

PURSUANT TO TITLE IV. 13. 11, ORDER OF DISMISSAL IN THE TITLE IV DISCIPLINARY MATTER INVOLVING THE RT. REV. J. JON BRUNO, RESPONDENT

Following the conclusion of the hearing in the Title IV matter of the Church proceeding against the Right Reverend J. Jon Bruno, Bishop of the Los Angeles Diocese of the Episcopal Church, and review of the closing briefs of counsel, WE, THE HEARING PANEL, have conferred and determined that matter should be DISMISSED because the Church Attorney did not establish by clear and convincing evidence that the Bishop committed canonical violations which were material and substantial or of clear and weighty importance to the ministry of the Church.

The Hearing Panel finds as follows:

The Church Attorney's first charge for a violation of Title II. Canon 6.3. by the Bishop is dismissed because undisputed evidence established that the Newport Beach Church property was not sold. Therefore, Title II. Canon 6.3: "No dedicated and consecrated Church or Chapel shall be **removed, taken down, or otherwise disposed of for any worldly or common use**, without the previous consent of the Standing Committee of the Diocese" (Emphasis added) was not violated.

The Church Attorney's Second Charge against the Bishop for alleged misrepresentations is dismissed. The first factual allegation, that the Bishop made misrepresentations regarding his plans for "St. James the Great" before May 17, 2015; was supported by witnesses who quoted the Bishop stating, "We look ahead to engage God's mission locally for the days and years to come." We find the it is not a misrepresentation for a bishop (as rector) not to tell a forming mission congregation of his willingness to consider offers to buy property the congregation is using with the Bishop's permission rent-free; that there was not proof the Bishop intended to deceive the congregation into believing it would always stay at the NPB Property; and (3) we find that the Bishop's communications to the congregation, if misleading were not **material and substantial or of clear and weighty importance to the ministry of the Church.** (Title IV.3.3.)

We note that the Church Attorney offered evidence from Reverend Voorhees that the Bishop promised her he would not sell the property. We find that this evidence was not clear and convincing because it was disputed by other witnesses as well as the Bishop. For this reason, and because this factual allegation appears to be beyond the scope of “misrepresentations regarding the Bishop’s plans for St. James the Great” we dismiss this charge of misrepresentation.

The Church Attorney’s Second Charge against the Bishop for allegedly misrepresenting that SJG was not a “sustainable” congregation is dismissed. Based on the information at the Diocese at the time the Bishop made his decision to accept the offer for the property, the forming congregation was not self-sustainable. It relied on significant financial assistance from the Diocese, the rental of portions of the Church property and the free services of a vicar.

The Church Attorney’s Second Charge against the Bishop for allegedly misrepresenting that Rev. Voorhees resigned as “vicar” of St. James the Great is dismissed. Based on Rev. Voorhees’ own testimony and her final pastoral letter, she had resigned on June 25, 2015.

The Church Attorney’s Second Charge against the Bishop for allegedly misrepresenting that St. James the Great could leaseback the NPB Property until October 2015 with financial assistance from the Diocese is dismissed. The NPB Property was not sold and the Bishop’s promises to the St. James the Great congregation about the leaseback and support were contingent upon the sale of the property.

The Church Attorney’s Third Charge against the Bishop for conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy is dismissed because the charge is based on the same factual allegation of misrepresentations and “summarily taking possession of the real and personal property of St. James the Great on or about June 29, 2015.” The Church Attorney presented no evidence to support the allegation or even what property belonged to St. James Great.

ACCORDINGLY, WE ORDER DISSMISSAL OF ALL CHARGES IN THIS TITLE IV
DISCIPLINARY MATTER INVOLVING THE RT. REV. J JON BRUNO, RESPONDENT.
ISSUED BY THE HEARING PANEL THIS DATE, _____, 2017

Rt. Rev. Herman Hollerith IV, Convener _____

The Rt. Rev. Nicholas Knisely

The Rt. Rev. Michael Smith

The Rev. Erik Larsen

Ms. Deborah Stokes