



Anglican Church in North America

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

The Ecclesiastical Court for the Trial of a Bishop
Anglican Church in North America

July 23, 2025

Limited Response to the Public Release of the Former Provincial Prosecutor's Resignation Letter

The Trial Court of a Bishop now has before it two letters to the Archbishop—one by the former Provincial Prosecutor, *ex post*, and one filed with this Court from the Respondent in direct response to the former Provincial Prosecutor's assertion of a tainted process, requesting action by the Archbishop. The Court is uncertain why one was made public and the other not and therefore declines to comment further on their publication.

Although it is not our normal practice to speak publicly while proceedings are ongoing, because the communication from the former Prosecutor was made public, the Court finds it requires a limited response. This is particularly true when it calls into question the integrity of the Court and the fairness of the trial in *In the Matter of the Rt. Rev. Stewart Ruch, III*.

The full seated Court has reviewed the recent publication of the letter by the former Provincial Prosecutor concerning testimony and internal proceedings of this Court. The letter includes commentary on confidential deliberations, public criticism of a sitting member of the Court, and a call for the release of trial records—despite a standing order that the proceedings be conducted *in camera*. These actions have contributed to public confusion, diminished trust in the process, and placed pressure on a tribunal still actively engaged in the work before it.

Affirmation of the Court's Review

The full Court has met to review, in detail, the exchange referenced in Mr. Runyan's letter. We affirm without hesitation that the questions posed by every member of this Court to the witness in question were appropriate and fell squarely within our responsibilities. The line of questioning, in fact, was based upon questions concerning the Province's own exhibit directed to his own witness. The former Prosecutor, who was present, invited to redirect the witness, and

given multiple opportunities to speak, raised no objections at any time during the line of questioning he now complains of to the Archbishop. In fact, the objections he did raise in response to defense questions were heard and, on multiple occasions, sustained.

Within our ecclesiastical system, the Trial Court holds both the authority and the responsibility to ensure that the evidence presented is trustworthy and complete. When a report forms the basis for testimony or prosecutorial submission, the Court has a duty to ask whether it was edited or filtered before being introduced. This kind of inquiry is not adversarial, but necessary, especially in a case carrying the weight and gravity of a presentment against a bishop.

Judicial questioning—even when difficult—is part of the Court’s sacred task. Our responsibility is not diminished when questions yield testimony that may be challenging for one party or another. Contrary to Mr. Runyan’s implications, questioning by the Court—even when it may elicit unfavorable testimony—is not improper. As a tribunal serving as both judge and jury, we are charged with weighing evidence carefully and prayerfully. We do so without prejudice, relying only on what is properly before us. The Court is fully capable of setting aside any comment, question, or testimony it deems unhelpful or inconsistent with the record, regardless of whether an objection is formally raised.

Fairness, Process, and Procedural Opportunity

Throughout these proceedings, parties have been free to raise concerns through well-established procedures: by objecting to a question, moving to strike testimony, or asking the Court to limit or preclude further lines of questioning. These are not only allowed but encouraged to ensure fairness. Unlike civil or criminal jury trials, this is not a jury in need of shielding. Rather, we are a Court of prayerful discernment, called to steward both the truth and the dignity of all involved.

In the specific exchange referenced in Mr. Runyan’s letter, not a single objection or concern was voiced—despite clear opportunities and invitations to do so. The Court reiterated the Prosecutor’s right to speak. He chose not to. Instead, late on a Friday afternoon, the Prosecutor departed the trial without an explanation or request to withdraw. Multiple members of the Court invited him to voice any concerns or comments, but he declined. This left the Province’s case without representation during a pivotal moment. The former Provincial Prosecutor then chose, following his resignation, to use the forum of communication with the Archbishop to raise his objection. The Court learned of Mr. Runyan’s concern for the first time by reading its public disclosure on the provincial website.

Rather than seek clarification or remedy through the Court, the Prosecutor expressed his concerns through a letter to the Archbishop that was later made public. This approach, outside the bounds of our shared process, disrupted the proceedings, undermined public confidence by implying misconduct (or a “tainted process”), and placed additional strain on a Court already laboring to serve with care and faithfulness.

On Confidentiality and Public Disclosure

The public release of testimony and commentary from *in camera* proceedings carries serious consequences. Confidentiality measures are instituted in order to protect the integrity of

the process and the privacy of those involved—particularly where testimony involves highly sensitive personal, pastoral, or reputational matters. Upon completion of a matter, the Court will issue its findings and all of the evidence that supports those findings in an order, appropriately redacted where necessary to protect vulnerable individuals. Such confidentiality ensures that witnesses may speak with candor and that vulnerable parties are shielded from unnecessary harm or public scrutiny.

The duty to protect the confidentiality of those proceedings does not end when someone withdraws from participation. It continues until the matter is fully and properly concluded. The disclosure of protected material—particularly when directed to others outside the Court—undermines the integrity of these proceedings and violates the orders under which we operate. We find no provision in the Constitution or Canons of the Anglican Church in North America that allows an exception to the confidentiality requirements, even for purposes such as notifying others of resignation. The responsibility to preserve the sacred trust of these proceedings remains binding.

The Court will address these disclosures more fully in its final opinion. We decline to do so now, because doing so would be inconsistent with our oath, our calling, and the need to maintain the impartiality and integrity of this trial. These matters will be considered carefully, at the proper time, and in the context of the full record.

Ongoing Commitment

We remain committed to concluding this trial in a manner that is just, thorough, and faithful. The Court will hear all admissible evidence from both the Province and the Respondent and will issue a full opinion after prayerful deliberation. We are also prepared to work respectfully and cooperatively with the newly appointed Provincial Prosecutor to provide access to necessary materials and transcripts so that the process may continue smoothly and with integrity.

May God grant us all wisdom, charity, and perseverance in the work to which we have been called.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Bryan".

The Rt. Rev. David Bryan

President, Trial Court of a Bishop
Anglican Church in North America