

STATEMENT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
June 20, 2008

The Standing Committee of the Diocese of Pennsylvania has just received the confidential report of the Title IV Review Committee issued in accordance with Canon IV.3.46, in which the Committee advised that on May 21, 2008 the Review Committee voted not to issue a presentment against Bishop Bennison in response to the verified complaint filed by the members of the Standing Committee in June of 2006. That Complaint alleged violations of Canons IV.1.1(e), (f) and (j) based upon Bishop Bennison's mismanagement of diocesan financial affairs, misuse of trust and endowment funds, and unauthorized expenditure of diocesan funds to pay for travel and "miscellaneous expenses". The Standing Committee had provided documentation detailing the expenditure of millions of dollars of endowment and trust funds, and the unauthorized expenditure of more than \$680,000 for travel and miscellaneous expenses between 2001 and 2006.

The members of the Standing Committee are disappointed that Bishop Bennison will not be held accountable for his mismanagement of diocesan funds which has crippled the Diocese of Pennsylvania, but understand the reasons why the Title IV Review Committee and the Church Attorney determined not to proceed. Under the Canons of the Episcopal Church, all members of the Clergy, including Bishops, are presumed not to have committed a canonical offense, which presumption can only be overcome by clear and convincing evidence that the accused member of the Clergy knowingly and intentionally acted in a manner which constituted a violation of national or diocesan canons. Unfortunately neither the Canons of the Episcopal Church or the Diocese of Pennsylvania make such financial mismanagement, without more, a canonical offense. In this case, Bishop Bennison apparently argued that he had acted in reliance upon the advice of counsel, former Chancellor William Bullitt, and therefore his actions could not be the basis for a presentment, and the Review Committee agreed.

It should be noted, however, that in its report, the Review Committee did not "exonerate" Bishop Bennison or conclude that Bishop Bennison had not committed the acts alleged, and it did not indicate approval of his conduct. Rather, it determined not to issue a presentment based upon the conclusion that his conduct, under these circumstances, would not constitute a canonical offense under the Canons of the Episcopal Church or the Diocese of Pennsylvania..