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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Statement Regarding May 13 El Paso County District Court Ruling**

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO. – The Bishop and Diocese of Colorado, and Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church today welcomed the El Paso County district court's timely ruling, in which Judge Schwartz denied four motions brought by a group that seceded from The Episcopal Church and is currently suing The Episcopal Church for possession of the church property. In the ruling, Judge Schwartz denied the secessionists' motion to dismiss The Episcopal Church entities' counterclaims, and Donald Armstrong's similar motion.

By setting this matter over for trial on February 10, 2009 the court has acknowledged the seriousness of the legal issues yet to be resolved.

“The issue in this case is whether those leaving The Episcopal Church can take its property with them,” remarked Larry Hitt, chancellor for The Episcopal Diocese of Colorado. “The assertion that they can defies common sense, canon law and the 1986 Colorado Supreme Court Mote decision.”

Clelia deMoraes, senior warden of Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church said, “The secessionists, who have our property, have effectively admitted that they are violating Colorado law when they posted a plea on their web site seeking support from others in ‘overturning’ the Mote decision,” (A copy of that plea is attached.) deMoraes added, “Indeed, Father Armstrong himself admitted to the parish in a written report prior to his decision to leave The Episcopal Church, that ‘the church property legally belongs to the Bishop and the Diocese.’”

The issue of corporate identity raised by the secessionist group when it filed suit against the diocese is a secondary issue that does not begin to alter the constitutional law that affirms the Church's right to its property, which has been upheld in numerous legal precedents.

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