

THE  
*Episcopal*  
CHURCH

February 22, 2024

Dear friends in Christ,

I write regarding changes to the handling of Title IV when dealing with allegations against Bishops. Over the past several months, I have worked closely with my senior advisors to create protocols that will increase transparency in the Title IV process. Now that all pieces are in place, I am happy to report them to you. They will be implemented no later than February 22, 2024.

As you are aware, experience over the past several years with Title IV matters involving Bishops has given rise to calls for more transparency in the process. The Canons prescribe some measure of transparency throughout the process, with increasing transparency if a matter moves to public trial. For example, when a Title IV matter is in the early stages, regular status reports are required to be provided to the persons making a complaint as well as the Bishop who is the subject of the complaint, but some confidentiality is also required. Subsequently, if a matter reaches a Hearing Panel, which is the equivalent of a trial, then all filed papers must be posted publicly. Thus, in the Canons we see a balancing of the benefits of transparency against the benefits of some measure of privacy. Striking the right balance may help us get closer to the lofty goals set out in Canon I of Title IV – “healing, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, justice, amendment of life and reconciliation among all involved or affected.”

Against this backdrop, the Canons give broad discretion to the Presiding Bishop in matters involving Bishops to disclose information in a matter when the Presiding Bishop deems it “pastorally appropriate.” For example, Canon IV.8.3 provides:

“In every case, and notwithstanding any other provision of this Title to the contrary, the [Presiding Bishop] may disclose such information concerning any alleged Offense or concerning any Accord or Order as the Bishop Diocesan deems *pastorally appropriate*.”<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis added.)

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<sup>1</sup> See also, e.g., Canon IV.6.11 (communications and deliberations during intake and referral stages are confidential except as Bishop deems disclosure to be “pastorally appropriate” or as required by law); Canon IV.7.9 (Bishop may disclose information regarding Pastoral Direction, restriction on ministry or Administrative Leave as “pastorally appropriate”); Canon IV.14.13 (“In every case, notwithstanding any other provision of this Title to the contrary, the Bishop Diocesan may disclose such information concerning any Offense of allegations thereof or concerning any Accord or Order as the Bishop deems appropriate.”). The Presiding Bishop generally functions as “Bishop Diocesan” in Title IV matters per Canon IV.17.2.c.

The Most Reverend Michael Curry  
PRESIDING BISHOP AND PRIMATE



And yet, after granting broad discretion, the Canons include a reminder of the importance of privacy in some situations, with Canon IV.8.4 providing:

“The [Presiding Bishop] shall give consideration to the respective privacy interests and pastoral needs of all affected persons.”

Given the current atmosphere, I have chosen to exercise my canonical discretion to adopt a general protocol for transparency in Title IV matters involving Bishops. The protocol will provide for greater transparency around Title IV processes while also appropriately protecting privacy, all in the service of encouraging the goals set out in Canon I of Title IV. Under this protocol, the process for making complaints against Bishops will become more accessible. Procedural updates about Title IV matters that have become publicly known will, in most cases, be made available to the public. And, statistics about the process will be made available annually. Pursuant to the Canons, I have concluded that the protocol is “pastorally appropriate” in this moment.

More specifically, the transparency protocol will involve three initiatives:

- Creation of easily-accessible pages on the Church’s website (episcopalchurch.org) containing general information about Title IV as well as information about how to make a complaint against a Bishop;
- Posting on the Church’s website procedural updates in Title IV matters involving Bishops that have become public as the result of a public statement by my Office, or that otherwise have become public such that, in my discretion, public disclosure of procedural progress is warranted. The updates will record the procedural progress in a matter without addressing the substance or merits of the matter. Under the Canons, I may, at any time, override this portion of the protocol in a particular matter after considering “the respective privacy interests and pastoral needs of all affected persons”; and
- An annual report by me to the House of Bishops including statistical information about the Title IV process involving Bishops, such as the number of Title IV matters against Bishops rising in the previous year and numbers on how they were resolved (number dismissed by the Intake Officer, dismissed by the Reference Panel, resolved by Accord, resolved by Hearing Panel, etc.).

The initiatives of the transparency protocol are not the only innovations underway. As you know, last year a new, full-time position of Intake Officer for Bishops was created, with the Rev. Barbara Kempf filling that role last August. Barb’s full-time attention to the Title IV process is improving communication with and attention to those involved in Title IV processes and improving case management, as well. Barb is also in the early stages of assembling a pastoral response team that will provide pastoral care to persons impacted by Title IV processes. Prompt, appropriate pastoral care is a critical factor in achieving the goals in Canon I of Title IV.

I pray that each of these initiatives helps to make the Title IV process an instrument of God's peace.

In the spirit of the transparency protocol, I am making this letter available to the wider Church today.

Your brother in Christ,

+ Michael Blum