

## A COMMITMENT TO GENDER SAFETY & EQUITY IN MINISTRY SETTINGS

**Biblical Grounding:** In the Christian Testament, Jesus shared a table with women and gave them a place, defending them against the judgment and accusations of others. Women were the first witnesses of the resurrection. Women were funders and foundational members of the earliest Christian congregations.

Our scriptures tell us that women served as leaders and teachers, disciples, apostles, deacons, and patrons in the early church. Although their stories have been largely ignored and are only now being reclaimed, these texts provide an important affirmation of the importance of women's leadership.

**Summary of the Resolution:** This resolution calls the United Church of Christ to renewed accountability for the theology of equality that we have long professed as the United Church of Christ. In a climate of increased violence and hatred, where women in public leadership are targeted with intimidation by the highest office of government, women and non-binary clergy are uniquely vulnerable as they stand in the pulpit. Clergy have begun to share their #metoo #churchtoo stories of discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse in the congregations where they serve. This resolution confesses our complicity with systems of sexist oppression and asks the Church to explore ways to promote gender safety.

**Actions: The resolution was approved with a vote of 97%.**

1. The resolution asks the Church to empower women and non-binary persons, both lay and ordained, to raise issues regarding sexism and discrimination, free of censure or threat of retaliation.
2. The resolution affirms the physical and sexual autonomy of women and non-binary persons: the right not to have any other person invade her/their personal space without permission; the right not to be touched, or abused, either emotionally or physically, in any way by another person; the right to express gender in the ways she/they choose; the right to communicate autonomously, without reproach or censure based in sexism and misogyny; the right to expect that any such action will in no way be held against her/them for any reason in the workplace, including ministry settings, or in any social situation.
3. It urges congregations to address inequities (in pay, benefits, senior leadership, etc.) for clergy and lay women and non-binary persons who serve within the Church.
4. The resolution asks that the Church do this work with intentionality and awareness of the added threats and realities of violence experienced by women and non-binary persons holding multiple marginalized identities.
5. The resolution asserts that this work must simultaneously address the threats and realities of violence that racism, transphobia, heterosexism, classism, and ableism impose on the daily life and leadership of women and non-binary persons in the Church.

Prayerfully submitted  
Shirley Keith Knox  
GS 33 Delegate