his Bishop, William Swing. Also in attendance were my mother, Rev. Margo Maris, and Bishop Harold Hopkins. I needed to face my abuser and describe the impact that his behavior had and continued to have on my life. It was a horrific experience – John challenged my understanding of the nature of our “relationship,” I was verbally attacked by Bishop Swing for daring to threaten the reputation of his priest, and otherwise treated in a hostile and confrontational manner. Bishop Swing accused me of being vindictive and insinuated that I was only after financial compensation. There were no words of compassion or concern for my mother or me nor any evidence of God’s love for that matter. When I returned home after this disastrous experience, I fell into a clinical depression. Depression had been a regular visitor in my life as a consequence of the behavior of the Bennisons, but this time around it was especially hard to endure. I had been so hopeful that the intervention process would allow me to find peace and wholeness once and for all, and instead I felt revictimized, humiliated and dismissed by the leaders and Church I had loved and trusted.

A disclosure took place at St. Mark’s Church in October of 1993. In a letter to the vestry, I described the abuse I had experienced at the hands of John Bennison, and Charles Bennison’s inaction in the matter. Although I did not speak personally at this meeting, I was present and allowed my name to be used in full. What I remember most clearly about this gathering was a comment by one of the longstanding parishioners, who wondered how it could be anything but consensual, since I did not have a gun placed to my head. Meanwhile, there was to be a disclosure at John Bennison’s church in Clayton, CA. In my naiveté, I trusted that the entire truth would be told at John’s church. Unfortunately, only part of the abuse story was shared with the parishioners – they were not told that I was a minor and that the abuse continued uninterrupted for four years of my adolescence.

In November of 1993, I received a letter from Bishop Swing informing me that he would not remove John Bennison from ministry, as he had a spotless record of service to his church. I heard nothing but silence from Charles Bennison. Weary and emotionally beaten down by this “healing” process, I acknowledged to myself

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and my family that I would not receive justice from the Church, nor would there be any genuine repentance from John and Charles Bennison for the harm done to me. I accepted, however painfully, that I had done all that I knew to do. I had wanted this tragedy addressed within the Church; pursuing criminal or civil charges would only cause greater anguish.

Time and time again, CEB had the opportunity to truly enter into this tragedy, and share my brokenness, and help me find healing and comfort and wholeness. I never expected that he could take away the reality of what his brother had done, but I did hope that he would *see* my desperation and help me. If a car hits a child, do we not rush to help, not waiting to be asked, or asking for "proof" of visible injuries?

In 2004, I received word that the statute of limitations was being temporarily lifted in California to allow victims of sexual abuse to file charges. I had no interest in pursuing legal action against Charles or John Bennison. I had sacrificed too much of my life to this sorrow, and I refused to devote any more of my emotional energy to it. In 2006, I was informed that SNAP (Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests) was planning to release a public statement regarding John Bennison and his history of abusive behavior. When I was contacted by the news media to give an interview regarding my abuse, I did not respond. I contacted the Rev. Margo Maris and told her that I wanted no part in playing out this story in the media. Even so, the public exposure was devastating. Shocking details of my sexual abuse that I had never shared with my mother and brother were televised. Out of fear that they would hear from outside sources, my husband and I had to finally tell our sons about my painful past, something I never wanted to burden them with. It grieves me that it took an embarrassing public scandal to get the Church to even begin to address the wrong, remove John Bennison from ministry, and start the

resigned, there would be an ecclesiastical trial. In light of my experience in 1993, I had no interest in being part of a trial, and I fervently prayed that Charles would resign and spare my family and me from the trauma of a trial.

When it became apparent that Charles Bennison had no intention of quietly resigning, I prepared as best as I could for the emotional stress of giving testimony at trial. I had the prayer support of my faith community, the wise counsel of my therapist, the love of my husband and sons, and the faithful presence of my advocate, the Rev. Margo Maris. How bad could it be? However, now I realize that nothing could have prepared me for the impact that hearing Charles Bennison testify would have on my heart. It was one thing to learn to accept his silence and

degree of his emotional disconnect and indifference was devastating. Hearing Charles use words like "illicit, immoral, fornication" to describe the heinous abuse that I suffered at the hands of his own brother was, and remains horrifying to me. I felt naked and humiliated at the trial – forced to relive, yet again, the shame, guilt, betrayal and degradation of John Bennison's abuse. I never expected the trial experience to be easy, but I did not anticipate the degree of extreme emotional anguish I would carry home with me at the conclusion of Charles Bennison's testimony.

Why did Charles Bennison have to drag my family and me through this very public heartache? Where is his compassion and soul? Has he no shame? I watched my mother hold her head up despite being relentlessly badgered by

scandal to force just action. I ask the Church to depose Charles Bennison because it is the right decision to make in light of his behavior. He has not demonstrated godly leadership or integrity and should not be in the position of leading the flock. A pastor is not "just a man." He is appointed by God to stand in Christ's stead to his people. He has a sacred responsibility to uphold the faith, order and discipline of the Church. He is to be a guardian of the Church's faith and its people. Charles Bennison dishonors his Church, his profession and his faith.

There have been murmurings that we (my family and I) are vindictive, bent on destroying the Bennisons. Nothing could be further from the truth. I only ask for justice and accountability. I long for peace and rest for my soul. I have carried the burden of this travesty for more than 30 years. I only ask that those who should rightly bear this burden now take it upon their shoulders. I'm weary of it. Give me freedom. Restore to me faith in the Church, the certainty that the innocent and vulnerable will be safe, that those in leadership will "be merciful to all, show compassion to the poor and strangers, and defend those who have no helper." Restore to me and all the faithful the confidence that the vows of ordination are sacred and will be defended by the Church. Return to me the Church that I lost so many years ago, the Church that I loved and trusted.

## **TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE COURT FOR THE TRIAL OF A BISHOP**

A Victim Impact Statement Regarding the Trial of the Bishop of Pennsylvania, Charles E. Bennison, Jr. for Conduct Unbecoming a Member of the Clergy

**IN THE BEGINNING** - 50 years ago, my husband Don and I and our toddlers Allison and Andy, lived in Butte, Montana where Don was the new pediatrician in town. It was there that we were introduced to St. John's Episcopal Church and we instantly felt that it was our spiritual home. Shortly afterward we were confirmed just in time to welcome to our family a perfect new baby, Martha, our third child. We very soon took her to St. John's and presented her for Holy Baptism. It is a Sacrament with words that have never ceased to move me even now: We were asked, "Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present, Martha, is brought up in the Christian faith and life?" We said, "I will with God's help"; and, on behalf of Martha, "Do you renounce Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?" and we said "I renounce them". . . .and so on for the whole beautiful liturgy.

Shortly after Martha was baptized we moved to Southern California, where we joined Christ Episcopal Church in Ontario, California. We stayed for 9 years, during which time our fourth child, Emily Ann, was born and baptized. When we were expecting another child we moved to a bigger house and changed our membership to St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Upland, California, just blocks away from our home, where our fifth child, a daughter, Elizabeth Rose, was baptized. The rector at that time was Father John Harrison, a man who along with his wife Betty, we loved and respected. It was he who when our fourth child, Emily, died at the age of six following heart surgery, ministered to us and conducted the funeral and the solemn Burial of a Child. In 1971, while Don was serving on the vestry, St. Mark's called CEB who was studying for a PHD at the nearby Claremont School of Theology, to be our next rector.

This was a fateful day for our family because the very next year, 1972, CEB brought his brother John, a Claremont divinity student, to be on the church staff as the youth minister.

Never at that time could we have imagined what would become of our child Martha as a result of these two brothers, first Charles, and then John, coming into our lives. In 1971 she was 13 years old and when John arrived she was 14 years of age.

Our faith, which we entered into 50 years ago in Butte with "gladness and singleness of heart" was attacked in the very place where we expected to be, and had a right to be, safe from the "wickedness of the world". Martha was taken from us for years by first, John Bennison, and second, by Charles Bennison, our rector.

**THE TRIAL** - This has been an excruciating time for all of us as we are forced to recall the pain of the past. We have willingly entered into it because we have sought for years to tell our story, to tell the truth, to be believed and vindicated, and now at last after 30 years of unsuccessful struggle for me and 36 years for Martha we finally have this opportunity. We believe we have an obligation to stand up not only for ourselves but for the other victims that we know, like Muriel and Pat, and for others we do not know, that they too can be acknowledged. Our prayer is that this will change a Church that has up to this time often cared more for the shepherd than for the sheep. We, the victim/survivors, are the sheep that the Lord Jesus Christ referred to in Matthew 18, and that Bishop Richards reminded us of in the trial.

You have the transcript of the trial and know the individual testimonies so I will not repeat them. What follows declares the impact of all that happened, has had on me, the mother of the victim/survivor, Martha Alexis.

### **IMPACT - Shame**

After the disclosure by Martha in 1978, Don and I gradually resumed a relationship with CEB as pointed out in testimony, and for that I am deeply ashamed. How must that have made my daughter feel! Certainly that her experience was something to get over, because apparently her mother got over it. I continued to attend Saint Mark's and I even expected my two daughters to be married by CEB. Oh, how much I regret that, and how ashamed I am! I don't know what I should have done, but I know what I should not have done. I wish I could have lied when Mr. Pabarue asked me if CEB had officiated at the weddings of my two daughters. I wish I could have lied and said "no", or I wish could have lied and said "I

don't remember", but to my further shame I could not.

When Martha, after 15 years and much counseling, felt strong enough to confront John Bennison about the harm done to her, with the support and counsel of Margo Maris, she decided to initiate an Intervention, she called and asked me if I would stand up with her, but would understand if I would not because of my love for CEB, shame rained down on me. That she should, and understandably so, ever question that I would support her with my whole heart!

I protected CEB when I didn't insist that he be involved in the '92,'93 Intervention, and even as recently as 2006 when I finessed a question by TV reporter Dan Noyes about CEB's part in the John Bennison story. I was so focused on removing John Bennison from the ministry that I could not address the failure of CEB, too. One Bennison at a time was all I could handle, but it was still an omission on my part.

Even after John was removed I still did not volunteer information about CEB to the Presiding Bishop. Even at the beginning of this trial, I intended to take no stand on his sentence. I am ashamed for thinking it was the problem for the Diocese of Pennsylvania, and not my business. (Especially because I recall that in his deposition CEB stated " she (referring to me) was making constant appeals to the Church to rectify what she thought was a gross piece of failure of ecclesiastical leadership" and on being asked his response he said, "That it was their problem". )

CEB is not my model. This matter of the sentence is my business. The Episcopal Church belongs to me too, not just the clergy, and we need to care about and to protect each other.

### **IMPACT - Anger**

After Martha told me in 1978, the anger at both brothers was overwhelming, only assuaged by being assured by CEB that John had renounced his vows and would never again be a priest.

Eventually, with time, after Martha's disclosure in 1978 and her seeming recovery, Don and I resumed our attendance at St. Mark's and our friendship with CEB. But the anger wasn't gone, it was only buried. The very next year, 1979, we learned that John had been reinstated to the priesthood without our being informed ahead of time, and with CEB in

attendance! The anger erupted again like a scabbed wound broken open.

Another cause for anger is that not until SNAP and an investigative reporter, Dan Noyes of ABC7 and KGO San Francisco made public the story of John Bennison, did Bishop J. Jon Bruno, Bishop of Los Angeles, remove him from the ministry. Because of the bad publicity, the Presiding Bishop insisted that something be done about it. The Episcopal Church was embarrassed and scandalized. That's what it took to do the right thing.

In CEB's deposition he claimed that Don and I shared with him our concern about Martha being "too adventurous, that she was trying new things". This never happened and was not true and is so far off the mark that I realize that he doesn't even know who Martha is! (Deposition Feb 26 '07 Page 14 )

In this trial Charles explained he "would not have applied these (today's) protocols then because Martha would have been regarded as "licentious, immoral, fornication on her (Martha's) part. . ." ) and for him to call that decision "wise, sensitive, pastoral care" is enraging. (Transcript Day 4 Page 30 - 31)

I don't want to be a person consumed with anger. I know anger hurts me more than it does anyone else. So what am I going to do? It was believed that this trial would bring a victim/survivor like me closure but for me Bishop Bennison's own testimony has added to the fire. The day that the Bennison brothers entered our life was a dark day for the Alexis family.

### **IMPACT - Grief**

The grief is for Martha's lost high school years. I will be attending a high school reunion in August and still have friends from my 1949 Akron, Ohio West High School class. Martha will never attend a high school reunion and she has no high school friends. All that was stolen from her. The grief is also for the lost parental connection, the lost mother and daughter relationship. It was her father and I who were responsible for her raising, not John Bennison, it was her father and I who should have had the privilege of shepherding her through her painful adolescent years. John supplanted us, she turned to him, not us. And CEB stole her from us too when he made the decision not to tell us, the parents. Oh how much has been lost! And it was not over when she told us in 1978. She still suffered

without telling us and until our joint effort at the Intervention, there was an unspoken barrier to our relationship. So she lost her adolescent years and I lost a daughter for a long time. We are together today, but there are so many lost years.

### **IMPACT - Guilt**

This is enormous, I did not protect my daughter. I did not want to believe that such a violation could be possible. When I confronted John Bennison and he strongly denied the accusation, I wanted to believe him because not to do so would be so horrendous I couldn't comprehend it. I wanted to believe that he would not break his ordination vows, which I later learned were a lie anyway. I believed him because I wanted to believe him. Anyone who thinks I have been courageous in standing up for my daughter is wrong, I failed her at the most important time.

### **IMPACT - Lack of Pastoral Care**

Much has been made of the lack of CEB's pastoral care. I ask, how it is possible for the enabler to counsel the mother of the victim? I did not ask for, nor expect his "sensitive compassionate pastoral care" when he himself contributed to this tragedy. I did not "invite" him to the Intervention, first because this was all about John and secondly to my shame I believed that relatively CEB was the "good" brother, and John was the "bad" brother. What was I thinking? Did Jesus Christ think in relative terms? CEB was the one who brought John to my family. He was the one that stood by for the ordination of this predator and later for his reinstatement. How long it took me to realize that there was no "good" brother! Not until this trial and reading his own testimony did I truly recognize that fact. I have had no pastoral care from him, it would have been impossible. Any care and counseling I have had from the church is through Margo Maris.

### **IMPACT - Family Secrets**

When I learned the news in 1978, my two older children were out of the home. My son was still at college and my older daughter had graduated but living elsewhere. I didn't call them to tell them what had happened so they didn't know. Andy piece by piece learned about it and has been a bulwark ever since. My older daughter already suspicious of

organized religion didn't want to know. Even now, though she and Martha are close sisters, this matter is peripheral. My youngest daughter found the draft of a letter that Don was writing to Bishop Rusack in 1978 and so on a level that an 11 year old can know, she knew the secret. She, now 41, is still unchurched.

### **IMPACT - Church Secrets**

From the time that John began as the youth group director in 1972 until the preparations for the October 1993 Disclosure at St. Mark's those who knew what had transpired were the Bennisons, the Alexis', Ann Allen, the mysterious person that CEB referred to who told him on a "sunny morning in my office", and Ann's sons Greg and Bruce and undoubtedly other teenagers in the youth group. That secret could not hold forever. But while it did, none of us were free. We were bound by the secrets.

I remember sitting in church behind Bishop and Mrs. Bennison, the brothers' parents. I had written them a letter informing them of what John had done but they never spoke of it to me, nor did I to them. How strange to sit in a house of worship harboring this unspoken truth. Keeping the secrets was a burden and ". . . the burden of them was intolerable".

Jesus said "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me. . . and you will find rest for your souls. . ." I didn't look to Jesus then, I just got used to carrying the burden and I did it for years. Today I give it up to Him. I cannot carry it any longer. The silence of CEB, keeping the secrets, the desire to prevent scandal and preserve confidentiality didn't work for me. How complicated we make everything when all we need to do and all we ever promised to do was follow the words and the deeds of Jesus Christ.

In March 1993 when the leaders of St. Mark's began to prepare for the Disclosure that was to be made in October, I met with Jonathan Glass, the rector, and Murray Duvall, a lay leader that I considered a friend. On that occasion I was offered therapy if I desired and informed that a meeting was scheduled the following night and was asked if I was "up to it". I then learned that the Suffragen Bishop would be present along with the Chancellor, a Consultant, the Senior Warden, the Junior Warden, the Headmaster of the school, and Murray and Jonathan himself. I quickly understood that this meeting had been planned far in

advance and that I had been invited at the last minute with the hope that I would not be "up to it". The only conclusion possible was that it was an intentional exclusion. How ironic that a meeting to strategize a Disclosure about long held secrets, should itself be secret and exclude a major player, me.

I was indeed "up to it". It was an awkward meeting and I fully realized that I was the outsider, the problem to deal with, the unwelcome guest, the party crasher. I had no

~~advocate there and I no longer trusted Jonathan and Murray. The moment I~~

who had stood up for my right to be present. They anxiously waited for me to depart so that they could debrief. I stayed as long as I could stand it.

From that day forth I no longer felt that I belonged at St. Mark's. I had been a faithful parishioner for years, but it wasn't enough. I was separated from the Body of Christ as I knew it, St. Mark's Upland. Metaphorically they had a feast and I wasn't invited. Jesus taught that the stranger should have been seated at the head of the table, and I was somewhere at the end. I continued to attend services until I moved in 1997, but it was never the same again.

In October the long planned for Disclosure was made; present were Bishop Borsch, Martha, Margo, and myself and a group of about a hundred parishioners. (Missing were the

### **IMPACT - Betrayal**

Don and I truly did love CEB. It has been very hard to accept the fact that he put his career, his fear of scandal, his opinion of our teen-aged Martha as "culpable" and his pretense of preserving her "confidentiality" foremost. Not until this trial and his testimony did I fully accept this.

I have lost a dear friend.

### **IMPACT - A Reconciliation**

Maggie Bennison Thompson's very presence as a happy and normal wife acted as a cover and contributed to the success of John Bennison's ongoing sexual perversity. We have forgiven her and recognize that she too was a victim of his twisted theology. She has redeemed herself completely by her unremitting crusade to seek justice for all of those who have been deceived as she herself has been deceived. Maggie stands with us.

### **IMPACT -The Question of Healing**

The opportunity to make an impact statement is a chance for me to make a public confession that is an important step in my healing. It is hard to do but I hope that it will free me of unresolved emotions that I have felt for so long.

This process has been another major step in my healing. It is astounding! All of us have fought the Church for 30 years for the acknowledgement and rightful consequences of wrongs done and this is the first time we have been taken seriously by those with the authority to act.

If you depose CEB, I hope that it will be proven true that the value of one soul outweighs the many good works of the Bishop. Then I will turn to Margo and Martha and

And to Maggie and ...

permitted to remain as a Bishop in the Episcopal Church.. He has demonstrated by his own testimony that he has not learned anything from the experience with his brother and the Alexis family. The whole Episcopal Church will continue to suffer if he is allowed to remain.

## **CONCLUSION**

On the 4th of July weekend, I attended a baby shower for a very dear friend and prayer group partner. Her daughter, Elisabeth, will be born in September. Sitting in the midst of this group of women I wondered, reflecting back 50 years ago when Don and I brought Martha to St. John's to be baptized, will the Episcopal Church be any safer for Elisabeth than it was for Martha? Will our standing up and telling the truth today make the Church of the future any safer? Will Elisabeth grow up in a Church where the leadership is not afraid?

Today I see a hurting Church with many members like us who have been deeply wounded and disillusioned. My hope is that this trial process, painful though it is, will be a purifying force, and that our Church will be once again, as Don and I believed it was when we were first confirmed, faithful and true.

Julia Alexis

July 12, 2008

Shell Beach, California

## Victim Statement

Andy Alexis

July 10, 2008

Sacramento, California

It is very difficult for me, after knowing the Bennison brothers for 38 years, to state exactly how they have impacted my life and my family's life. They were both part of my family for a long time, for better and for worse. Imagining our lives without them is like an antithesis of "It's a Wonderful Life" in which George Bailey was suffered to see his life if it was as perfect as he had always dreamed it should have been, rather than as troubled and as difficult as it had been. It is also like trying to imagine life without an arm or leg, or imagine a life of blindness, or imagine my life if I was able to fly. It is simply incomprehensible.

On the surface, our times with the Bennison Brothers between the years 1970 and 1978 were wonderful and full of life and spontaneity. Our life at St Marks with the Bennison brothers filled a hole in my life; I was not popular at Upland High School, and I felt like a misfit there. My sister testified that she was a nerd in high school; that label fits me better than it does her. However, at St Marks, I felt I was part of a large community beyond my family; I felt the respect of my peers there and felt that it was a place where my gifts were appreciated. Charles inspired me with his sermons; John inspired me to want to learn how to play the guitar.

As has been ruthlessly documented in the trial, however, most of this was all veneer and false. There was little about those years that were normal or healthy for my family.

Of all of the members of my family, I and my other two sisters were protected by my parents and by my sister from the great evil done to us by the Bennison brothers. The flip side of this protection was that they were forced to lie to us directly and indirectly by omission for decades. I also protected myself, as well, by my naïveté in not seeing or explaining away telling clues to what was really happening. This naïveté however is a direct result of the Bennisons; I was lying to myself unconsciously to protect myself. This lasted until my father, who knew he was dying, felt obliged to tell me the truth of what had happened. By that time in 1988, though, I had already pieced together some of what had occurred. He told me because he was a good father, but he also told me for himself; he knew that his time on this earth was very limited and he had to be able to live with himself. He was a good man and had to go to his grave knowing he was unable to protect his family.

After the trial, I reviewed a stack of about 30 letters from my sister during our college years. During the trial, she testified that her college years were very troubled for her, and were filled with self destructive behaviors. Yet in her letters, there is a not a single clue of this. She wrote about boys she wanted to know

better; going to the "big game" with her friends; and studying for midterms and finals. She even went so far as to comfort me for my troubles and frustrations. I now realize that my sister was writing these letters as the person she desperately wanted to be, and not as the person who was at the low point of her life and on the verge of self-annihilation. She was lying to herself and to me. I am not sure though that I would have been emotionally mature enough to have helped at that age, but it devastates me to think that I could have done something about it or, if nothing else, served as a confidant and sounding board to my sister or my parents. Emotional maturity and self awareness comes from sacrifice and hard life experience however, and I was denied this by the secretive way in which the abuse was handled by Charles and by my family. The Bennison brothers denied this maturity to themselves as well.

I do not know what motivations drove Charles and John Bennison to act as they did. Being brothers, I am reminded of something my sister told me years ago as a parent to three small boys; the arguments and misbehavior of her boys were really just their collaboration to get their parent's attention. Both brothers were collaborators in this abuse. Whether Charles or John made conscious choices or unconscious choices for their actions, I can not say for certain. If I had to guess, I would say Charles' actions began unconsciously and ended consciously; and John's tended to be conscious at first and are now unconscious. As the parent of a child on the autistic spectrum, I am aware that some people are physically incapable of seeing life from the point of view of others. As I described above, I am also aware of how our minds will lie to us and thus protect us when there is a perceived threat or great pain, either due to the actions of others or due to our own actions. One side of this is naïveté; the other side is selective amnesia.

It is clear to me now after hearing testimony by Charles that he is still not aware of what he has done wrong, and may never be aware. From what I learned of John's recent actions and letters, he as well has not come to terms with the impacts of his actions on our family, on himself and on his own family.

Either way, though, both men broke their ordination vows, and at some level, are still not fully aware that they have done so. Apart from ordination vows, though, they did not even act properly as friends, as neighbors, or as practicing Christians. Both brothers had many opportunities to set things right, and have not done so. Their actions are not acceptable for anyone, regardless or whether or not they wear a clerical collar. I would not knowingly choose to interact in any way with anyone who acts as they have.

The ability of any leader to act properly in difficult and painful situations such as this requires a great deal of self awareness, the courage to act selflessly, and an ability to see the world from the viewpoint of others. Neither brother has any of these abilities, and most likely will never have them. Allowing either brother to act as leaders will permit, and most likely already has permitted the same pain

and heartbreak our family has suffered to be repeated in other families and in other situations which are or were in their power to heal.

Accordingly, I humbly request that the Court permanently depose Charles Bennison; not solely as punishment for his actions before the court, but primarily as a positive pastoral choice made by the Court to ensure that the evil endured by my family will never again be inflicted on other families under the pastoral care of Charles Bennison. It grieves me greatly to envision the impact of this judgment on their wives, families, and friends, who are also innocent victims, but I believe that there can be no alternative. Both Charles and John have many gifts, however, and I am certain they can share these gifts and serve God in other ways, as countless other people of faith do already in their everyday lives.

Witness Impact Statement  
By Maggie Thompson  
In the Matter of the Ecclesiastical Trial of  
Charles E. Bennison, Jr.  
July 19, 2008

Charles Bennison has been found guilty on two counts of conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy. My recommendation is that his sentence be one of permanent deposition from the priesthood. Since the 1970's, and continuing to the present day, his inactions and actions have had a profound impact on me, affecting my life in the church, my spirituality, and my emotional well-being. The impact also extends to my loved ones.

## PREFACE

*For the beauty of the earth  
For the beauty of the skies  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies  
Christ our God to Thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise.*

The Hymnal 1982, #416

I happened across it again the other day – a sterling silver medallion with a profile of Jesus on one side and, on the back, the words "I am an Episcopalian." It was a gift from my Sunday school teacher for good attendance, and I wore the necklace proudly as a child. The Episcopal Church has been a foundation of my life for as long as I can remember. Even as a young child I loved the music and recognized the beauty of the Episcopal liturgy. I grew in faith amidst a warm church family, leading to my confirmation in sixth grade. God was very present to me on our dairy farm - in the fertile earth, the animals, the seasons and through my parents abiding love. Spontaneously, I often sang hymns in the fields to my cows and dogs. My father served many terms on the vestry. After breakfast, sitting on the side of his bed before going to the Kane County Courthouse where he was the Probate Judge, he regularly read the Daily Office from the Book of Common Prayer. When my mother tucked me in at night, she instilled in my heart the words from Philippians 4:8, praying that I would fill my life with "whatsoever is true, pure, lovely and of good report." Later, in the 1970's, my mother became the first woman to ever serve on the vestry of our church. I took religion seriously, found joy in worship, and found strong friendships and role models in the congregation. The clergy had my unconditional trust.

When I fell in love with John Bennison and married into the Bennison family of clergy, it felt like an ideal outgrowth of my childhood faith – a life and family that I wholeheartedly embraced.

## SPIRITUALITY AND LIFE IN THE CHURCH

*I bind this day to me forever  
By power of faith,  
Christ's Incarnation.*

The Hymnal 1982, #370

Early on in the marriage to John, my trust was betrayed by violation of our marriage vows through his insidious calculated erosion of my self-esteem and his sexual infidelities. With knowledge of John's aberrant sexual behaviors, Charles Bennison made a mockery of the Rite of Ordination by presenting John for ordination twice – first to the Diaconate in August of 1974, and again to the Priesthood in June of 1975. When charged, "If you know any impediment or crime because of which we should not proceed, come forward now and make it known," (BCP, 539), Charles said nothing. Charles' support of John to be ordained raised the level of power available to John, which enabled John, in the name of God, to escalate his domestic abuse of me and his emotional, spiritual and sexual abuse of many vulnerable female parishioners, including Martha Alexis who was a minor at the time. This was compounded by Bishop Robert Rusack who, after I told him of John's flagrant sexual misconduct, reinstated John to the priesthood in 1979, which allowed John to continue, unchecked, in parish ministry. The truth and gravity of my concerns were brushed aside. I felt betrayed by Bishop Rusack and further victimized by the Episcopal Church. Charles was present for John's reinstatement ceremony and, again, said nothing regarding his knowledge of John's abusive and criminal (in the case of one minor) sexual behavior.

As a result, I am guarded and suspicious of all clergy, especially Bishops. I do not trust clergy unless they have proven to me over time that they are worthy of that trust. Rev. Margo Maris and my parish rector David Hall are among the few who have earned and sustained my trust. Because the betrayal of the ordination vows by Charles and John Bennison has been so profound, to this day ordination ceremonies are very painful to me. I cannot wholeheartedly support any ordination due to the corruption I have witnessed, even when I know the candidates to be worthy. The hymns for ordinations continue to bring me to tears. Memories of the bright floating batik processional banner and the jubilant yellow clergy stole designed and made by June Alexis for John's ordinations symbolize the trust, hope and love that was brazenly usurped by Charles and John Bennison.

I have been determined to deny the Bennisons the power to destroy my faith in God and my life in the Episcopal Church, but there has been an accompanying conflict in navigating a fulfilling path of worship in a denomination where I have been abandoned and betrayed by so many of its clergy. The jarring words of Marjorie Bennison (mother of John and Charles), which I thought bizarre when I first heard them as a young bride, have sadly proven true. "The Church exists in spite of the clergy."

After John and I were divorced and I had married Ron, and prior to a weekend visit back to Upland in April of 1979, Charles wrote me a letter admonishing me not to set foot in St. Mark's because he anticipated that my presence would cause scandal to erupt and he feared losing his job. Charles' paramount concern was self-protection and advancement of his own career. Charles saw me as a threat and an embarrassment and clearly sought to keep a lid on the truth. His response was painful to me and added to my sense of isolation and shame. I felt abandoned because the severity of my emotional and spiritual damage was not validated. With self-doubt, I became afraid of people finding out about my past. Charles' negative judgments and lack of compassion made it much more difficult for me to come forward with my truth. There was no safe place to go for help in the Episcopal Church - not until 1991 when I happened upon Rev. Margo Maris' enlightened article about healing from clergy sexual abuse. I took comfort in the Prayer for Quiet Confidence (BCP, 832), which became the fabric of my life.

O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON ME

*Wherefore with my utmost art I will sing thee;  
And the cream of all my heart I will bring thee.  
Though my sins against me cried, Thou didst clear me,  
And alone when they replied, Thou didst hear me.*

The Hymnal 1982, #382

The following string of adjectives burst forth as I gathered my thoughts about the emotional impact of the Bennison case: betrayal, abandonment, mistrust of clergy, sadness, anger, fear, loss, discouragement, insecurity, self-doubt, guilt, shame, intimidation, worthlessness, desperation. I thought of Ralph Jacobs' question posed at the conclusion of the trial, "What do we want our church to be?" Certainly not a place characterized by the feelings listed above. Yet this is what I have lived with. To stay buoyant I have had to compartmentalize my faith, seeking the life-affirming light and

boxing up the evil Bennisson dark. The light that has sustained me is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the music and in precious friendships among the laity. I have been a joyful church musician since the age of eight. Music rivets my soul to God more deeply than anything else. In times of intense Bennisson despair, it has only been the sacred choral music of Bach, Brahms, Rutter, Faure, Mozart, and others that has soothed my heart and nourished my soul. In addition to the abuse carried out in God's name by John Bennisson, the dark side has been the silence and inaction of Charles Bennisson, Bishop William Swing, Bishop Robert Rusack and others in the hierarchy of the Episcopal Church. The emotional cost of this struggle for over thirty years has been a tremendous drain on my time and energy – resources that came at great expense to my loved ones.

With regard to Charles Bennisson's role of "conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy" ~~inserted here~~

permanently left the priesthood within two weeks of the first broadcast. Charles continued his silence.

Following this media exposure, Charles' role of covering up John's sexual misconduct came to the attention of the Standing Committee in the Diocese of Pennsylvania where Charles served as Bishop. With John removed from the priesthood, focus was directed to Charles, a pivotal person in the cover up and broken church system which allowed John's aberrant sexual behavior to go unquestioned for thirty years. In November of 2006, six of us who participated in the media effort went to Philadelphia to speak our truths at three public forums. This was yet another emotionally draining and difficult step, heightening the sadness and tragedy that now spanned three decades.

The recent Presentment and ecclesiastical trial brought more emotional expense and grief as the Alexis family, Ron, Margo Maris and I clung together during a week of intense pain. Enduring Charles' arrogant, self-righteous, condescending, uneducated testimony illustrated clearly "conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy." His stagnant beliefs concerning clergy sexual abuse and his lack of empathy regarding its long term damaging effects have not changed in over thirty years. He showed no shred of compassion, understanding or growth. It was wrenching to me to hear his abhorrent

Further, Charles and his attorney showed complete ignorance of the dynamics and long term effects from the domestic abuse I suffered during my eight years of marriage to a perpetrator. They were unable to acknowledge me as a victim survivor and instead sought to portray me as complicit in the abuse of Martha. This accusation is nothing short of excruciating. Since 1987 when I first had accurate words to describe what had happened as clergy sexual abuse, I have initiated repeated efforts to pursue healing and justice for Martha and for myself and have sought to have my truth heard and honored by the Episcopal Church. I have not given up. I wanted to believe that God's grace and understanding must exist somewhere in the hierarchy of the Episcopal Church. At long last, the verdict from this trial has acknowledged the truth of the far-reaching damage Charles and John Bennison have done to me, to the Alexis family, to other victim survivors and to the Episcopal Church. Charles (and John) has clearly demonstrated that he is a sociopath, with no conscience. The most loving and just

## EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON MY LOVED ONES

The emotional impact of the Bennisons on my family and loved ones has been extensive, and would have been greatly alleviated had these issues been directly dealt with first of all by Charles, and secondly by Bishop Rusack in the 1970's. It has affected the parenting of my two daughters. Though they were raised in the Episcopal Church, attending church, junior choir and Sunday school weekly, they did not become regular members of high school youth groups because I feared for their safety. One daughter chose to be confirmed, the other did not. Even before they knew the full story about John and Charles Bennison, they sensed a confusing disconnect in trust. They lived with my pain and angst during a time of intense therapy in the 1980's, during the 1991-93 intervention, the 2006 media exposure, the 2006 public forums in Philadelphia and the 2008 trial. Now at ages 24 and 27, they are proud of their mother's courage and activism, but they want nothing to do with the Episcopal Church. The baptisms of my daughters were powerful sacraments to me, articulating the highest ideals of the Christian faith. It is a source of great sadness to me that "opening their hearts to God's grace and truth" (Baptismal Covenant, BCP 305) has led them away from the Episcopal Church.

My husband Ron and I met on the steps of our Episcopal Church in Santa Barbara. Spiritual matters have always been of great importance to us. In the wake of the decades of Bennison tragedy, Ron has struggled mightily with his allegiance to the Episcopal Church. He attends church to sing in the choir with me and to offer his trumpet playing to the glory of God, however in an institution peppered with corrupt bishops who abuse their power, he can no longer consider himself an Episcopalian. His spiritual harbor now lies in the Quaker Society of Friends where there are no clergy. It is a grave loss to me that the exuberance of our faithful participation in the Episcopal Church during the fresh days of our marriage has now been irreparably fractured. This festering wound would not have been the outcome had Charles chosen to take appropriate action in the 1970's.

The Bennison impact extends to members of our faith community who are in disbelief, shocked and sickened when they first hear my truth. My story has been of serious concern to one friend who is on the path to ordination. Working with a spiritual advisor and her bishop, she has devoted much thought and prayer regarding the gross mishandling of the Bennison case and its implications in discerning her call to ministry in the Episcopal Church.

The Bennison impact extends to Ron's colleagues in the field of psychology. They are horrified that the Bennison abuse of power and sexual misconduct has spanned this length of years unchallenged. In their profession, sexually abusive conduct results in

immediate action and permanent loss of licensure. They are quick to note the irony of the church, of all places, as being a sheltered venue for perpetrators.

Charles' cover up of John's sexual misconduct has also deeply affected my friend Susan Browne. A former member of the St. Mark's Upland youth group and a near victim of John's herself, she was so distraught with news of the disclosure at St. Mark's in October 1993, that she suffered a profound crisis of faith and sense of betrayal by Charles for his failure to notify parents or to protect youth group members from a sexual predator in their midst. When justice through church channels was woefully unsatisfactory, Susan felt called to explore what else could be done. An astute analyst, she researched legal and media strategies. It was her proactive leadership, in partnership with me, other victim survivors, Rev. Margo Maris and a courageous reporter, that brought about the pivotal media exposure resulting in John Bennison's permanent removal from the priesthood, which was followed by the current ecclesiastical trial of Charles Bennison. With sincere emotional investment, Susan has devoted considerable amounts of her time and expertise to these stressful efforts and has been a steadfast source of encouragement.

*Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.*  
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Like many women, it is more inherent for me to take action on behalf of others than it is to advocate on my own behalf. In the wake of the Bennison tragedy this has been especially true with regard to my feelings for Martha Alexis. In addition to our painful legacy of abuse, she and I shared a genuine friendship in the 1970's. Since 1987 when I first gained full and clear definition of the abuse that had taken place, the healing efforts I have initiated grew in large measure out of my care and concern for Martha. I have felt positive about the healing between us over the years, but the 2006 media effort introduced an agonizing dimension because I knew Martha would want no part of it. Yet I felt called by the Holy Spirit to move forward with the truth for broader reasons: to validate and support past victim survivors of clergy sexual abuse; to help current victims know that they have choices and do not have to suffer in isolation; to extend the horizon of advocacy to clergy wives who are in abusive marriages; to raise public awareness to promote prevention of future abuse; to increase the spiritual health, safety and credibility of the Episcopal Church; to show that clergy need to be held accountable for their actions.

I did not hear from Martha during the media coverage in May-June 2006, nor during the Philadelphia forums in November 2006. Nevertheless, she was always close to my heart as I moved forward. My respect and support for her were unwavering. By God's grace and their own tenacity, Andy and June Alexis did participate, which helped bridge communication with Martha and validate my efforts. I feared that the current resurgence of the Bennison betrayal had touched such a deep chord of pain between

us, that our friendship had become a casualty of the process. As the Bennison crisis escalated further with the Presentment and forthcoming ecclesiastical trial of Charles, Martha chose to testify and have her voice heard directly. When Andy, June, Margo, Martha and I first met with the church attorneys in February 2008, I still had not had any direct communication with Martha and was extremely anxious about seeing her. The initial tension gave way to a greater spirit of compassion as we worked together for the shared purpose of presenting our truths at trial. During the trial I felt our spirits were knit together, blessing us with the strength needed to proceed through that most difficult week of testimony. Our care for each other was palpable. Further, as an only child whose father and mother died 43 and 23 years ago, it is a poignant joy to me to witness the tender, unconditional, spirit-centered manner in which June, Andy and Martha understand and nurture each other. Seeing the Alexis family in action, and with their gentle humor, has been a window to my own parents, raising in me their strength, goodness and felt presence.

#### EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF THE TRIAL

I will preface this section by stating that I have gained the utmost respect for Larry White and Ralph Jacobs. They have demonstrated the highest expertise in both legal acuity and human compassion. The integrity and sustained effort they devoted to this case is sterling. I understand their focus on choosing legal strategy that would put forth our case in the strongest manner. I understand their constraints in having to work within the limitations and definitions of the current framework of canon laws. I fully acknowledge the severity of betrayal by John and Charles Bennison to Martha and her family. For these very solid and good reasons, I was pleased to provide only a secondary supportive role in my testimony at the trial. I am heartened by the court's verdicts of guilt.

However, the emotional impact of this trial has been heavy indeed.

#### I AM STILL NOT ACKNOWLEDGED AS A VICTIM SURVIVOR BY THE NATIONAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

- I was sequestered and not allowed in the courtroom prior to my testimony, whereas all three Alexises were allowed to be present the entire time.
- I am still marginalized by my apparently confusing and certainly complex status as a former wife of an abusive clergy perpetrator. Does having been his wife somehow relegate me to being "less than" other victim survivors? Does having been John's wife somehow invalidate the pain of my experience? Am I seen skeptically as a vengeful ex-wife, not to be taken too seriously?

- Even this very Impact Statement of mine that I have spent hours writing, will not be submitted in an official capacity to the court, and thus will not be taken with the same degree of seriousness as the other witness statements.

The efforts I have initiated over the years have taken great courage, prayer, honesty and vulnerability and have paved the way for the current proceedings. Putting myself forward in raw and painful truth has been an undertaking requiring every ounce of my strength and faith in God. I would like to be validated and publicly commended for my efforts by the Presiding Bishop of the National Episcopal Church. I will give more thought to what specifically this would entail. Without clear acknowledgment, restoration of my trust in the hierarchy of the Episcopal Church is impossible.

Respectfully,

Maggie Shopen Thompson  
July 19, 2008



# EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

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## STANDING COMMITTEE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, has received a copy of the Notice of Judgment and Consideration of Sentence of the Rt. Rev. Charles E. Bennison, Jr., Bishop of Pennsylvania, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the terms of the aforesaid Notice of Judgment and Consideration of Sentence, the Church Attorney is given the opportunity to present to the Court for the Trial of a Bishop "comments on the Sentence to be adjudged," and

WHEREAS, the Standing Committee has been invited by the Church Attorney to offer to him any comments which might be included in his submission to the Court,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Standing Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania, that the Church Attorney be advised of the following:

1. In light of the gravity of the charges for which he was convicted and the inevitable impact of that conviction on his ability to continue to function as a Bishop of this Church, the

- c. That he be permanently prohibited from the exercise of any clerical acts within the Diocese of Pennsylvania; and
- d. That he be permanently barred from any communication with any member of the clergy or lay person in the Diocese of Pennsylvania regarding any matter pertaining to the affairs of the Diocese or any institution thereof.

Dated: July 13, 2008

SUMMARY OF CONDUCT  
OF BISHOP BENNISON  
IN THE DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA

1. In 2003, a priest in the Diocese was accused of having multiple affairs with members of the congregation, including engaging in such activities in the parish rectory. The last accusation came from the wife of one of those parishioners. The priest admitted the conduct to Bishop Bennison. Bishop Bennison did not refer the matter to the Diocesan Review Committee, and no action was taken to impose ecclesiastical discipline under Title IV. There was no Voluntary Submission to Discipline. Rather than follow the canons, Bishop Bennison simply gave the priest a Pastoral Direction which provided as follows:

*"In response to your violation of Canon IV.1.1(b) and (j), through a series of immoral and illicit relations with married men, including, in one case, in the parish rectory, I am issuing you this Pastoral Direction and Solemn Warning that you are never again to enter into such relationships..."*

The priest has since left the diocese but remains a priest in good standing canonically resident in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

2. In 2006, a priest in the diocese misappropriated \$25,000.00 in mission funds from his parish and at least \$3,000.00 from his discretionary account, all of which was used for his own purposes. When the theft of the \$25,000.00 was uncovered in an audit, the priest agreed to "retire" and signed an agreement to repay the money (but he has not done so). Bishop Bennison permitted the priest to submit to discipline and admonished him not to steal from his next congregation. While the matter was pending, Bishop Bennison permitted the priest to transfer to another diocese and signed letters dimissory, certifying, pursuant to Canon III.9.4(a), that the priest "has not, so far as I know or believe, been justly liable to evil report, for error in religion or viciousness of life, for the last three years." The priest is now the rector of a congregation in another diocese. After leaving the diocese, the parish discovered that funds had also been misappropriated from the rector's discretionary account.
3. In 2005, another priest in the diocese, while serving as an interim rector, misappropriated \$16,147.25 from the parish's funds. Bishop Bennison did not refer the matter to the Diocesan Review Committee, and no action was taken to impose ecclesiastical discipline under Title IV. There was no Voluntary Submission to Discipline. Rather than follow the canons, Bishop Bennison simply gave the priest a Pastoral Direction "not to exercise [his] priestly ministry in any ecclesiastical position in which [he] would have access to or be responsible for the use of the institution's financial resources." That same priest had earlier voluntarily submitted to discipline under Title IV and received an admonishment from Bishop Bennison for immorality and conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy after he pled guilty to disorderly conduct for public masturbation in a park.

4. In 2006, another priest in the diocese who was married had an affair with a member of her congregation. The priest admitted the conduct. Bishop Bennison did not refer the matter to the Diocesan Review Committee, and no action was taken to impose ecclesiastical discipline under Title IV. There was no Voluntary Submission to Discipline. Rather than follow the canons, Bishop Bennison gave the priest a Pastoral Direction not to exercise the gifts of ministry conferred by ordination for three years.
5. Another priest in the diocese engaged in an extra-marital affair with a married priest. Following that priest's divorce, they married, and soon thereafter her husband died. Between 2001 and 2005, she was the subject of at least 6 separate Pastoral Directions from Bishop Bennison which she repeatedly ignored. No ecclesiastical discipline under Title IV was ever sought or imposed by Bishop Bennison. She is still a priest in good standing in the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

The foregoing is not intended to be a complete list of the instances in which Bishop Bennison in the exercise of his authority as Bishop of Pennsylvania ignored Title IV and essentially covered up serious misconduct by a number of priests who are still priests in good standing in the Episcopal Church.