



GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

January 6, 2016

Dear People of Grace,

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,
but if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just,
will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *I John 1:8, 9*

It is with a heavy heart that we send this letter to you. But we know it is the right thing to do. It has come to light that three members of Grace Church were sexually harassed by The Rev. Bry Dennison, during his tenure as our interim priest in 2008 - 2009. He initiated inappropriate sexual contact with these women. Grace leaders notified the staff in the office of the Diocese of Western Michigan, at the time under the leadership The Rt. Rev. Robert Geper. We understand he began to communicate with the Bishop of the Diocese of Michigan, The Rt. Rev. Wendell Gibbs, who has jurisdiction over Rev. Dennison. After a prolonged process, Bishop Gibbs sanctioned Rev. Dennison and forbid him from serving and preaching in the Episcopal Church for five years through July 2015.

Unfortunately, Grace Church failed to disclose the situation to the congregation and did not offer counseling or support to the three victims who came forward. We do not know if other women were victimized.

Although years have passed, we are now taking action to rectify this regrettable situation. Most importantly, the women can seek counseling. They have been given the names of licensed local counselors and the assurance of financial support from both Bishops to receive counseling.

Secondly, we have scheduled a parish meeting (with childcare) for January 18, 2016, at 7 pm to address the sexual misconduct that occurred under Dennison's tenure. Bishop Houglund and Canon Spaid of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan will attend and are organizing a Pastoral Care Response Team to be at Grace that evening. An early outline provided by the Bishop looks like this:

- Gather and pray
- Introduce team
- Review situation facts
- Break into discussion groups
- Come back to review next steps for moving forward

Please mark this date on your calendar and pray for the victims and the church.

Yours in Christ,

Donna Olendorf, Senior Warden

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna Olendorf".

Jeff Tibbits, Junior Warden

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Tibbits".

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