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Syracuse, NY – The Rt. Rev. Gladstone B. Adams, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York, announced Monday that the former rector of St. James' Episcopal Church in Skaneateles, NY, J. Edward Putnam, is suspended from all ministerial and priestly responsibilities for twenty years as of July 23, 2007.

A suspension prohibits Putnam from exercising any rights or responsibilities in The Episcopal Church bestowed upon him at ordination. The suspension is a result of a church investigation into complaints that Putnam engaged in inappropriate sexual conduct with minors during his tenure as rector of St. James'. Adams stated, "Ed Putnam is a man whom the Church entrusted with the care of its youth and to whom the Church granted authority as a priest to lead this faith community. Through his actions he has abused and betrayed that trust and he has harmed those entrusted to his care. His behavior is reprehensible and is not tolerated in this Church." Putnam was rector of St. James' from January, 1986 through May, 1993.

Bishop Adams received the initial complaint in May, 2007 and initiated the Diocese's Pastoral Response Team to investigate the allegations. During the investigation, Putnam was temporarily inhibited from functioning in the Church. As a result of the investigation four individuals have filed affidavits describing the abuse that occurred while they were adolescents. The victims, their families, and the congregation, will continue to be provided opportunities for pastoral and psychological care.

Adams apologized to the victims, their families, and the congregation of St. James' last night for the hurt caused by the behavior of Putnam. Adams further stated, "We may wonder how this all fits in God's plan; we may ask why this happened in our church and in our community; and we may wonder if the pain of this betrayal will ever disappear – I have faith that we will see the effect of God's reconciling grace in and through one another."

The Diocese of Central New York has a safe church policy that requires all clergy, paid staff and volunteers working with youth and children to participate in safe church training and undergo background checks. The Diocese has a no tolerance policy for any type of clergy abuse or misconduct.

Putnam retired from active ministry in January, 2004.

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