

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Co-moderators call for “deeper cultural shift” on sexual harassment and abuse

Anderson, Edmiston urge all PC(USA) church bodies to use preaching, teaching, and policy-setting resources to achieve complete gender equity

December 7, 2017



from the Office of the Co-Moderators

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

LOUISVILLE

In an open letter ([link here](#)) to the church dated December 6, 2017, Anderson and Edmiston cited “concrete tools for addressing these issues” and “strongly encouraged” Presbyterians to “use these [tools] in your ministries.” They listed resources for setting policies, teaching, and preaching.

This “deeper cultural shift,” the Co-Moderators wrote, includes coming to terms “with all the ways we victimize and objectify people, including actions that are often less noticeable. We have to be willing to examine and confess implicit gender biases that show themselves, among other ways, in pay disparities and comments about personal appearance.”

In sum, they concluded, “We must be a church committed to gender equity in all areas of our life together.”

The full text of Denise Anderson's and Jan Edmiston's letter:

December 6, 2017

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),

We write this today as leaders of our denomination—and specifically as leaders who are women—to address the harassment and abuse stories being shared via the #MeToo and #ChurchToo hashtags. For many, this movement has been both empowering and triggering, as people find themselves reliving sexual trauma from their past. We stand with all who have been victims of assault and objectification in the Church and beyond.

While it goes without saying that healthy boundary training, child protection training and criminal background checks are the responsibility of every congregation and council, we are called in this unique time to seek a deeper cultural shift. We are called to stand up against a world that allows predators to flourish and victims to

be shamed into silence. The Church is called to be what the world is not: safe, life-giving, and willing to hold people accountable.

Our denomination—through the ministry of the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns and the work of the General Assembly—suggests concrete tools for addressing these issues. We strongly encourage you to use these resources in your ministry:

Resources for setting church policies:

The PC(USA) Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Its Procedures (pdf) from the 222nd General Assembly [(2016)]

Resources for teaching:

I Believe You—a film exploring the stories of survivors of domestic abuse how faith groups might address their needs.

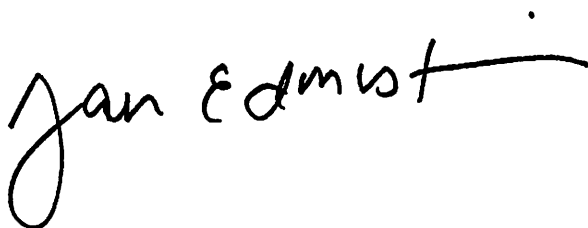
Resources for preaching:

We Will Speak Out sermon guide

Culturally, we must come to terms with the all ways we victimize and objectify people, including actions that are often less noticeable. We have to be willing to examine and confess implicit gender biases that show themselves, among other ways, in pay disparities and comments about personal appearance. While the stories being shared in the media are representative of perhaps the most egregious forms of sexual violence, gender bias must be disrupted everywhere it presents itself. We must be a church committed to gender equity in all areas of our life together.

We humbly ask that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) continue to be a Church in prayer, asking God to bring healing to the victimized, redemption and correction to the victimizer, and a cultural shift to our denomination so that we might have the abundant life promised to us by Jesus Christ.

In Christ's name,



The Rev. T. Denise Anderson & The Rev. Jan Edmiston
Co-Moderators of the 222nd General Assembly (2016)

Additional resources available from the Office of the General Assembly include:

“Advent pastoral statement on abuse” ([link here](#)) by Laurie Griffith, associate director for constitutional interpretation

Recent communication from OGA’s Mid Council Ministries to mid council staff detailing a other resources, particularly the PC(USA)’s abuse hotline for those wanting to report abuse: **1-866-607-SAFE (7233)**.

Creating Safe Ministries: a website created by PC(USA)'s legal services to help ministries create policies, raise awareness of prevention practices, report misconduct, and rebuild a broken trust when sexual misconduct occurs.

Tags: co-moderators, denise anderson, domestic violence, jen edmiston, sexual abuse, sexual harassment

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