



Anglican Church in North America

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ECCLESIASTICAL COURT FOR THE TRIAL OF A BISHOP ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

**In the Matter of the Rt. Rev. Stewart Ruch, III
(Bishop, Diocese of the Upper Midwest)**

June 23, 2025, Update

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ecclesiastical Trial Court of the Anglican Church in North America, acting under the authority of our Constitution, Canons, and the *Rules of Procedure for the Court for the Trial of a Bishop*, is preparing for an upcoming trial of the Rt. Rev. Stewart Ruch, III, to begin on July 14, 2025. As part of that process, the Court convened a Pre-Trial Conference, a customary proceeding in both civil and ecclesiastical tribunals. The purpose of this conference is to address preliminary matters, clarify the issues in dispute, establish procedures for the trial, and confirm the identity of witnesses and exhibits. It ensures that the trial will proceed in an orderly, fair, and timely manner in accordance with canonical due process.

Over the past several months, the parties have participated in what is known as the discovery process. Discovery is a formal stage in litigation during which each party is permitted to obtain evidence and relevant information from the other party in preparation for trial. This process includes:

- **Interrogatories:** written questions that one party sends to another, requiring written responses under oath;
- **Requests for Admission:** statements presented to an opposing party for acknowledgment or denial, which help narrow the issues to be decided at trial;
- **Depositions:** sworn, out-of-court oral testimony taken from parties or witnesses, typically transcribed for later use at trial;
- **Requests for Production of Documents:** formal requests to produce documents or tangible items relevant to the case.

In addition to discovery, the parties may file motions with the Court. Among the most important types of motions at this stage are motions in limine. A motion in limine (Latin for “at the threshold”) is a legal request made to the Court before the trial begins, asking it to rule on the admissibility of certain evidence. These motions seek to exclude evidence that is irrelevant,

prejudicial, misleading, or otherwise improper under the rules and principles governing the proceedings. The Court considers these motions carefully, to ensure that only appropriate and lawfully presented material is introduced at trial.

While the Court deeply values transparency, the Court also bears a solemn responsibility to maintain strict confidentiality where required. The tension between these two principles—being transparent with the people of God and preserving the sanctity of a fair and impartial trial—is not easily resolved. The Court navigates this delicate balance with utmost care, desiring to be both accountable and just. In some instances, remaining silent is not secrecy but discipline—a necessary posture to protect the fairness of the process, the dignity of all parties involved, and the integrity of the Church’s judicial witness.

Our Canons and Rules of Procedure affirm the presumption of innocence for any accused person. No judgment is to be rendered apart from the evidence properly brought before the Court. The Trial Court hears only what is presented in accordance with canonical standards, and no inference may be drawn from public commentary, rumor, or speculation. Psalm 24:4, a scripture that is incorporated into our court rules, instructs us, “*All witnesses and parties are expected to appear before the Trial Court with clean hands and a pure heart, not lifting up his or her soul to what is false, and does not swear deceitfully.*”

The rules governing our ecclesiastical trials provide important safeguards:

- Affirms the presumption of innocence for any accused person
- The accused has the right to representation by counsel;
- The burden of proof is on the accuser and must meet the standard of *clear and convincing evidence*;
- The Court is bound by principles of natural justice, due process, and fairness;

Use of Secure Internet Platform

The Court has also determined that the trial, which begins on July 14, 2025, will be conducted via a **secure internet-based platform**, consistent with its authority under the *Rules of Procedure for the Court for the Trial of a Bishop*. This decision was made following careful deliberation and in recognition of the following important benefits:

- **Accessibility:** This format allows participation by parties, counsel, witnesses, and members of the Court across geographic distances, removing logistical barriers and avoiding unnecessary expense;
- **Efficiency:** Remote proceedings facilitate a more timely adjudication of the matter, consistent with the rules’ mandate for expeditious resolution;
- **Security and Order:** The platform enables structured presentation of evidence and testimony while ensuring appropriate controls are maintained by the Court;
- **Past Precedent and Practice:** Ecclesiastical and civil tribunals, particularly since the global pandemic, have increasingly employed secure video technology to preserve due process while stewarding resources and ensuring participation.

The Court is confident that this format provides a fair, dignified, and orderly setting for the hearing of evidence and the rendering of justice. The platform selected includes necessary safeguards to ensure that witness testimony can be received effectively, counsel may advocate fully, and the Court may assess credibility and demeanor with clarity.

Upon conclusion of the trial, the Court is canonically required to render a written judgment within sixty (60) days. In the case of a bishop, the judgment will declare whether the accused is guilty or not guilty on each count or allegation. In all matters, the final written opinion will include:

- A statement of the case,
- A summary of the positions taken by the parties,
- A description of the evidence presented,
- And the official ruling of the Court.

We assure the clergy and laity of this Province that a comprehensive report of the proceedings and the Court's final decision will be made available after the trial has concluded and a formal order has been issued.

Until that time, we ask for your continued prayers for the Court, for all parties involved, and for the Church's witness to the gospel. We labor not merely for procedural accuracy but for the integrity of Christ's Body and the healing truth of His justice.

For the Court,

Rev. Cn. Jeff Weber, Esq.

The Office of the Provincial Ecclesiastical Court for the Trial of a Bishop

Anglican Church in North America

June 2025

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