

**GENERAL CONVENTION OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH 2018  
ARCHIVES' RESEARCH REPORT**

**RESOLUTION NO.:** 2018-D047  
**TITLE:** Compassionate Care of Victims of Sexual Abuse by Clergy  
**PROPOSER:** Ms. Pauline Getz  
**TOPIC:** Structure

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**Directly Related:** (Attached)

2015-A074 Update the Safe Church Training Materials  
2009-D062 Continue Developing Policies and Procedures for Sexual Misconduct Prevention  
2006-A156 Adopt Policies for Protection from Sexual Misconduct  
1994-A064 Acknowledge Sexual Misconduct and Authorize Referrals to Victims' Advocates  
1991-B052 Establish a Committee on Sexual Exploitation

**Indirectly Related:** (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2006-A086 Create and Disseminate Training Materials to Recognize and Respond to Abuse  
2003-A023 Establish a Task Force for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct

*In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1976 through 2015, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives at 800-525-9329 before Convention or at Convention in the General Convention Secretariat.*

# D047 Compassionate Care of Victims of Sexual Abuse by Clergy

<b>Proposer</b>	Ms. Pauline Getz
<b>Topic</b>	Structure
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Lynch, The Rev. Gwynn; Mathewson, The Rev. Colin
<b>Sponsored by</b>	
<b>Page numbers</b>	Blue Book: p. N/A; Constitution & Canons: p. N/A
<b>HiA / Leg. Cttee</b>	HD / 03 - Safeguarding and Title IV
<b>Current Status</b>	Resolution Filed
<b>Version</b>	Original (as filed)
<b>Review Status</b>	Did not pass review - see review report

## RESOLUTION TEXT

- 1 *Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church calls upon all members of dioceses, congregations, institutions, and all affiliated organizations, individually and in community, to acknowledge that:
  - 2 • reporting clergy misconduct is a courageous and sacrificial act, demonstrating love for and trust in the church;
  - 3 • such reporting is an act of service to the church;
  - 4 • a victim has a right to expect our faith communities to respond with the love and compassion of Christ.
- 5 *Resolved*, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church direct the formation of a task force, in accordance with Title I.1.2(o), to study the experience of victims who report clergy sexual misconduct; become educated on best practices for safeguarding these reporters; and issue recommendations to the Executive Council, and the 80th General Convention to do the same; and be it further
- 6 *Resolved*, That the Presiding Officers appoint task force members by October 31, 2018, and which task force shall be comprised of passionate advocates for misconduct victims who are committed to ensuring that our faith communities respond with love, compassion, and respect for the reporting victim. Victims of clergy sexual misconduct will be a significant presence on this task force; and be it further
- 7 *Resolved*, That the recommendations shall reflect a trauma-informed approach (i.e., an approach based on the knowledge and understanding of trauma and its far-reaching implications) to the care of reporting victims, both through the canonical reporting process, as well as in their home parish; and be it further
- 8 *Resolved*, That the work of the Task Force will in no way offer a negative impact on current Title

IV processes, procedures or confidentiality requirements for Complainants and Respondents; and be it further

- 9 *Resolved*, That the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance consider a budget allocation of \$50,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

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**EXPLANATION**

Quoting from the Memorial submitted by the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego on this topic: “It has been 15 years since the Boston Globe exposed the horrific sexual abuse of children by priests within the Roman Catholic Church. There is now a general awareness that clergy sexual misconduct occurs in all denominations; however, it is a lesser known fact that adult women are more likely than children to be victimized by clergy. In fact, based on the size of our own diocese, statistics would suggest that scores of women who are active members of our congregations have been or will be victims of clergy sexual misconduct in their adult lifetimes.

Reflecting this growing awareness within the past two decades, The Episcopal Church has striven to prevent clergy misconduct, primarily through its Safeguarding God’s People program. Further reflecting an evolving culture in which the reality of and the damage caused by sexual exploitation of women is increasingly recognized, the church has strengthened its response to clergy misconduct through the codification of disciplinary procedures in Title IV of its canons. . . In practice, the church lacks sufficient policies to facilitate the healing and recovery of victims. Indeed, studies suggest that at least 5 out of 6 adult victims who report sexual exploitation end up leaving their church as a result. Most leave the Church entirely. Many lose their faith.

Literature, therapists, and victims themselves often attribute this alienation from the church not so much to the original clergy misconduct, but to re-traumatization by both clergy and congregations during and after the reporting process. This re-traumatization often involves disbelief, minimization, slander, isolation, and shunning of the victim. This has been described as an effectual excommunication.

In analogous situations outside of the church, whistleblowers are given legal protection, and creating a hostile environment is illegal in both workplaces and schools. There are no such statutes offering protection within one’s church. Yet, as followers of Christ and called to be a reconciling community, the church has an even greater obligation than a statute might mandate.

Although an incident of clergy sexual misconduct always represents a failure of the church, this truth is often overlooked. The incident may even be treated as a failure on the part of the victim. Rather than promoting healing and reconciliation, this scapegoating of the victim, who is already deeply traumatized by the misconduct itself, results in deep emotional and spiritual anguish. It does irreparable harm to the victim. It is a missed opportunity for the community to grow into what it should be. And it greatly diminishes the Body of Christ.”



**Resolution Number:** 2015-A074  
**Title:** Update the Safe Church Training Materials  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 78th General Convention direct that the Episcopal Church Center arrange for the updating or supplementing of written and web-based materials used in the *Safeguarding God's Children* and the *Safeguarding God's People* programs to reflect the experience of the Church in using the *Safeguarding God's Children* and the *Safeguarding God's People* materials; and to cover topics such as social media, mission trips, pilgrimages, camp and conference center programs, and other overnight events, and the experiences of LGBTQ persons; and be it further*

*Resolved, That, in addition to developing printed and web-based versions of the updated or supplemented *Safeguarding God's Children* and the *Safeguarding God's People* materials, electronic links to the online versions of the *Safeguarding God's Children* and the *Safeguarding God's People* curricula be made available on The Episcopal Church website; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the Episcopal Church Center publicize the availability of the revised or supplemented written and web-based *Safeguarding God's Children* and the *Safeguarding God's People* materials to dioceses and congregations; and be it further*

*Resolved, That dioceses of The Episcopal Church be required annually to confirm, in writing or by email, to a designated office in the Episcopal Church Center that the diocese and (to the best of its knowledge after due inquiry) congregations in the diocese are training persons in positions of authority (including clergy, staff, vestry, children, and youth educators/leaders and other volunteers) by using the *Safeguarding God's Children* and the *Safeguarding God's People* materials or other appropriate materials for this training; and be it further*

*Resolved, That after the written and web-based *Safeguarding God's Children* and the *Safeguarding God's People* curricula are revised or supplemented, re-training of trainers be conducted so that the persons conducting training in congregations and dioceses are fully aware of the changes in the training materials and are able to teach them competently; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the 78th General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$50,000 for the implementation of this resolution.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 418-419.



**Resolution Number:** 2009-D062  
**Title:** Continue Developing Policies and Procedures for Sexual Misconduct Prevention  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Amended  
**Final Text:**

***Resolved, That the 76th General Convention direct the Center for Evangelism and Congregational Life to continue the work of developing clear and firm policies and procedures for the well-being of all, and commit this church to being and becoming a place where children, youth and adults are safe, especially from abuse, neglect and exploitation, particularly in dioceses that have been unable to implement the call to provide sexual misconduct prevention training; and be it further***

***Resolved, That the 76th General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$20,000 for the implementation of the resolution during the 2010-2012 triennium; and be it further***

***Resolved, That the 76th General Convention request the Center for Evangelism and Congregational Life report to the Standing Commission on Lifelong Christian Formation and Education before the 77th General Convention on the status of diocesan training and implementation.***

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Anaheim, 2009* (New York: General Convention, 2009), pp. 286-287.



**Resolution Number:** 2006-A156  
**Title:** Adopt Policies for Protection from Sexual Misconduct  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred as Substituted  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church affirm the work already occurring in many dioceses and at the same time recommit itself to the positions taken by previous General Conventions that sexual misconduct (encompassing both sexual harassment and sexual exploitation) of adults by clergy, church employees, and volunteer workers has been and continues to be of deep concern to this Church, is an abuse of trust, a violation of the Baptismal Covenant, contrary to Christian character and is, therefore, wrong; and be it further*

*Resolved, That each diocese adopt policies for the protection from sexual misconduct of those served by diocesan programs, those who volunteer in the work of the diocese or are employed by the diocese, and that dioceses assist congregations in the development of such procedures and policies, including using the many resources that already exist, that address the following:*

1. **the articulation of behavioral standards for all clergy, lay employees, and volunteers who work with adults or who provide pastoral counseling, pastoral care, spiritual direction, or the sacraments;**
2. **a screening process for all clergy, lay employees, and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling and care, spiritual direction, or the sacraments and who supervise clergy or lay volunteers;**
3. **education and training for all clergy, lay employees, and volunteers as listed above, with particular attention paid to what legally constitutes sexual harassment and to appropriate behavior and inappropriate sexual or sexualized behaviors towards adults, and with periodic refresher training encouraged;**
4. **guidelines for responding to concerns of sexual misconduct; and be it further**

*Resolved, That each diocese shall report to the House of Bishops Committee on Pastoral Development prior to the Spring 2009 House of Bishops meeting with a copy of its adopted and implemented policy and an evaluation of the history of its use. A summary report shall be made to the House of Bishops Spring 2009 meeting and a full report made to the 76th General Convention.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), p. 667.



**Resolution Number:** 1994-A064  
**Title:** Acknowledge Sexual Misconduct and Authorize Referrals to Victims' Advocates  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred As Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church acknowledges that sexual misconduct may occur in this Church, and accepts with gratitude the work done on this problem by the Committee on Sexual Exploitation, the Office of Pastoral Development, and the Church Insurance Company, amongst others, in dealing with this issue; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the 71st General Convention of the Episcopal Church authorize the Office of Pastoral Development to establish, either directly or by contract with another entity, a nationwide "800" telephone number for referrals to qualified and trained Victims' Advocates.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, 1994* (New York: General Convention, 1995), pp. 320-21.



**Resolution Number:** 1991-B052  
**Title:** Establish a Committee on Sexual Exploitation  
**Legislative Action Taken:** Concurred As Amended  
**Final Text:**

*Resolved, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church declares that sexual abuse, exploitation, coercion, and harassment of adults and minors by clergy and church employees are abuses of trust, a violation of the Baptismal Covenant, contrary to Christian Character, and are therefore wrong; and be it further*

*Resolved, That the 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church establish a Committee on Sexual Exploitation to be appointed by the Presiding Bishop and the President of the House of Deputies to work with the Office of Pastoral Development. It shall be the duty of the Committee on Sexual Exploitation to study, educate, develop curriculum, and propose policy and standards of conduct on sexual abuse, exploitation, coercion, and harassment, and to advise the Office of Pastoral Development as resource persons. The membership of the committee is to be representative as to sex, race and ethnic diversity. The Committee will report to the 71st General Convention.*

**Citation:** General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Phoenix, 1991* (New York: General Convention, 1992), p. 783.