

# Covenant is First Step in Response to Abuse and Exploitation

Following a special listening liturgy on July 3 to acknowledge the MeToo movement and hear personal stories of abuse, harassment and exploitation, bishops meeting at The Episcopal Church's General Convention in Austin adopted a covenant that commits them to seek changes. The document, which applies only to bishops, is entitled "A Working Covenant for the Practice of Equity and Justice for All in The Episcopal Church."

The stories which were read by bishops during the liturgy had been chosen from more than 40 testimonial letters submitted. Names and identifying information were redacted, but the readings and silence within the liturgy was both dramatic and profoundly uncomfortable for those attending. The Covenant is meant as a first step in the Church's response.

## **A Working Covenant for the Practice of Equity and Justice for All in The Episcopal Church**

Giving thanks to God, and listening deeply to the recent outcry expressing pain and brokenness in our church, we recognize the urgent need for change. The church as both community of faith and workplace is not immune to abuse, harassment and exploitation of people of varying gender, racial and cultural identities. As pastoral and prophetic leaders of the church, we bear the responsibility to continue the healing and transformational work that has yet to be fully realized. Together, we commit ourselves in our local contexts to strive daily, transforming the culture of our church into a more just, safe, caring and prophetic place for all. We are grateful for the substantial and insightful memorial offered at General Convention, 2018 by *Gathering the Next Generation, 2016*. We seek to shift our institutional life from one which benefits a few at the expense of others, and more determinedly live our baptismal vows following the way of Jesus.

Leading with greater awareness of God's dream, deeper courage and integrity, we plan to engage our diocesan cultures and structures in the following ways:

- Recognize and respect the official as well as unofficial power given to us by our office, exercising it with humble care and in loving service with all God's people;
- Participate in regular self-examination and seek amendment of life in our personal and systemic use of authorized, relational and positional power;
- Increase our awareness of, listen to, and take to heart the stories that reflect the biases deeply embedded in our structure;

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- Create a culture of empowerment, giving space for leadership based on equity, not tokenism;
- Make room for varying cultural and gender-based leadership practices, nurturing an ethos of cooperation and collaboration, exploring and supporting a broad range of leadership models;
- Eliminate pay and benefit inequities among all persons;
- Create and enforce equitable parental leave policies;
- Utilize formational opportunities for congregational search committees to examine bias and make responsible choices regarding their selection and call of clergy into ministry with them.

### **Documento proyecto de pacto por la práctica de la equidad y la justicia para todos en la Iglesia Episcopal**

Dando gracias a Dios, y escuchando atentamente el reciente clamor que expresa dolor y quebranto en nuestra Iglesia, reconocemos la urgente necesidad de cambio. La Iglesia, tanto comunidad de fe como centro laboral, no es inmune al abuso, el acoso y la explotación de personas de diversas identidades sexuales, raciales y culturales. Como líderes pastorales y proféticos de la Iglesia, asumimos la responsabilidad de continuar la obra de recuperación y transformación que no se ha realizado plenamente aún. Juntos, nos comprometemos en nuestros contextos locales a luchar diariamente para transformar la cultura de nuestra Iglesia en un lugar más justo, seguro, solidario y profético para todos.. Estamos agradecidos por el sólido y esclarecedor memorial dirigido a la Convención General, 2018 por el grupo *Gathering the Next Generation, 2016*. Buscamos cambiar nuestra vida institucional de ser una que beneficia a unos pocos a expensas de los otros, y vivir más resueltamente nuestros votos bautismales siguiendo el camino de Jesús.

Liderando con mayor conciencia del sueño de Dios, con valor e integridad más profundos, nos proponemos actuar en nuestras culturas y estructuras diocesanas de las formas siguientes:

- Reconocer y respetar el poder, tanto oficial como extraoficial, que nos da nuestro cargo, ejerciéndolo con humilde cuidado y en amoroso servicio hacia todo el pueblo de Dios.
- Participar en [ejercicios] regulares de autoexamen y procurar enmendar la vida en nuestro uso personal y sistémico del poder [que nos otorga] la autoridad, las relaciones y la posición.
- Aumentar nuestra conciencia de las historias que reflejan los prejuicios profundamente arraigados en nuestra estructura, escucharlas y tomarlas en serio.
- Crear una cultura de empoderamiento, dando lugar a un liderazgo basado en la equidad, no en el formulismo.
- Dar lugar a prácticas de liderazgo basado en la diversidad cultural y de género, fomentando una idiosincrasia de cooperación y colaboración, explorando y apoyando una amplia gama de modelos de liderazgo.
- Eliminar inequidades de salario y beneficio entre todas las personas.
- Crear y aplicar normas equitativas de licencia parental.

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- Utilizar oportunidades formativas para que los comités de búsqueda congregacionales revisen sus prejuicios y tomen decisiones responsables respecto a su elección y el llamado de clérigos a ministrarles.

Página de la Amada Comunidad: [www.episcopalchurch.org/Beloved-Community](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/Beloved-Community), con materiales adicionales sobre prejuicios implícitos que se encuentran en: <https://episcopalchurch.org/resources-racial-reconciliation-and-justice>

Nesbitt, Rda. Dra. Paula, [Porqué el género es importante] “Why Gender Still Matters” (artículo), en *Cast Wide the Net: Search and Transitions Toolkit for Female Clergy*. Online compendium of resources, 2015. <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/cast-wide-net>.

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