

Preventing Sexual Harassment and Discrimination

Resolved, That the 108th Convention of the Diocese of Olympia ratifies and joins in the work set forth by Resolution A109 – *Create Task Force on Sexual Harassment*—of the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church by declaring that “sexual harassment of adults by clergy, church employees, and church members are abuses of trust, a violation of the Baptismal Covenant, contrary to Christian Character, and are therefore wrong”; and

Be it further Resolved, that this Convention hereby establishes a Diocesan Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Discrimination, to be appointed by the Bishop or the Bishop’s designee, with preference given to those who have experience in dealing with harassment and its effects, such as psychologists/psychiatrists, medical doctors, employment lawyers, HR professionals, and with the following duties:

- a. To coordinate on a local level with *The Episcopal Church Task Force on Sexual Harassment* in its duty to “study, educate, develop curriculum, and propose and promulgate model policy and standards of conduct on different forms of harassment, and to advise the Church as resource persons”; and
- b. to support and advise diocesan staff, if requested, in any planned development and/or updating of preventative education tools (including those contained in *Safeguarding God’s People: Preventing Sexual Exploitation in Communities of Faith* training), standards for the continued care of those who have been affected, and guidelines for the appropriate response of ministry leaders; and
- c. to report to the 109th Convention of the Diocese of Olympia on their findings and recommendations; and
- d. to accompany that report with suggested appropriation of funds and expenditures to be included in the 2020 Diocesan Budget.

Explanation: We applaud the 79th General Convention of the Episcopal Church for taking on the important work of studying best practices to address sexual harassment and discrimination within our communities of faith. While it is vital to adopt consistent best practices throughout the Church, we also advocate that immediate and concurrent work take place on the local level to begin shifting the culture toward greater health and awareness, rather than waiting for the next triennial meeting of the General Convention to take any steps.

While the Church has made significant progress in protecting vulnerable populations such as children, differently-abled, and elderly members of our communities, we have not provided the same education and resources to prevent and address the occurrence of sexual harassment and discrimination as it may be experienced by any member of our diocese at large. Our hope in creating this Resolution is to advance a culture of increasing safety, trust and healthy behaviors for all of God's People in the church.

The understanding of sexual harassment behind this resolution expands toward a definition put forth in the Equality Act of 2010 in the United Kingdom as "unwanted conduct of a sexual (and gender related) nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them". Moreover, this definition can extend beyond the workplace to include harassment as it may be present among parish members, volunteers, staff, and clergy in circumstances where power differentials may be more nuanced and complicated.

Whereas Title IV of the Canons of The Episcopal Church addresses the accountability and discipline of clergy, this resolution is intended to encourage the discussion of and focus on preventing sexual harassment and discrimination as it may be experienced between leaders or in any other person to person interaction, including abuse of or between clergy, abuse between parishioners, staff, non-parochial volunteers, and program conveners.

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