



THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

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SOUTH CAROLINA SUPREME COURT RETURNS 14 CHURCHES TO THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

CHARLESTON, SC – (April 21, 2022) On Wednesday, April 20, the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that 14 South Carolina churches that were once part of The Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina shall be returned, along with all real and personal property held in trust for the diocese, including the St. Christopher Camp and Conference Center on Seabrook Island. The churches left the diocese in 2012 and later joined the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and yesterday's news marks another milestone in a nearly decade-long legal journey that included a lower court decision in 2014 which was largely overturned by the state's high court in 2017 and then further clarified with the decision yesterday.

Of the decision, the Right Reverend Ruth Woodliff-Stanley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, said: "Their decisions will no doubt bring joy to many in our diocese, but for others, there will be grief in the possible finality of a loss they have been feeling for nearly 10 years." She also added a hope for the future of the reconciled diocese: "...we now walk into a bright future, one in which we will focus on the reconciling power of the Gospel to transform injustice, to heal the brokenhearted, and to build God's beloved community."

The South Carolina Supreme Court, using a variety of determining factors, decided that 14 parishes (of the 29 previously named) did create an "irrevocable trust in favor of the National Church and its diocese" (the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina – the "Associated Diocese"). These 14 parishes are as follows: Christ Church, Mt. Pleasant; Good Shepherd, Charleston; Holy Comforter, Sumter; Holy Cross, Stateburg; Holy Trinity, Charleston; St. Bartholomew's, Hartsville; St. David's, Cheraw; St. Luke's, Hilton Head; St. Matthew's, Fort Motte; St. James, Charleston; St. John's, Johns Island; St. Jude's, Walterboro; Trinity, Myrtle Beach; and Old St. Andrew's, Charleston.

Conversely, the Court found that 15 of the 29 parishes "did not create a trust in favor of the National Church or its diocese, and thus those 15 Parishes retain title to their real estate." These parishes are as follows: All Saints, Florence; Church of our Saviour, John's Island; Church of the Cross, Bluffton; Christ-St. Paul's, Yorges Island; Epiphany, Eutawville; Redeemer, Orangeburg; Resurrection, Surfside/Myrtle Beach; St. Helena's, Beaufort; St. Paul's, Bennettsville; St. Paul's, Summerville; St. Philip's, Charleston; St. Luke & St. Paul, Charleston; St. Michael's, Charleston; Trinity, Edisto; and Trinity, Pinopolis.

The South Carolina Supreme Court has decided that all real and personal property, including the St. Christopher Camp and Conference Center, have been held "in trust for the benefit of the National Church [The Episcopal Church] and the Associated Diocese," meaning the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina. The ruling further concluded that "The real and personal property held in trust by the Trustees is now held for the benefit of the Associated Diocese."

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On all matters and questions relating to “names, styles, emblems, and service marks,” the Court deferred to the federal court. The U.S. District Court previously ruled in favor of The Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina (also recognized as The Episcopal Church in South Carolina) in September 2019. This decision has been appealed, but any future rulings were stayed pending the outcome of this state case.

In [her pastoral letter to the diocese](#) sent hours after receiving the opinion, Bishop Woodliff-Stanley discussed the next steps for the diocese. “We are still working to understand the immediate path forward and promise to be in communication with you as our legal team helps us determine what comes next,” said Bishop Woodliff-Stanley. “May we focus together on reconciliation and the way of love as we journey together on the road ahead, centered in Christ’s love for all of us.”

The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina was one of the nine original dioceses that formed The Episcopal Church in 1785. The Episcopal Church, which encompasses 111 dioceses and regional areas in 17 nations of the world, remains the only denomination in the United States affiliated with the worldwide Anglican Communion.

About The Diocese of South Carolina

The historic (Episcopal) Diocese of South Carolina (DSC), also known as The Episcopal Church in South Carolina (TECSC), is the local diocese in the eastern half of South Carolina and part of The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. The diocese currently includes 31 congregations and more than 7,000 members. For the latest on DSC, visit episcopalchurchsc.org or connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) @DioceseofSC.

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Media Contact:

Molly Hamilton, Director of Communications
The Diocese of South Carolina
MHamilton@episcopalchurchsc.org
843.327.6479