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## *An open letter to the church at large from our congregation at St. James the Great*

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April 6, 2016

# 40 Weeks in the Wilderness



*Easter morning service in the park across the street from our unsold church, with over 200 in attendance.*

Dear members of the L.A. Diocese, Bishops, and Friends,

Happy Eastertide! We hope you had a blessed Holy Week and Easter and continue in the joy of Christ's resurrection!

We genuinely appreciate your ongoing support as we work to save St. James the Great. Many of you have asked for an update on our situation, so we write to share the following news:

As we write this letter, we cannot believe we are coming up on one year (April 10, 2015) since our bishop, Jon Bruno, agreed to sell our sacred church to developers who want to demolish it and build luxury townhomes. The agreement, however, remains on hold under litigation for clear title.

This past Sunday marked a staggering 40 weeks that we have been locked out of our empty church. We remain strong yet yearn to return home to our beloved sanctuary where we have the ability to hold services, house our children safely in Sunday school, provide accessibility for our physically challenged and continue outreach to our local community. We would also like to observe the sacraments in sacred space, such as our desire to baptize our backlog of five infants and several children whose parents wish to have them baptized in the church.

Even with the challenges of our situation, we continue to grow and thrive as a spiritual community that has remained ever faithful to God as members of the Episcopal Church. This, despite Bishop Bruno's actions of locking us out of our church, completely cutting us off from any due process, our finances, all communication, and making no provision for a place to worship. These actions by Bishop Bruno were taken in the face of contrary advice from many leaders in our diocese.

As we write about the lack of support we have received from Bishop Bruno — how about YOU? During his diocesan convention remarks, Presiding Bishop Curry referred to himself as our Chief Evangelical Officer (CEO). Considering this clear sign of leadership, it is surprising to us that it is now April and our diocesan website does not have one posting for Bishop Bruno's visitation schedule for this year. Not one. Given the clear division in the diocese expressed by convention outcomes, we are astonished at the lack of pastoral care and leadership responsibility in our diocese. What interaction and support have you, your congregation, or your communities received from our bishop?

As for transparency and accountability, we have also asked for the financial audit of Corp Sole that Bishop Bruno promised to the entire Diocesan Convention—over 800 people—back in December. To date, the bishop has refused to honor his commitment to release the information. Corp Sole owns over 66 real estate properties; a Delaware LLC with a multi-million-dollar commercial land asset in Anaheim, CA; and unaccounted donations to the diocese. Are we not all curious to know what is financially occurring in our diocese? We seek to understand the truth and we are concerned as to why the bishop will not share the information. For the health of our diocese, we ask Bishop Bruno to produce the audit to aid in transparency and accountability.

Regarding the canon-law-violation complaint against Bishop Bruno, it has been nearly 10 months since we sought help from The Episcopal Church (TEC) in New York for Bishop Bruno's actions against our congregation. After a failed conciliation process eight months ago (in the course of which Bishop Bruno refused to sign a confidentiality agreement and refused to meet with us), we were told on October 29, 2015 that our Title IV Complaint against Bishop Bruno would go before a Conference Panel made up of three bishops, one priest and one layperson. We have not heard from TEC in over five months about when and where the hearing will take place.

The most incredible part of this situation, however, continues to be the lack of communication and care by this bishop in power and those who stand by and enable it to continue. As we know from confession, we fail as much by what we have done as by what we have left undone. We ask you to help us right this wrong and end this hurtful injustice. As our presiding bishop has recently said:

*"We have healing to do. Trust must be rebuilt. Unhelpful patterns of behavior need to be replaced with new ways of working together."* —Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry

We ask you to please keep us at St. James the Great in your prayers. Please feel free to forward this letter to your family and friends.

Together in Christ,

The Congregation of St. James the Great

Learn more about our community's efforts to save the church at: [www.savesaintjamesthegreat.org](http://www.savesaintjamesthegreat.org)