Moving Beyond Limiting Gender Language in our Common Life

Names of Submitters:

Thom Peters
Don Burr
The Rev. Carolyn Sharp, Ph.D.
The Rev. Barbara Cheney, Ph.D.
The Rev. Tracy Russell
The Rev. Julie Kelsey
The Rev. Ellen Tillotson
The Rev. Kate Heichler
The Rev. Paul J. Carling, Ph.D.

Resolved, that the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) acknowledge that the use of solely male language for God needlessly distorts and impoverishes our theological vision; and

Be it further resolved, that parental titles for clergy ("Father" and "Mother") trade on gendered notions of authority that may be unhelpful for many, including those who have survived abuse in their families of origin, clergy and aspirants who do not have children, and clergy and aspirants who do not identify by traditional gender titles; and

Be it further resolved, that ECCT acknowledge that developing alternatives to inappropriately gendered language will require a sustained commitment to transforming androcentrism (a narrow focus on males, men and issues affecting them, to the detriment of non-males) and misogyny (prejudice against women) wherever those may be embedded in our institutional forms; and

Be it further resolved, that this Convention direct those involved in ECCT's multicultural change efforts to attend to the issues raised by gendered language, by listening to those adversely affected by traditional practices and by suggesting a detailed plan for congregational learning and transformation to the 233rd Convention of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut in 2017.
Explanation
Language matters, and successive General Conventions have worked to eliminate gender – inappropriate language from our common life, but much remains to be done, particularly since effective action requires attention at all levels of change: personal, inter-personal, institutional and cultural. In anticipation of General Convention’s resolve to consider a comprehensive plan for Prayer Book revision in 2018, diocesan efforts to develop contemporary and non-oppressive language seem especially timely. Such change is best achieved by integrating these efforts into the larger work of multiculturalism already being undertaken by ECCT.

Statement
This resolution responds directly to the 4th mark of mission: “to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation,” by creating environments in which we are encouraged to use language that is respectful, celebrates difference and unique experiences, rejects inappropriate authority structures, promotes an expansive understanding of God, and encourages reconciliation among people of all genders.

Requirements to Implement this Resolution
Since this work is to be integrated with the ECCT’s work on multiculturalism, it is not anticipated that it will have any particular costs associated with it, or require specific materials. It will require that additional time, however, be spent in incorporating issues of language and gender into the work of that group.