



Office of Public Affairs

The Episcopal Church Announces Launch of *Together Again/Juntos de Nuevo: Cuba Pensions Campaign*

[February 27, 2019] In the spirit of welcome and reconciliation with the Episcopal Church of Cuba (ECC), The Episcopal Church today announced the launch of *Together Again/Juntos de Nuevo: Cuba Pensions Campaign*, which aims to raise funds to provide future retirement benefits for current and retired clergy in the ECC.

The campaign follows a vote last summer at the 79th General Convention to readmit the Episcopal Church of Cuba as a diocese of The Episcopal Church after 52 years of separation. The Diocese of Cuba will join TEC's Province II, which includes two other Caribbean dioceses – Haiti and the Virgin Islands.

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry encourages all Episcopalians to participate in the campaign as a common moment of mission. “This is part of the work of reconciliation, bringing us together across historic divides. This is not just fundraising; it’s following Jesus and finding our way back to each other,” he said.

When the Episcopal Church of Cuba was separated from The Episcopal Church in 1966, benefits, including pension contributions for the clergy, were no longer available. With readmission, The Episcopal Church believes justice requires that Cuban clergy be treated in the same manner as clergy throughout The Episcopal Church.

Led by the Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado Del Carpio, the ECC is a church that is growing and increasingly having an impact on communities throughout Cuba. With 46 congregations and missions led by 23 priests, along with an active lay leadership, it serves 10,000 Cuban Episcopalians and their neighbors. Its operating budget in 2017, which also includes all clergy compensation, was \$155,000.

The Right Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, 26th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, urges the church “to rejoice at the return of Cuban Episcopalians to this body and offer what we can for the well-being of those who have served so long and faithfully.”

Currently, the average salary for the current 23 Cuban clergy is \$55 a month. When they retire, clergy members will not be eligible for any state pension or social security because the Cuban government does not recognize their service as employment.

The campaign seeks to raise a one-time amount of \$800,000 by June 9, 2019. This will provide funding for past contributions that will yield future retirement benefits for 23 active clergy, three retired clergy, and one surviving spouse. The funds will be placed in the Church Pension Fund and eventually make pension benefits available to eligible clergy.

The Episcopal Church of Cuba traces its origins to 1901, when the House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church established the Missionary District of Cuba under the jurisdiction of the Presiding Bishop. During the 1960s, the government led by Fidel Castro began cracking down on religion, jailing religious leaders and believers. Because most interaction between Cuba and the US was embargoed, in 1966 the ECC was made an autonomous diocese within the Anglican Communion, under the oversight of a Metropolitan Council comprising the Primates of the Anglican Church of Canada, the Church in the Province of the West Indies, and The Episcopal Church.

The campaign is co-chaired by the Rev. Matthew Heyd, rector of Church of the Heavenly Rest, and the Rev. Dr. William Lupfer, rector of Trinity Church Wall Street, and includes generous involvement from the Rt. Rev. Chip Stokes, Diocese of New Jersey; Francis Armstrong, Church Pension Group; the Friends of the Episcopal Church in Cuba; The Episcopal Church, and other campaign leadership and advisors.

Donations to the campaign can be made in the form of cash, pledges, or securities. For more information on supporting the campaign or to make a gift, please contact T.J. Houlihan, Development Officer, at (212) 716-6271 or thoulihan@episcopalchurch.org, or visit www.episcopalchurch.org/development/pensions-campaign.

On the web:

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