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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Ecclesiastical Court of the Diocese of Colorado met on Sept. 26, and issued its final judgment and sentence to Bishop Robert O'Neill in the matter of The Rev. Don Armstrong, who was serving at rector of Grace and St. Stephen's Church in Colorado Springs at the time the diocese began an investigation into allegations against him of financial wrongdoing. Armstrong was notified of the decision on Friday, Sept. 28.

The Court's unanimous judgment and sentence, which comes following a 30 day comment period initiated by their preliminary judgment, reiterates its preliminary finding that Armstrong is guilty on all Counts included in the Motion for Summary Judgment in his case. Those counts are: 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. Armstrong now has two weeks to provide reasons why he should not be sentenced or provide information about circumstances that would mitigate the court's findings.

The five member panel – made up of clergy and lay people elected at Diocesan Convention – also sentenced Armstrong with deposition from his ministry as an Episcopal priest. The court's ruling is another step in the well-defined disciplinary process established by the Canons of the Episcopal Church whereby serious allegations of wrongdoing against any member of the clergy can be thoroughly and impartially investigated, and throughout which the accused has numerous rights and protections. The Ecclesiastical Court functions independently of the Bishop and is governed by the disciplinary laws and processes of the Episcopal Church's Canons. Those Canons exist to

guard the well-being of all members of the church, and when there is wrongdoing to help restore the spiritual and institutional health of the church.

Following a 30-day waiting period, Bishop O'Neill will pronounce a final sentence. Under the Canons of the Church, it is the Bishop's responsibility to impose the sentence. The Bishop can, at his discretion, lessen the court's sentence but cannot increase it.

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