

## **Working Vision for Being a Welcoming Church**

We are a Christian church that professes God's unconditional love for every person. This is a central doctrine of Christian faith. More specifically, the Episcopal Church is part of 'one holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church' whose creeds and baptismal covenant testify that every person is made in God's image and deserves full dignity and respect.

As a catholic church the Episcopal Church is set apart in 'welcoming everyone to its table' so as people baptized in Christ we can worship and share in communion together without discrimination. No dogma of the Episcopal Church forbids full participation of any member in any role based on distinguishing factors such as class, gender, race, or sexual orientation. In practice, and because of its Anglo-American roots, the Episcopal Church is committed to a democratic process that values equality and fairness. This calls us to be 'welcoming' on another level. Social justice is called for to reform policies that treat people unfairly. For example, not too many years ago women and people of color were not as supported in leadership roles. Now people of greater diversity are welcomed as members and as leaders in our church, but we have much work to do. This is what it means to be truly welcoming: the church actively works so that all of its members have equal opportunity to participate in celebration, in worship and in leadership roles, based on merit and not arbitrary personal factors. Christ welcomed everyone, and still does through us, if we see unjust discrimination as wrong and are willing to do something about it. In short, to profess Christ's way requires that we do more than just maintaining the status quo. We must be willing to act righteously and courageously to welcome every person and promote social justice. May this work be inspired by the Holy Spirit, supported by Christ Jesus, and done in the name God.

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*[Drafted by Mary I. Bockover; Outreach Committee for Being a Welcoming Church]*