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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Beckett Stokes, bstokes@coloradodiocese.org
(303) 837-1173 xt. 21 office
(303) 748-9835 mobile

The Bishop's office of the Diocese of Colorado is aware that today (Tuesday, Oct. 23) The Rev. Don Armstrong of Grace and St. Stephen's in Colorado Springs is reportedly releasing results of an audit of financial records at Grace and St. Stephen's. The Bishop and Diocese have not seen the report that is to be shared at the press conference.

On Sept. 26, the Ecclesiastical Court of the Diocese of Colorado convicted Armstrong of six counts of financial misconduct, including Count 1 – commission of crimes, including theft of \$392,409.93 from Grace Church, and causing Grace Church to issue false W-2s and underreport Armstrong's income and benefits by \$548,097.27; Count 2 – that Armstrong received illegal loans totaling \$122,479.16 in violation of Diocesan Canons; Count 3 – unauthorized encumbrance and alienation of Grace Church's real property; Count 4 – violation of the temporary inhibition placed on Armstrong; Count 5 – the improper use of clergy discretionary funds; and Count 6 – failure to maintain proper books of account.

That conviction followed an extensive investigation into charges of serious financial wrongdoing. As part of the established disciplinary process in the Episcopal Church, two elected diocesan bodies composed of clergy and lay people, acting independently of the Bishop – the Diocesan Review Committee and the Ecclesiastical Court – reviewed the evidence compiled by an outside forensic auditor and former IRS fraud investigator and a nationally renowned criminal defense attorney who were retained by the diocese. The Diocesan Review Committee found unanimously that there was adequate evidence to take the case to ecclesiastical trial, and the Ecclesiastical Court found unanimously that Armstrong is guilty of the offenses with which he has been charged.

Throughout the investigation, Armstrong has refused to answer the charges in front of these elected bodies or to present evidence on his own behalf in direct response to the specific charges, in spite of the multiple formal and informal opportunities and invitations he has had to do so. According to the procedures laid out in the canons of the Church, the Bishop will formally pronounce sentence on Armstrong next week; the Ecclesiastical Court recommended the most severe sentence available to them – deposition from the priesthood in the Episcopal Church.

The Bishop has reported the results of the Diocese's investigation to the appropriate legal authorities, has turned over all documents related to the investigation, and is cooperating fully with law enforcement officials. Bishop Robert O'Neill today expressed his confidence that the criminal justice system will respond appropriately.

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