



## Letter to Los Angeles Diocesan Convention from St. James the Great, Newport Beach

December 2, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As we all prepare for Diocesan Convention later this week, we wanted to familiarize you with the context behind the proposed Canon Amendments and Resolutions that will be decided upon at Convention.

Who is St. James the Great?

Let us re-introduce ourselves. We are St. James the Great of Newport Beach. We were re-seeded in October 2013 by Bishop Bruno after a lengthy legal battle with the previous congregation that disaffiliated with The Episcopal Church over theological differences.

See Bishop Bruno's dedication at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEJLPgH8Ev0>

Since Oct 2013, we have grown to almost 200 members. We have created unique ministries and have become an important part of the Newport Beach community. On June 21, 2015, Bishop Cathy Roskam presided over a service where we confirmed 8 new Episcopalians and 57 answered her call for anyone wishing to be re-Affirmed. Seeing the long line of faithful Episcopalians saying that no matter what happens, we are Episcopalians and our faith is strong – was deeply moving.

Our pledge growth has been exciting: we doubled total pledges and pledging families between 2014 and 2015. Our 2016 pledge drive, while not yet complete, has been a remarkable success – our average pledge size is up 23%, and the number of pledging families is up almost 25% -- this is yielding a total pledge increase over 2015 of just over 50%! All this while being locked out of our church property since June 29.

What happened to the congregation of St. James the Great?

On May 17, 2015, Bishop Bruno came to St. James the Great to celebrate the Eucharist. At our hospitality hour, he announced that he had “sold our church” to a developer who was planning to demolish our sacred space and replace it with high-end townhomes. He stated that it was completely within his power to sell the church property since it was owned by Corporation Sole.

We have since learned that many missions and parish properties are owned by Corporation Sole in addition to other non-sacred real estate. Further, we learned via the Bishop's attorneys in court that the proceeds from the sale of St. James the Great were being used in conjunction with a pending real estate

transaction in which the Bishop was engaged. Corporation Sole has enabled the Bishop to engaged in numerous real estate transactions without having to disclose these activities. What happened to the congregation of St. James the Great could happen to others in the Diocese. The proposed canon changes and resolutions are expected to prevent this from happening to you without the conversations and due process that the governance changes would require.

What do we want?

Simply put we want to return to our church property and we want the sale cancelled. We wish to continue our ministry in the Newport Beach community where an Episcopal tradition and presence has existed since 1945.

What can you do to help?

Support the three Canon Amendments and three resolutions regarding Corporation Sole and St. James the Great. As delegates to Convention, you have the power to ensure transparency, good governance, and to bring the Diocese into a 21st century mode of charitable operation. We are also asking you to stay until the end of convention when the resolutions are scheduled to be presented.

Where can you learn more?

Attached to this letter is a brief list of Questions and Answers that discusses the Canon Amendments and Resolutions as well as addresses the objections that the Bishop's staff have proposed. Also included is a list of Parish and Mission properties currently owned by Corporation Sole. We went to great effort to compile this list in the hopes that it will provide the members of this Diocese a picture of the extent of holdings in Corporation Sole, and to prevent what happened to St. James the Great being repeated.

Finally – there is [www.savesaintjamesthegreat.org](http://www.savesaintjamesthegreat.org). Here you will find a complete timeline of activities related to our journey. It will give you a thorough context behind what has happened.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we wish what all of you wish: To worship as faithful Episcopalians in our church property, to serve the community we live in with ministries that make a difference in peoples' lives, and be a part of a thriving, growing Christian movement that embraces tradition, is open and honest and welcoming to all. So please share this email with everyone you know – friends, family and other delegates to convention.

We welcome you all to come visit us at our table in the convention hall this Friday and Saturday where we will have additional information and fun takeaways. We look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,

The congregation of St. James the Great  
[www.savesaintjamesthegreat.org](http://www.savesaintjamesthegreat.org)

## **MORE QUESTIONS AND MORE ANSWERS FROM ST. JAMES THE GREAT**

**What do the people of St. James the Great want?** We want to be allowed back into our church, from which the bishop has locked us out. We want the sale of our church property to be canceled, so that we can worship in our church for decades to come and continue the **Episcopal** tradition and presence we have had in Newport Beach that began in 1945.

**Why all the canon amendments and resolutions?** We want changes in the diocese, so that no other congregation in the diocese suffers the “sudden sale” that we have suffered. Passing the canon amendments and resolutions will require transparency and reporting structures that are not currently in place.

**How many other Episcopal dioceses have a Corp Sole?** We believe that only about 10 dioceses, out of the almost 100 in the nation, still have Corp Sole. The California diocese recently moved its Corp Sole under the Corporation of the Diocese, rather than continue it as an independent, unaccountable entity.

**Are there other church buildings in the Los Angeles Diocese owned by Corp Sole?** Yes. We believe, based on our research in the land records, that there are more than a dozen parishes and about twenty mission congregations plus multiple other entities owned by Corp Sole. *See list on the reverse side.*

**What property would be transferred from Corp Sole to the Corporation of the Diocese?** The canon changes would remove references to Corp Sole from the canons regarding property, so that church properties would have to be transferred to the Corporation of the Diocese. The resolution asks only that property associated with active congregations, functioning schools and diocesan institutions” be transferred.

**Why not wait on these canon changes for another year?** The Chancellor has claimed that there might be legal issues if church properties are transferred as required by the proposed canon changes. But even though the canon changes have been on file for two months the Chancellor has not provided one concrete case of a church property in which there is such a mortgage or any other specific legal issue. On the other hand, St. James the Great is a concrete case of what can happen under the current structure. We should not wait for the abrupt sale of another church building out from under another congregation. We believe that, as a simple matter of fundamental fairness, all congregations should be treated equally and have available the same protections, checks and balances. It is an inequity to have some congregations have access to the consultative and deliberative processes of the Corporation of the Diocese and some congregations subject to the arbitrary action of Corp Sole with no recourse.

**Will there be tax costs if church property is transferred out of Corp Sole to the Diocese?** No, because the transfer would be from one non-profit to another related non-profit.

**But what is the harm of waiting another year?** St. James the Great is a concrete case of what the Bishop can do by selling a mission church building. We should not wait for the Bishop to sell another church out from under another congregation. We should change the canons, as suggested, so that other churches in the diocese are transferred out of Corp Sole.

**So what should we do?** The people of St. James the Great request that you vote in favor of the three canon changes (on Friday) and the three St. James resolutions (on Saturday).

## MISSIONS OWNED BY CORP SOLE

1. St. Paul's, Barstow
2. St. John's, Buena Park
3. Holy Communion, Gardena
4. Emmanuel Church, El Monte
5. St. Thomas, Hacienda Heights
6. St. George's, Hawthorne
7. Faith Episcopal, Laguna Niguel
8. St. Paul's, Lancaster
9. Church of the Epiphany, Los Angeles
10. Chapel of St. Francis of Atwater Village, Los Angeles
11. Grace Church, Moreno Valley
12. St. John the Evangelist, Needles
13. St. James the Great, Newport Beach
14. St. Bartholomew's, Pico Rivera
15. St. Clare of Assisi, Rancho Cucamonga  
*(sold)*
16. St. Francis of Assisi, Simi Valley
17. St. John & Holy Child Philippine Independent Church, Wilmington
18. St. Alban's, Yucaipa
19. St. Joseph's, Yucca Valley

## PARISHES OWNED BY CORP SOLE

1. St. John the Divine, Costa Mesa
2. Emmanuel, Fullerton
3. St. Andrew & St. Charles, Granada Hills
4. St. Wilfrid's, Huntington Beach
5. St. Mary's, Lompoc
6. St. Mary in Palms, Los Angeles
7. St. Aidan's, Malibu
8. St. Gabriel's, Monterey Park
9. St. Barnabas, Pasadena
10. Church of the Angels, Pasadena
11. Blessed Sacrament, Placentia
12. St. Peter's, Rialto
13. St. Francis of Assisi, San Bernardino
14. Christ the King, Santa Barbara
15. Prince of Peace, Woodland Hills

## OTHER ENTITIES

- 26 Residences
- Chester Talton Hall, Compton
- Faith in Action, Barstow
- Korean Methodist Church, Buena Park
- Project New Hope, Los Angeles
- Society of St. Francis (home), Los Angeles

**IN ADDITION**, our research finds that that Corp Sole owns three commercially zoned properties in Anaheim's "Platinum Triangle," with 50% owned by Katella Howell LLC, a Delaware corporation with the bishop as the sole officer.