



The Episcopal Diocese of Central New York
The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe

October 31, 2019

Clergy and Parish Wardens
The Episcopal Diocese of Central New York

Dear Clergy and Parish Wardens of Central New York:

Several weeks ago, in a news release on the diocesan website and in a letter to our clergy, I shared that the Diocese of Central New York has been investigating alleged financial wrongdoing by the Rev. Joell Szachara, former Rector of St. Stephen's Church in New Hartford. Due to initial findings, and on behalf of the Vestry, the Diocese engaged Dannible and McKee LLP to conduct a forensic audit of the finances of St. Stephen's Church. We have now received a completed audit report and, in concurrence with the auditors' recommendation, I have directed our chancellors and the Vestry of St. Stephen's to turn over the audit report and relevant materials to law enforcement officials. A disciplinary process under Title IV of our church canons will continue.

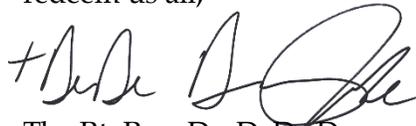
Diocesan leaders are also taking measures to prevent any further harm from this situation. At my direction, the Rev. Joell Szachara resigned in August 2019 from her position as rector of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in New Hartford and from all other diocesan leadership and pastoral ministry positions. She remains on administrative leave and is restricted from engaging in ministry of any kind. Diocesan leaders are also working with the leadership of St. Stephen's church to ensure that appropriate fiduciary processes are implemented, and to provide pastoral support to parish members.

In this Diocese, we have a shared commitment to transparency and accountability, acting in ways that honor the sacred trust of being a community of faith. While there may be times when that trust is betrayed, together we will do the hard work of holding one another accountable, repenting, and seeking forgiveness, praying to "live lives worthy of our calling" (Ephesians 4:1). It is by God's grace and unconditional love, more powerful than any human brokenness, that each of us has the power to proclaim the Good News, bearing witness to God's love through our words and deeds. Let us not be deterred from our primary focus on sharing the love of Jesus.

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I will continue to communicate directly with you as this matter develops. At this time, please join with me in prayer for the people of St. Stephen's Church, our diocesan leaders, the Rev. Joell Szachara, and all others whose lives have been impacted by this situation.

And as we continue this journey together, let us rejoice in the power of God's love to heal and redeem us all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DeDe Duncan-Probe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "P".

The Rt. Rev. Dr. DeDe Duncan-Probe
Bishop of Central New York

DDP/mks/kdm

CC The Rev. Joell Szachara, Members of the Standing Committee & Diocesan Board, Martha Berry, Esq., Jonathan Fellows, Esq., the Rev. Canon Carrie Schofield-Broadbent, the Rev. Canon John Crosswaite, Meredith Kadet Sanderson, Kathleen McDaniel