



THE RT. REV. DR. J. PHILIP ASHEY

BISHOP ORDINARY  
DIOCESE OF WESTERN ANGLICANS

8 May 2026

Dear brother Bishops in the ACNA,  
Grace and peace to you in Jesus' name,

Dean Julian Dobbs has brought to my attention the concerns some of you have raised to him regarding the lectures I gave May 1–2 through our Diocesan Anglican Center of Theology and Formation, our Spring Lectures on “Ecclesiastical Justice.” Specifically, some of the things I said regarding the pending trial of His Grace Archbishop Steve Wood. I have reviewed the lectures and write you to set the record straight and clarify any things I could have said differently or perhaps not at all.

The purpose of these lectures is educational. They were offered at a level that would be understood by lay and clergy leaders alike. I believe with all my heart that transparency builds trust, and it is in that spirit that I offered my comments in response to questions posed in person and to an online audience.

Nevertheless, I have relistened to the relevant portions of the lectures. In several places I spoke imprecisely, and in two places I said things that, on reflection and on the record, I should not have said. What follows is not an attempt to recharacterize what I said but to withdraw and correct it where correction is owed.

*The sequence of the Presentment against Archbishop Wood:* On relistening, I did say that after the *Washington Post* publication, the bishops decided they had to “catch up with the *Washington Post*” and sign the accusation. I, myself, was contacted by a bishop and asked to sign a Presentment. I declined because I was already preparing to volunteer as a canonical advisor to Archbishop Wood. Nevertheless, my statement regarding this College in the plural was not only imprecise but incorrect. For the record, no bishops have signed this presentment, and I should not have spoken in a way that suggested otherwise. I withdraw the statement and apologize to every bishop whose integrity I impugned by that remark, and I ask their forgiveness.

*My use of the word “exonerated” with regards to the outcome of the trial of Archbishop Wood:* I said in the lecture that I personally believed there was a “good chance” Archbishop Wood would be exonerated. Despite the qualifications I attached to that comment, I should not have offered a prediction about the outcome of a matter that is properly before the Court for the Trial of a Bishop. I withdraw the speculation and apologize for it.

*The nature of my role with Archbishop Wood:* I have said to the College, to individual Bishops who have asked me directly, and to others that I am a volunteer “Canonical Advisor” to the Archbishop. Period. I was not appointed nor was I approved by the College to serve in this way. I serve entirely at the pleasure of Archbishop Wood as a friend and colleague. With regards to my comment in passing about a “ruckus” with the College, my comment was solely in regards to those Bishops who called me directly and expressed their concerns that my service as a canonical advisor to the Archbishop created a “conflict of interest,” and that my very presence in the College would introduce a point of view that would taint the

“objective neutrality” of the College pending the outcome of the Board of Inquiry and the Trial and sentencing of Archbishop Wood. For the record, I responded at once with an offer to recuse myself from all further meetings of the College of Bishops—in response to those concerns that my presence would “taint” the College. At that time, Dean Julian declined my offer. In light of the distress my comments in the lectures have caused, I renew my offer to Dean Julian and to this College to recuse myself from all further meetings of the College until after all procedures with regards to Archbishop Wood are concluded.

*The Inhibition of Archbishop Wood and the five senior Bishops who signed that Inhibition:* One question that came to me online was “why was Archbishop Wood inhibited when he had already voluntarily taken a leave of absence?” In reviewing what I said in the lecture, please note that I said it was due to the seriousness of the charges and the desire of the bishops that the College not appear to give “special treatment” to one of its own members, and especially an Archbishop. I did not mean to leave an impression that the five senior bishops who signed the inhibition did so under pressure from social media, or that they in any way acted in bad faith and not on the merits. I ask their forgiveness for leaving such an impression.

*Who is responsible for making sure Archbishop Wood complies with the Inhibition:* My comments about my counsel to Archbishop Steve were not intended to say that I am an authority on whether he has in fact complied. My advice is simply advice. Any determination about His Grace’s compliance with the inhibition will be made by the Dean and the College. Not by me.

*The status of the Complainants:* On relistening, I did refer to certain complainants as having been “terminated as employees.” That was inaccurate, and I should not have characterized their separation in those terms. I withdraw the statement and apologize to the individuals concerned and to the College for my imprecision.

*Motive of the College in approving new Title IV:* On relistening, there was a point where I framed the discussion of Title IV in terms of bishops’ fears and nervousness about being subject to presentment. I should not have ascribed that motive to fellow bishops. The College’s deliberation on Title IV deserves to be described on its merits, not through the lens of fear. I acknowledge publicly and personally that our deliberations as a College are driven by the merits of the inquisitorial paradigm to which we are now turning in new Title IV. So, I am deeply grieved that I have left any other impression than that, and I withdraw those comments and ask forgiveness for impugning the motives of this College.

*A Note on the Letter:* I write this letter to the College, but I recognize that questions about the lectures have travelled beyond the College, and that some of you have been asked about them by clergy, lay leaders and others in your dioceses. You have my permission to share this letter where you judge it pastorally appropriate, in whole and not in excerpt, so that the corrections and apologies offered here are received in the same context in which I offer them.

Finally, I am grateful to Dean Julian for bringing your concerns about these imprecisions and misstatements to my attention, and for the opportunity to correct them with apologies and requests for forgiveness. The corrections are owed and I make them gladly. I offer this College my apologies. In the future, I will focus my teaching on canon law with more precision and attention to the facts.

I continue to stand on the promise of unity, fellowship and cleansing promised in I John 1:7–9. I apologize to any person, named or unnamed, complainant, bishop, or member of the faithful, who has been grieved or wounded by what I said or how I said it.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by stylized initials 'PA' and a flourish.

The Right Rev. Phil Ashey

The Diocese of Western Anglicans