

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

In the Matter of the Rt. Rev. Stewart Ruch III

(Bishop, Diocese of the Upper Midwest)

PRESENTMENT

In accordance with Title IV, Canon 2 and Canon 4 of the Canons of the Anglican Church in North America (“ACNA”), the undersigned bishops of the Anglican Church in North America, hereby state that there are sufficient grounds to charge the Rt. Rev. Stewart Ruch III, bishop of the Diocese of the Upper Midwest (“UMW”), with offenses in violation of the Canons of the ACNA.

The Charges regarding Bishop Ruch allege that he has engaged in the habitual neglect of the duties of his Office in violation of subsection 10 resulting in conduct giving just cause for scandal or offense in violation of subsection 4 of Title IV, Canon 2 of the Anglican Church in North America.

The factual and canonical basis for these Charges is set forth below. In making these Charges, the undersigned have considered documentation and other information, some of which was provided by the team appointed by ACNA Archbishop Foley Beach to investigate this matter, specifically the Rev. Travis Boline, Ms. Elizabeth Conkle, the Rev. Chris Culpepper, Mr. Alan Runyan, Esq., and the Rev. Deacon Lisa Schwandt (the “Provincial Investigative Team – UMW”) with the assistance of law firms Husch Blackwell and Telios Law and other provincial representatives.

CHARGE 1: Habitual Neglect of the Duties of the Bishop’s Office in Violation of Canon IV.2.10

There is reasonable cause to conclude that Bishop Ruch repeatedly failed at his duty to be an “administrator of godly discipline and governance” (ACNA Canon III.8.2) in his diocese: by ignoring the repeated advice that his diocese have a child protection policy; by allowing for inadequately vetted, trained, and/or supervised Lay Catechists to function in leadership positions in his diocese, including leading congregations; by not providing sufficient vetting, training, and/or supervision of his clergy and the Greenhouse deanery and its Lay Catechists, resulting in various serious acts of sexual misconduct and other immorality by multiple leaders and the failure of other leaders to respond appropriately to accusations of such misconduct. This was in contradiction of his duty to “take care” that his clergy (and, arguably, such congregational leaders as Lay Catechists) “be a wholesome example and pattern to the entire flock of Christ” (ACNA Canon III.2.1).

- I. Bishop Ruch habitually neglected to: (a) learn about and understand sexual abuse issues; (b) create, distribute, and implement policies and procedures to address sexual misconduct and abuse and to ensure the training of diocesan leaders in such policies and procedures; and (c) appropriately receive and respond to allegations of misconduct and abuse as evidenced in documents, testimony, and other evidence showing, without limitation:

1. For at least 8 years, the ACNA College of Bishops, of which Bishop Ruch is a member and regular attendee, has been discussing the importance of ACNA dioceses having child protection policies specific to their jurisdictions. Bishops in dioceses with policies had shared their policies to aid dioceses as they created their own.
2. On August 27, 2018, Brenda Dumper, Lay Canon to the Ordinary of the Diocese of the Upper Midwest, emailed the Archbishop via his then-assistant Betty Shanks, with Bishop Stewart Ruch cc'd, admitting that the Diocese did not have a written child protection policy and claiming that they did not know until that previous spring (2018) that they needed one.
3. In 2022, Bishop Ruch explained in his interviews with Husch Blackwell regarding the sexual abuse allegations made against a Lay Catechist in the Diocese in 2019, "that the larger church (UMW Diocese) did not have a protocol in place at the time regarding a bishop's response to sexual misconduct allegations."¹
4. Ruch and the Diocese of the Upper Midwest did not initiate an investigation into the allegations of abuse made against Lay Catechist Mark Rivera and the subsequent handling of those claims by the Diocese until April 2021, nearly 2 years after the first report.
5. Ruch claimed that as late as January of 2021 he did not realize a third-party investigation "was an option" until an alleged victim suggested it,² this despite all that had transpired in or around the summer of 2019, the constant reminders from the College of Bishops, and the highly publicized Dudley Report in or around the fall of 2019 (Gulf Atlantic Diocese).
6. Grand River Solutions (GRS), the investigative firm hired by the Diocese of the Upper Midwest in the Spring of 2021, concluded in its Transition Report that there was a widespread lack of training of Diocesan and church leaders: "In reviewing the stories and narratives gathered, three themes become clear. First is the lack of training or education for key Resurrection or COLA staff on child abuse, grooming behaviors, boundaries, and the identification of at-risk individuals (those with a history of trauma or abuse, for example). Second is the lack of consistent, effective, and repeated training on mandated reporting requirements for any of those who were tasked with working with those under 18 years of age.... Had there been better training and education for church leadership and staff, it is possible that the signs would have been noted years before the first vulnerable person fell prey to Rivera's misconduct."³ These conclusions are supported by statements made to GRS by key Diocesan, Church of the Resurrection, and Christ Our Light Anglican leaders, including without limitation:
 - a. Brenda Dumper, who joined the Church of the Resurrection staff in 2009 and now serves primarily as UMW Lay Canon to the Ordinary though also splits time with

¹ Husch Blackwell report, pg. 22

² Husch Blackwell report, pg. 50

³ GRS Transition Report, pg. 11

the Church, told GRS in 2021, “I just did a mandated reporter training for the first time. I was shocked to find out our volunteer and childcare workers would have to report.”⁴

- b. Deacon Valerie McIntyre, who joined the Church of the Resurrection staff in 2011 as Pastoral Care manager then became a pastor then a deacon and now serves as the Pastor of Spiritual Formation, told GRS on or about July 12, 2021, “...we never had any training on ‘here is what to look for, here is what to do.’ I do not feel well trained.”⁵
 - c. Meghan Robins, Pastoral Care Manager at Church of the Resurrection, told GRS on or about June 29, 2021, “Grooming training was really missing. We get training on signs of physical abuse, we need more training on what predatory behavior looks like, and also how to report, when to report.”⁶
 - d. Fr. Rand York, Rector of Christ Our Light Anglican Church since in or around 2013, when asked on or around July 6, 2021 about what training was done regarding “child abuse/awareness/prevention” referenced his psychological assessment required of priests and said he and Rivera and a few others at the Church took a “one-time online training.”
7. Ruch himself failed to have a proper understanding of abuse and grooming behaviors of abusers:
- a. In August of 2021, Ruch admitted to Grand River Solutions that he and his wife, Katherine, had not had training on grooming behaviors and “just did not understand grooming we did not realize what it was about, how those interactions worked.”⁷
 - b. Viewing of pornography with others present is a form of grooming and is abusive itself, yet Ruch was dismissive of Rivera’s viewing of pornography with minors by describing it to Husch Blackwell, the law firm conducting an investigation on behalf of the Province, as “immature.”⁸
8. Due to the neglect of Bishop Ruch in not having proper policies, procedures, and training of leadership within the diocese, including himself, Ruch failed to act appropriately in response to multiple misconduct allegations:

⁴ GRS interview notes, Brenda Dumper.pdf, GRS Transition Report, pg. 9

⁵ GRS interview notes, Deacon Val.pdf

⁶ GRS interview notes, Meghan Robins.pdf

⁷ GRS interview notes, Bishop Stewart.pdf; GRS Transition Report, pg. 8

⁸ Husch Blackwell report, pg. 35

a. Chris Lapeyre

- i. When interviewed by Husch Blackwell, Bishop Ruch admitted that in 2015, when he was both Dean of Church of the Resurrection and Bishop of the Diocese of the Upper Midwest, he learned that one of his lay leaders, Chris Lapeyre, had been fired from his teaching job at a high school for ‘boundary crossing’ with a female high school student.⁹ Despite this knowledge, Lapeyre was able to serve on the launch team for the Christ Our Light Anglican Church plant and then as its Senior Warden without appropriate notification, oversight, and accountability. Lapeyre also preached at Christ Our Light. Lapeyre admitted to Husch Blackwell that his firing from the high school had “no impact” on what he was able to do at either Church of the Resurrection or Christ Our Light Anglican.¹⁰ Ruch neglected his duty to protect the flock by allowing a person known to have engaged in inappropriate behavior with a minor to have a leadership position with little accountability or monitoring.

b. Mark Rivera

- i. After Mark Rivera was accused of sexual abuse, Ruch was aware that Rivera had previously been around minors at Church of the Resurrection and yet Ruch did not take appropriate steps to address possible harm to others. Ruch evidenced concern about Rivera’s behavior in that he and his wife spoke with their own daughter to see if she had been abused by Mark Rivera, but Ruch did not show similar concern by informing other parents of the abuse. Thus, he failed to show appropriate pastoral concern for other minors and parents in the Resurrection/Christ Our Light orbit, neglecting his duty to the flock. At this time, Ruch was not only bishop, but still the Dean of Resurrection, the diocesan Cathedral.
- ii. Will Chester, Youth Minister at Church of the Resurrection, “also reported during his interview [with Husch Blackwell] that there was not an effort to identify the young people from Rez who may have spent time at Big Rock to ensure that someone spoke to them in the summer of 2019. Chester said that, at the time he learned of [name redacted’s] report, he knew of a half dozen students who had spent time at Rivera’s house—all of whom would have gone there to hang out as friends...”¹¹
- iii. Ruch made no effort to reach out to at-risk youth who had been in close contact with Rivera despite the repeated concerns also raised by Val McIntyre, Ruch’s deacon and the Director of Pastoral Care, who was worried about those girls. “She said she raised concerns that there were teenagers at Big Rock who may have been abused, and specifically

⁹ Husch Blackwell report, pg. 10

¹⁰ Husch Blackwell report, pg. 11

¹¹ Husch Blackwell report, pg. 23

mentioned [redacted] and [redacted] but felt her concerns were dismissed in 2019.”¹²

- iv. Ruch and his wife had a close relationship with the immediate family of the accused, Rivera, but Ruch did not recuse himself from the situation.
- v. The evidence indicates that he did not diligently seek assistance to address deficiencies in diocesan policies, practices, and expertise.

c. Joel Girard

- i. Though Bishop Ruch fired Joel Girard immediately upon his learning of an accusation of rape against Girard in November 2019, Ruch failed to follow up appropriately with the educational institutions and diocesan entities where Joel Girard served. “Joel served as a mission staff member with Cornerstone University of Illinois Chicago from 2017 until 2019 and he remained a member at Cornerstone West Loop until early [2021]. Previously he served as on campus mission staff with Greenhouse from 2015 to 2017 at College of Dupage. He also served at Iglesia de la Resurrección in 2015-2017. Joel attended Church of the Resurrection off and on from 2015 to 2019.”¹³ Girard was also present from time to time at a Greenhouse daycare center. However, after learning of the accusation of rape against Girard, Bishop Ruch did not take sufficient action in the subsequent two years to inform the educational institutions and diocesan entities where Girard served, to identify additional victims, or to put those vulnerable in the above communities on notice. However, after Ruch went on leave of absence in July 2021, the Bishop’s Council took action in August 2021 to notify the diocese and other institutions of the allegations against Girard.

II. Bishop Ruch habitually neglected to properly vet, train, and/or discipline the clergy and lay leadership of the Diocese as evidenced in documents, testimony, and other evidence showing, without limitation:

- 1. The Constitution of the Diocese of the Upper Midwest establishes that Greenhouse Net is a deanery of the Diocese and therefore under the authority of the bishop. The Missioner General of the Greenhouse Corporation served as the Dean of the Greenhouse deanery and on the Bishop’s Council of the Diocese in such capacity. The Greenhouse bylaws stipulate “the Missioner General acts ‘in cooperation with’ or ‘subject to the authority’ of the ‘local bishop....’”¹⁴ Having the Greenhouse Corporation be the legal authority of the Deanery and its local congregations, while at the same time having the bishop of the Diocese of the Upper Midwest be their spiritual

¹² Husch Blackwell report, pg. 32

¹³ “An Important Matter Affecting Our Upper Midwest Community,” Aug. 7 Bishop’s Council Letter to the Diocese, <https://midwestanglican.org/cornerstonecase/>

¹⁴ Telios Law report, pg. 5

authority, was “problematic from the outset.”¹⁵ However, under the Anglican Church in North America’s polity, the bishop ultimately has ecclesiastical authority over the clergy, heads of congregations, and congregations of the diocese. Bishop Ruch had a duty to “administ[er]...godly discipline and governance,”¹⁶ including the oversight of those to whom authority was delegated in the Greenhouse deanery and its congregations. This would include the vetting, training, and discipline of the leadership of the deanery and its congregations.

2. Bishop Ruch evidenced that he had authority within the Greenhouse churches when he fired from his position Joel Girard, a Lay Catechist and leader of a Greenhouse and diocesan congregation.
3. In the Diocese of the Upper Midwest, Greenhouse Lay Catechists were also UMW Lay Catechists and often led diocesan congregations. In such cases, the Lay Catechists were included as the sole leader of the congregation in the diocesan weekly and daily cycles of prayer.
4. The UMW Canon II.5.1 states that “Clergy and laity of this Diocese are called to be exemplary in all spheres of morality. This is a condition of being appointed to or remaining in a position or office of leadership.”
5. However, over the course of time between June 2021 and October 2022, the Province was made aware of at least twelve (12) lay and clergy leaders in the Diocese credibly accused of misconduct, six of whom admitted to the misconduct, including:
 - a. Mark Rivera: Greenhouse/UMW Lay Catechist on trial for sexual abuse of a minor and accused of sexual abuse by over 10 additional persons.
 - b. Chris Lapeyre: church planter and senior warden, accused of and admitted to inappropriate relationships with minor females and grooming.
 - c. Zach Stallard: Greenhouse/UMW Lay Catechist admitted to sexual immorality [REDACTED] both of whom were married to other people at the time.
 - d. [REDACTED]
 - e. Josh Moon: priest suspended for life by Acting Bishop John Miller for [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] had previously been disciplined in the Presbyterian church for solicitation of a prostitute which was known or should have been known to Bishop Ruch when ordained.
 - f. [REDACTED]

¹⁵ Telios Law report, pg. 5

¹⁶ ACNA Canon III.8.2

- g. Joel Girard: Greenhouse/UMW Lay Catechist accused of rape of another Greenhouse employee.
- h. William Beasley: Greenhouse/UMW priest accused of abusing his power as the leader of the Greenhouse movement. Also accused of directing an employee to submit information to an insurance company to say that Greenhouse had adopted and implemented child protection policies it had not adopted and implemented.
- i. Zach Taylor: Greenhouse/UMW Lay Catechist accused of unhealthy dating patterns within the congregation where he served that left several women hurt.
- j. Keith Hartsell: priest and Greenhouse executive leader accused of ecclesiastical abuse of power. (Hartsell has not cooperated with the investigations; he continues to misrepresent his conversation with Provincial representatives and has not provided evidence that he has asserted exonerates him.)
- k. Jonathan Kindberg: priest and former head of Caminemos Juntos accused of unhealthy dating patterns that left several women hurt.
- l. Sebastian Vargas: Greenhouse employee accused of misconduct.

That so many diocesan leaders have been credibly accused, six of whom have admitted misconduct, evidences neglect in vetting these leaders prior to placing them in leadership positions and/or neglect in training, supervising, and/or appropriately disciplining them.

CHARGE 2: Conduct Giving Just Cause for Scandal or Offense in Violation of Canon IV.2.4

The public perception of scandal, especially in our social media age, is not necessarily evidence that a scandal was caused by the accused or that the accused's conduct provided "just cause" for the scandal. Conversely, simply because scandalous actions have not yet erupted publicly does not mean that there is not "just cause for scandal." The mere existence of publicly perceived scandal is not determinative that there was just cause for that scandal nor does a lack of publicity mean that poor conduct is not scandalous or offensive. Rather, conduct should be reviewed as whether a reasonable person would believe the conduct to *justly cause* scandal or offense if it were more widely known.

In this case, Bishop Ruch's conduct was scandalous and offensive regardless of whether it had ever gained public attention. However, many of these actions did become publicly known, resulting in additional scandal.

The above facts of Charge 1 and those set forth below provide reasonable cause to believe that Bishop Ruch's actions have given just cause for scandal and offense in violation of Canon IV.2.4. The vulnerable have not been adequately protected and this has brought harm to many and offense to the Church at large. All the facts set forth in Charge 1 above are relevant to the charge of conduct giving just cause for scandal and offense. Ruch's habitual neglect of his duty to be an "administrator of godly discipline and governance" is itself conduct giving just cause for scandal and offense. But much of the conduct set forth above on its own also amounts to conduct giving just cause for scandal and offense, including but not limited to, the conduct found in the facts of paragraphs I.4, I.7.a, I.7.b, I.8.a, I.8.b.i, I.8.c, II.5.

Bishop Ruch’s neglect of his duty to be an “administrator of godly discipline and governance” and failure to enact and subsequently to follow a written child protection policy and properly to vet, train, and discipline diocesan clergy and lay leaders, did give just cause for scandal or offense. His conduct did in fact cause actual scandal and offense including, but not limited to, the following:

1. On or about June 29, 2021, the first public accusations were made against Bishop Ruch and the Diocese for mishandling the accusations of sexual abuse made by a minor against Mark Rivera, a Lay Catechist in the Diocese, in 2019. On or about July 7, 2021, the mother of the minor publicized additional details and allegations of mishandling by Ruch and the Diocese.
2. On or about July 8, 2021, the scandal had so escalated that Ruch requested a leave of absence from the Archbishop and the Bishop’s Council requested the Province take oversight of the investigation.
3. Since June 2021, the Diocese and, consequently, the College of Bishops and the Province have suffered criticism on social media and in numerous news articles in regional and national religious and secular media, as well as by the threat of lawsuits.

The above-mentioned facts provide reasonable cause to believe that Bishop Ruch’s habitual neglect of the duties of his office, as well as his own conduct, has given just cause for scandal or offense.

CONCLUSION

In accordance with Title IV, Canon 2 and Canon 4 of the Canons of the Anglican Church in North America, and based upon the foregoing information, the documentation included with this Presentment and incorporated herein by reference, and other evidence in support, the undersigned Bishops hereby state that there is reasonable cause to believe that there have been serious acts that constitute sufficient grounds to charge the Rt. Rev. Stewart Ruch III with offenses in violation of the Canons of the ACNA as set forth above.

Respectfully Submitted,

Raymond Gillin

Raymond Gillin (Dec 22, 2022 08:51 EST)

Dec 22, 2022

The Rt. Rev. Chuck Gillin
Bishop, Diocese of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic (REC)

Date

Todd Hunter

[Todd Hunter \(Dec 23, 2022 13:29 CST\)](#)

The Rt. Rev. Todd Hunter
Bishop, Diocese of Churches for the Sake of Others

Dec 23, 2022

Date

Kenneth Ross

[Kenneth Ross \(Dec 22, 2022 15:54 MST\)](#)

The Rt. Rev. Ken Ross
Bishop, Diocese of the Rocky Mountains

Dec 22, 2022

Date