

IN THE DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA  
BEFORE A HEARING PANEL  
IN THE TITLE IV MATTER OF  
THE REVEREND DR. B. CAYCE RAMEY, RESPONDENT

To: The Rt. Rev. E. Mark Stevenson, Bishop Diocesan  
The Rev. Dr. B. Cayce Ramey, Respondent  
The Rev. Edward O. Miller, Jr., Respondent's Advisor  
Jack W. Burtch, Jr., Esquire, Counsel to Respondent  
The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff, Complainant  
Bradfute W. Davenport, Jr., Esquire, Church Attorney

HEARING ORDER

Background

The Very Rev. Fran Gardner-Smith, as a Diocese of Virginia Title IV Intake Officer, sent an email dated November 20, 2022, to: Bishop Diocesan "The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes, Diocese of Southern Virginia (at the request of The Rt. Rev. Susan Goff who has recused herself from this process)" and to the Diocese of Virginia Disciplinary Board (hereinafter BOARD) President, that includes the following statement concerning received information as to The Rev. Dr. B. Cayce Ramey (Respondent), "After reviewing the information shared with me, it is my opinion that the information presented to me, if true, would constitute an offense under three provisions of Canon IV. . . ." (Joint Exhibit (hereinafter JX) 26 and JX 27) The BOARD after receiving a requested Investigation Report, dated April 21, 2023, (JX 39), issued pursuant to Title IV.11.3 a Notice of Referral to Hearing Panel, dated May 28, 2023, that referred this case to a Hearing Panel (hereinafter PANEL) consisting of: Brian Carr, Esquire, President, The Rev. Crystal Hardin, and The Rev. Herbert Jones. (JX 39A)

The parties pursuant to Title IV.13.5 were then afforded reasonable time and opportunity to discover evidence in preparation for a hearing on this matter. A hearing before the PANEL was held on March 6 and 7, 2024, at which

documentary evidence and testimony were given and for which a verbatim written transcript was prepared. (Title IV.13.8)

The PANEL, having considered all testimony, documentary evidence, all relevant arguments including canonical arguments and having deliberated fully, made its determination to issue the following Order:

## ORDER

### Fact Findings

Based on unopposed or Clear and Convincing testimony and documentary evidence, the PANEL finds:

1. Respondent was ordained to the Order of Deacons on June 2, 2012, and to the Order of Priesthood on December 15, 2012, and for both ordinations Respondent separately signed a Declaration of Conformity wherein Respondent declared to “conform to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.” (JXs 1 and 2)
2. On February 28, 2021, Respondent while in parochial ministry as Rector of All Saints Sharon Chapel, Episcopal Church, Alexandria, Virginia, sent an email to The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff, then Bishop Diocesan, in part stating: “Through my [Doctor of Ministry] DMin, I am wrestling with advocating for voluntary ex-communication” (JX 44, Bates No. R-048), and Respondent concluded with “I welcome your guidance and insight as to how to proceed in this discernment and to help contextualize the decision in light of my responsibilities as rector of Sharon Chapel and a priest of the Diocese of Virginia under your authority.” (JX 44, Bates No. R-050)
3. Respondent in partial fulfillment of requirements for a DMin degree submitted a thesis dated February 2022 that is titled “Leave Your Gift at the Altar: Redoing Eucharistic Theology in Light of Slavery through a Justice-Centered Community.” This thesis includes under a “Conclusion” titled section:

Having encountered the Holy Spirit, having been convicted of and by the truth of Black joy, suffering, pain, experience, and love . . . I must pattern my life, in submission and humility, with the teachings of Christ, I must, and we must leave our gift at the altar and first go and be reconciled. (Respondent’s Exhibit (hereinafter RX) 9, pp. 93-4)

4. Between February 28 and March 24, 2021, Bishop Goff told Respondent that she did not “explicitly support [his] path” but she would not “block [him] from pursuing it in prayerful reflection and conversation.” (Hearing Transcript (hereinafter TRANS.), 3/6/24. pp. 39:2-40:1; JX 4)
5. After June 22, 2021, while still in parochial ministry, Respondent ended discernment and began a Eucharistic Fast that includes not celebrating the Eucharistic Sacrament and not receiving the Eucharist. (RX 9, p. 83; and Hearing Transcript (hereinafter TRANS.) 3/6/24. p. 144: 8-11)
6. Bishop Goff, after learning in the late fall of 2021 from others than the Respondent that Respondent had earlier begun a Eucharistic Fast, communicated several times with him, and on October 27, 2022, Bishop Goff told the Respondent that she believed his Eucharistic Fast to be at least a violation of a priest’s ordination vows, and that accordingly there were consequent options that included possible institution of a Title IV disciplinary case. (TRANS. 3/6/24, pp. 67:15-70:14; JX 20)
7. Two weeks later, on November 10, 2022, Bishop Goff and Respondent again met and Respondent reported that he would “not voluntarily renounce his priestly orders and he will not again celebrate the Eucharist until he feels called to do so by the Holy Spirit.” (JX 23, Bates No. CA-222; TRANS. 3/6/24, pp. 73:13-78:14)
8. Respondent continued in parochial ministry as Rector of All Saints Sharon Chapel until the first Sunday in December 2022. (TRANS. 3/6/24, p. 148: 19-22)
9. Bishop Goff resigned as Bishop Diocesan at the end of 2022. (TRANS. 3/6/24, pp. 34:9-35:4)
10. Respondent’s Eucharistic Fast to not celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrament has continued without interruption from June 2021, except for the Easter Vigil 2022. (TRANS. 3/6/24, pp. 170: 6 – 171: 14)

### Ecclesiastical Discipline Findings

The PANEL finds based on (1) prior Orders and Decisions in this case as to Title IV violations, and (2) all relevant arguments including canonical arguments with respect to allegations of Title IV violations set out in the Church Attorney’s Amended Statement of Offenses, filed August 3, 2023, that:

1. Respondent having sent an email to Clergy and Laity that includes the statement that they “. . . are under no obligation to speak with [the Church Attorney] or not to speak with him either way” violated “Title IV.13.11(a) to at least the extent of committing conduct ‘contrary to the integrity of the proceedings.’” (PANEL Order on Church Attorney’s Motion for Sanctions, issued December 4, 2023; BOARD Decision on Notice of Appeal from Hearing Panel Order, issued January 15, 2024; and BOARD Decision and Order on Reconsidering Sanctions, issued February 12, 2024.)
2. Respondent refused to comply with a BOARD ordered sanction and thereby violated Title IV.4.1(d) by “failure to ‘. . . abide by the requirements of any applicable . . . Order.’” (PANEL Decision and Order Pursuant to Canon IV.13,11, issued February 19, 2024.)
3. Respondent violated Title IV.4.1(c) by failure to “abide by the promises and vows made when ordained” to at least the extent to “be guided by the. . . leadership of your bishop” and “minister . . . sacraments of the New Covenant. . .” (*Book of Common Prayer*, Ordination of a Priest, p. 532)
4. Respondent violated Title IV.4.1(h)(8) by “habitual neglect of . . . the Holy Communion, according to the order and use of the Church.”
5. Respondent violated Title IV.4.1(h)(9) by engaging in “Conduct Unbecoming a Member of the Clergy” to at least the extent of having violated Title IV.13.11(a), Title IV.4.1(d), Title IV.4.1(c) and Title IV.4.1(h)(8).
6. Allegations as to violations of Title 4.1(b) and Title IV 4.1 (h)(2) are not sustained.

### Discipline

Having fully considered all developed and otherwise offered information from the parties, including information offered in mitigation and aggravation, and cognizant of the Church’s interest in promoting healing, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, justice, amendment of life, and reconciliation among the Respondent, Complainant, affected Community and other persons, the following terms of discipline are prescribed:

Deposition, in which Respondent is deprived of the right to exercise the gifts and spiritual authority of God’s word and sacraments conferred at ordinations to Priesthood and Diaconate.

## Discussion

While the PANEL prescribes that Respondent be deposed, the PANEL does not characterize this as a case where a priest has misbehaved and now must be punished. Rather, the PANEL views deposition as a necessary recognition of the irreconcilable incompatibility between where Respondent has chosen to place himself and where his priestly vows and duties require him to be.

It is not within the power of a Hearing Panel to change what it means for a priest to “abide by the promises and vows made when ordained” (Title IV.4.1(b), or to alter what it means to “refrain from ... the habitual neglect of public worship, and of the Holy Communion, according to the order and use of the Church.” (Title IV.4.1(h)(8)). Nor is it within the purview of a Hearing Panel to reinterpret or to stretch the interpretation of these duties beyond their common understanding as practiced by the ecclesiastical authorities of the Diocese of Virginia and the ECUSA. Any such changes or modifications are the purview of General Convention, or perhaps to some extent, the purview of Diocesan Bishops as they choose how to administer their dioceses. This PANEL expresses no opinion on the question of whether any such changes *should* be made by those empowered to do so. The PANEL has, to the best of its ability, done what it is obligated to do: apply the established behavioral requirements of a priest, as they are commonly understood and practiced by the ecclesiastical authorities, to the facts and situation before it.

Celebrating the Holy Eucharist is widely understood to be at the very heart of what it means to be an ordained priest. Only an ordained priest can perform this sacrament. In a very real sense then, a priest who refuses to celebrate Holy Eucharist, in theory as much as in practice, has chosen to cease to “be a priest”. Respondent may believe that he is “living into his priestly vows” through his Eucharistic fast, but that belief alone does not make it so. Simply put, Respondent’s choice places him outside the definition of what it means to be a priest. His choice violates his vows, and by continuing to act on his choice, Respondent is necessarily neglecting public worship and the Holy Communion.

The beginning of the title of Respondent’s DMin dissertation is “Redoing Eucharistic Theology ...” Early on Respondent states that “This project explores the *redevelopment* of Eucharistic theology ...” (page 3) (emphasis added). Later he speaks of “[t]he *theological shift* needed in the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia

....” (page 34) (emphasis added). Throughout Respondent argues for a new interpretation of the Church’s theology of the Eucharist and a change in its Christology. His Eucharistic fast followed from his newly developed concept of Eucharistic theology.

The Church has a long history of encouraging the exploration of its theology, even of arguing for changes in that theology. And the Church’s theology has certainly evolved over time, often dramatically so. Advocating for theological change, as an academic exercise, and in an attempt to persuade others, has not only been tolerated by the Church, but generally encouraged by its rich intellectual tradition. Nevertheless, no individual priest has the authority to change his behavior without his Bishop’s permission to align with a newly developed personal theology that contradicts the Church’s teachings.

In his closing argument Respondent’s Counsel reminded everyone of past instances where bishops and priests have broken the rules but are now celebrated for their efforts to change the Church. He cited the “Philadelphia 11” regarding the ordination of women, and instances of priests who refused to conduct marriage ceremonies so long as gay and lesbian marriages were prohibited by the Church. (TRANS. 3/7/24, pp. 154:20-158:2) If these past events are applicable to the Respondent’s Eucharistic fast, that is for General Convention to determine. If there is to be an exception to a priest’s duty to celebrate Holy Communion, General Convention has the authority and the power to create that exception. A Hearing Panel does not.

By his actions Respondent has put himself clearly outside of what it means to be a priest. His Eucharistic fast is fundamentally incompatible with his priestly vows. The PANEL is duty-bound to conclude that the Respondent has violated his behavioral obligations under Title IV.

## Conclusion

Pursuant to Title IV.14.7, the PANEL on April 3, 2024, afforded the Bishop Diocesan, Complainant, and Respondent opportunities to be heard on Proposed Terms for Order (Exhibit A) that were previously sent to each of them.

This Hearing Order is transmitted to the Bishop Diocesan for disposition in accord with Title IV.14.8.

Date: May 8, 2024



Brian Carr, Esq., President  
Hearing Panel of the  
Diocese of Virginia

# EXHIBIT A



IN THE DIOCESE OF VIRGINIA  
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THE REVEREND DR. B. CAYCE RAMEY, RESPONDENT

To: The Rt. Rev. E. Mark Stevenson, Bishop Diocesan  
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Jack W. Burtch, Jr. Esquire, Counsel to Respondent  
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The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff, Complainant  
Bradfute W. Davenport, Esquire, Church Attorney

**PURSUANT TO TITLE IV.14.7  
PROPOSED TERMS FOR ORDER**

A hearing for this matter was held before the Hearing Panel (hereinafter PANEL) on March 6 and 7, 2024, during which evidence was presented and witness testimony taken.

Title IV.14.7 directs that:

Prior to the issuance of an Order by a . . . Hearing Panel, the issuing Panel shall afford the Bishop Diocesan, the Respondent and the Complainant each with an opportunity to be heard on the proposed terms of the Order.

Having privately deliberated the PANEL issues, this written Proposed Terms for Order to facilitate that each of all Title IV.14.7 designated parties be accurately informed for consequently being heard on proposed terms. Compliance with Title IV.14.7 does not direct that proposed terms be in writing nor be issued to the public. The PANEL requests that to best effect the spirit of Title IV.14.7's direction for parties to be heard as to what are the PANEL'S proposed terms that this Proposed Terms for Order not at this time be shared beyond the parties and the Church Attorney, who will not be heard, prior to all compliance with Title IV.14.7. To ensure a complete proceeding record, a copy of the Proposed Terms for Order will be attached to the issued Order.

## **FOUND RESPONDENT TITLE IV VIOLATIONS**

The Disciplinary Board and PANEL previously held, and the PANEL intends to include in the Order that Respondent during these proceedings violated the following Title IV Canons.

- “Title IV.13.11(a) to at least the extent of committing conduct ‘contrary to the integrity of the proceedings.’” (PANEL Order on Church Attorney’s Motion for Sanctions, issued December 4, 2023.)
- “Title IV.13.11(a) to at least the extent of committing conduct ‘contrary to the integrity of the proceedings.’” (Disciplinary Board Decision on Notice of Appeal from Hearing Panel Order, issued January 15, 2024)
- Title IV.4.1(d) by “failure to ‘. . . abide by the requirements of any applicable . . . Order.’” (PANEL Decision and Order Pursuant to Canon IV.13,11, issued February 19, 2024.)

## **PROPOSED TERMS AS TO ALLEGED TITLE IV VIOLATIONS**

Based on application of undisputed evidence and testimony, and other evidence and testimony found to be Clear and Convincing to allegations of Title IV violations set out in the Church Attorney’s Amended Statement of Offenses, filed August 3, 2023, the PANEL proposes the following Order terms as to be found Offenses.

Respondent has come to an intensely felt consciousness that the Episcopal Church participates in and benefits from racial injustice; in response, on or about June 2021, Respondent, while in parochial ministry at All Saints Sharon Chapel: Episcopal Church, Alexandria, Virginia, entered a self-imposed Eucharistic Fast to cease from receiving Holy Communion and presiding during the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist except for the 2022 Easter Vigil. In consequence of Respondent’s Eucharist Fast practice, the PANEL has found and proposes that the Respondent has and continues to commit Offenses in violation of the following Title IV.4 Standards of Conduct Canons.

- Title IV.4.1(c) failure to “abide by the promises and vows made when ordained” to at least the extent to “be guided by the . . . leadership of your bishop” and “minister . . . sacraments of the New Covenant. . .” (Book of Common Prayer, Ordination of a Priest, p. 532)
- Title IV.4.1(h)(8) “habitual neglect of . . . the Holy Communion, according to the order and use of the Church.”
- Title IV.4.1(h)(9) “any Conduct Unbecoming a Member of the Clergy” to at least the extent of having been found in violation Title IV.13.11(a) and Title IV.4.1(d), and as to be held by proposed terms in violation of Title IV.4.1(c) and IV.4.1(h)(8).

Based on application of undisputed evidence and testimony, and other evidence and testimony found to be Clear and Convincing to allegations of Title IV violations set out in the Church Attorney’s Amended Statement of Offenses, filed August 3, 2023, the PANEL proposes the following Order terms as to Offenses not found.

- Title 4.1(b) failure to “conform to the Rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer.”
- Title IV 4.1 (h)(2) “holding and teaching publicly or privately, and advisedly, any Doctrine contrary to that held by the Church.”

### **PROPOSED SENTENCE TERM**

Deposition, in which Respondent is deprived of the right to exercise the gifts and spiritual authority of God’s word and sacraments conferred at ordinations to Priesthood and Diaconate.

Date: March 21, 2024



Brian Carr, President  
Hearing Panel of the  
Diocese of Virginia