



DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD  
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Right Reverend Daniel H. Martins  
Bishop  
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28 June 20012  
St Irenaueus of Lyons

The Rt Revd F. Clayton Matthews  
Office for Pastoral Development  
The Episcopal Church

Dear Clay,

It has come to my attention that there is potential action against me under Title IV in response to my having signed an *amicus curae* brief that was filed in an ongoing court case regarding a property dispute in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

Please understand that my intention in so doing was in no way to affect the outcome of that case. As the Bishop of Springfield, it is no concern of mine how the matter is resolved. If my action has the effect of harming the interests of Bishop Ohl or the Standing Committee of Forth Worth, I would find that distressing.

Rather, I took the action I did reluctantly and reservedly, and with the best interests of the Episcopal Church, as nearly as I can discern them, at heart. My principal concern was to not leave unchallenged the assertion that the Episcopal Church is a unitary hierarchical organism at all levels, and that the dioceses are entirely creatures of General Convention. It is my conviction that such a claim is inconsistent with our history, our theology, and our polity as expressed in the constitution and canons. I viewed signing the *amicus* brief as consistent with my vow to uphold the doctrine and discipline of the Episcopal Church.

As an illuminating case in point, I would draw your attention to a resolution we will be considering next week in Indianapolis, A101, *Convene Consultation on Diocesan Effectiveness*. This resolution asks for a study of “the potential for re-aligning dioceses to maximize their effective witness and ministry.” While this may be a relatively small thing in itself, and might actually make good sense, if the top-down (with General Convention as the “top”) hierarchical model is accepted, then it sets in motion a potential chain of events that could end with General Convention imposing redrawn boundaries on dioceses without their consent.

I respect those who have a contrary understanding of our polity. While it is always possible that I could be mistaken—it has happened several times!—I am at present confident in the correctness of the view I hold. I recognize that taking this discussion into the secular courts certainly escalates tension and raises the stakes, which is regrettable. Perhaps it was an unwise move on my part. My chief concern was that a very particular property dispute in Texas not become the vehicle for supporting what I believe is an erroneous understanding of the polity of the church to which I am committed, with consequences to our common life that we cannot now even imagine.

Faithfully in Christ,



(The Rt Revd) Daniel H. Martins  
XI Bishop of Springfield

cc: The Presiding Bishop  
Frederick P. Velde, Esq., Chancellor of the Diocese  
Kevin Babb, Esq., Vice-Chancellor of the Diocese