



Bias and the Search Process

What is Unconscious/ Implicit Bias?

Vanderbilt University

- Prejudiced or unsupported judgements for or against a person, thing, or group, as compared to another.
- Research suggests that it occurs automatically.
- As a result, certain people benefit and others are penalized.
- We all have unconscious biases, which influence our opinions and behaviors without our knowing it.

Why It Matters for the Clergy Search

- Churches thrive when there is a good and healthy match between congregation and clergy.
- Our Implicit biases get in the way of our ability to see, evaluate, and judge a person's gifts, to see clearly if they are a match for our gifts.
- Clergy searches are tasked with deep discernment and need help building the skills necessary to truly hear the Holy Spirit.



Addressing Unconscious Bias in Each Stage of the Search Process:



PLANNING



DISCERNING



CHOOSING

Planning



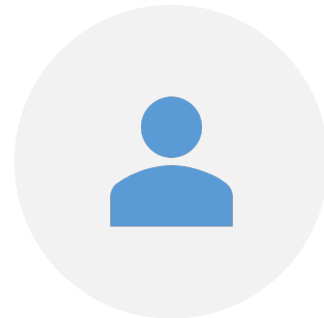
Includes the Transition Ministry Team, Wardens and Vestry




Equipping/Preparing the Vestry for Clergy Search



Communicating with the Congregation. Learning discernment together




Preparing the Parish Profile/
OTM Profile



Grounding the process in prayer from the very beginning is the most important thing.

The way the congregation in a Clergy Search prays will shape how the process unfolds.

Remind them that right now, at this very moment, their next Rector/PIC is moving around in the world, practicing ministry. Pray for their heart, that it might be open to hear this call.

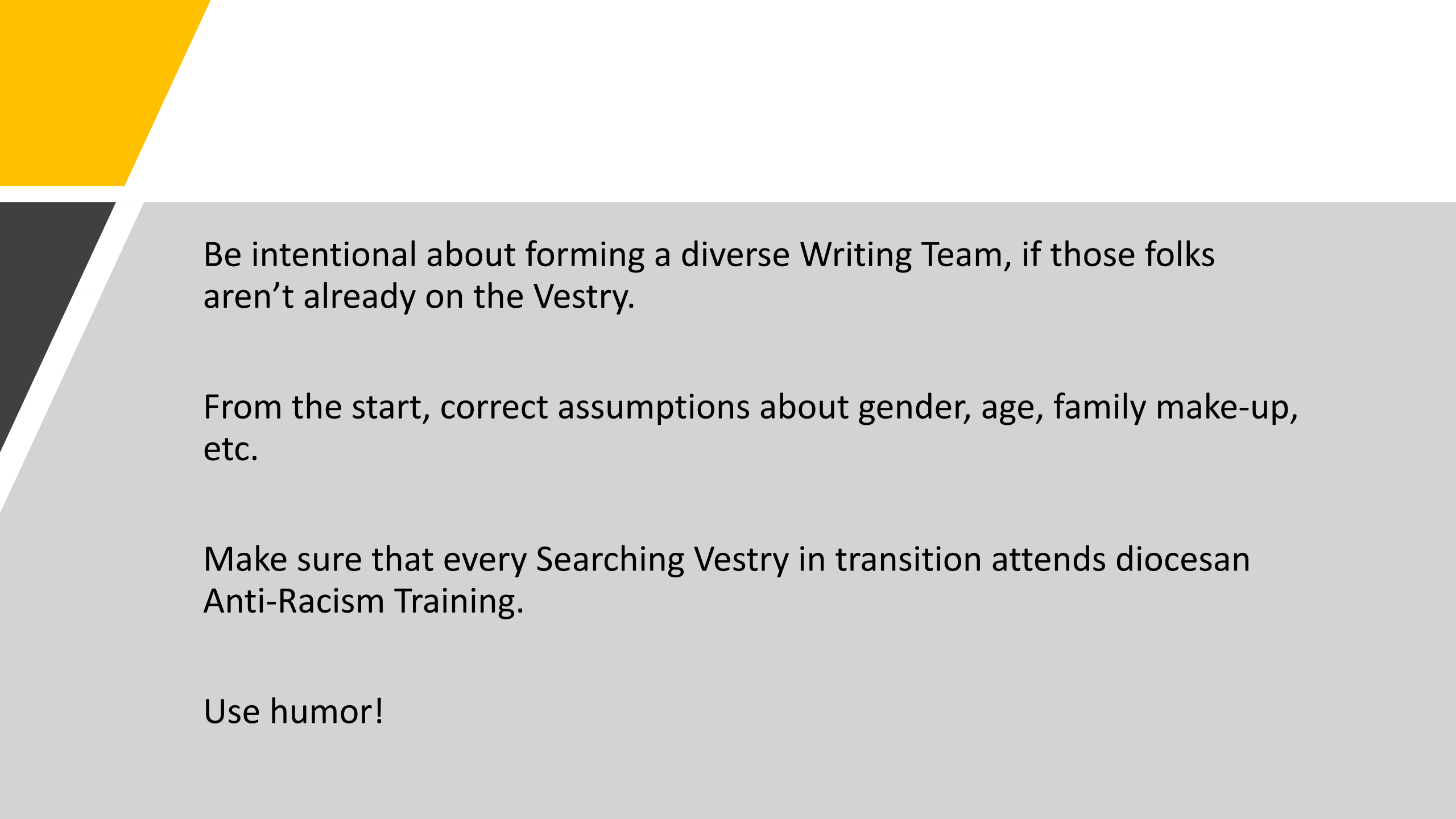


Talk about both diversity and bias candidly, early, and often.

“Your slate of candidates will be as diverse as the Episcopal Church.”

“You cannot serve in the Clergy Search if you know right now that you don’t want a woman, Person of Color, or LGBTQ person serving as your next Rector/PIC.”

“You already know some with “axes to grind” may seek to influence the Clergy Search in your parish. Don’t let them.”

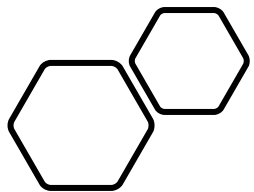


Be intentional about forming a diverse Writing Team, if those folks aren't already on the Vestry.

From the start, correct assumptions about gender, age, family make-up, etc.

Make sure that every Searching Vestry in transition attends diocesan Anti-Racism Training.

Use humor!



Discerning



Includes reviewing
parish input and
written materials



Mock Interviews



Interview questions
and interpretation



Decisions by
consensus

Receiving Written Material

- Biases will flare up when considering actual candidates.
- Alert the Vestry to this and remind them that they are seeking the will of the Holy Spirit and need to be able to hear God's voice.
- Make it easier for them by creating “apples to apples” applications.
- For parishes with larger slates, a “blind round” (with identifying features “inked out”) may be helpful. Make sure candidates understand this.

Insisting on an “apples to apples” process from start to finish is an intentional way to reduce “Confirmation Bias”: When someone forms an opinion and interprets new information as confirmation of that belief. By **asking the same questions of each candidate**, the focus stays on the information you’re trying to learn about everyone, not the opinions you’re unconsciously trying to confirm.

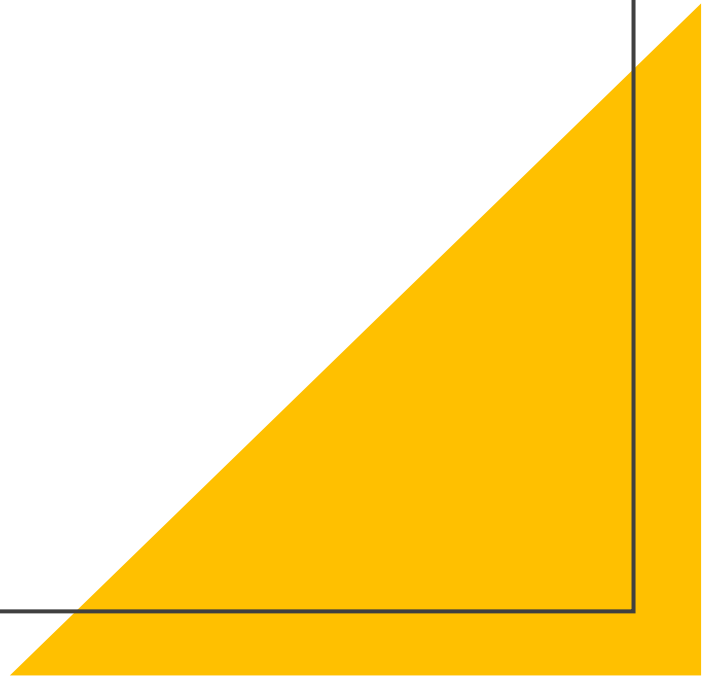
You can help
reduce bias
by following
the same
process for
every single
candidate:


1. Review your congregation's OTM profile.
2. Say a prayer for the candidate.
3. Read the first application slowly and deliberately, timing how long it takes. Take care to spend about the same amount of time reading each additional application.
4. Record your observations, questions, concerns, etc. How does this candidate's gifts match your congregation's gifts?
6. Pray again. Take a break. Repeat.

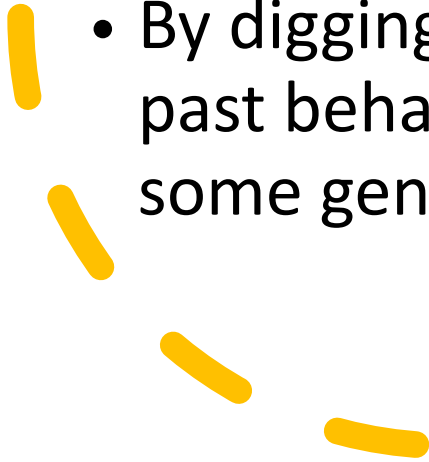
Training in Non-Biased Interviewing:



- When it's finally time to interview—via Zoom and in person—insist on “Behavioral Interviewing.”
- Behavioral Interviewing: Asking the applicant to describe and reflect on past behavior rather than imagining future behavior.
- Helps draw out “apples to apples” information about skills and experience and disrupts how different people respond to open—ended opinion questions and how those responses are received through our biased lenses.

“Tell us
about a time
when...”



- 
- Help the Vestry understand that different people are socialized to answer questions differently and that we are socialized to hear answers differently (that's bias!). Use real examples from your congregation and ask them for examples from their own ministry.

- 
- By digging for more detail in a behavioral interview, they can focus on past behavior (the best indicator of future performance) and disrupt some general patterns:

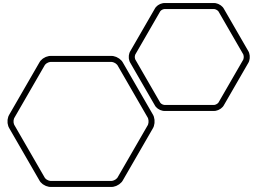
- 
- Men are more likely to be evaluated on potential; women on achievements.
 - Men are more comfortable bragging; women downplay their accomplishments.
 - Women and People of Color are likely to attribute achievements to others rather than taking responsibility for them (in order to avoid disbelief or appearing “bossy”.)
- 

The Power of the Mock Interview

Help the Vestry draft their questions and approve each set for desired information.

- Pick a mock candidate who challenges assumptions particular to the congregation.
- Facilitate a conversation after the interview between the candidate and the Vestry.
- Take the questions back to the drawing board if necessary.

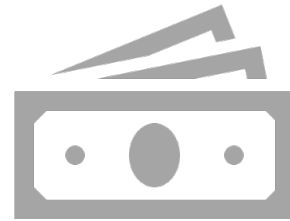




Discerning



Includes Decisions by
Consensus



Compensation Package/LOA



Welcoming and willingness to
discern Mission with the
congregation

- Is often the way that the Holy Spirit works in groups with peace and joy central signs.
- Is a general agreement, not necessarily a unanimous one.
- Might mean not selecting your favorite candidate, but the one that the groups agrees is best for your church.
- There are no ditches here for you to die in. This is not “Twelve Angry Men.” No one can hold the Vestry hostage because the will of the group is not going their way.

Consensus

≡ Compensation by Gender and Age



Gender	Cleric Age	Median	Number	% of Total
Female	34 and younger	\$75,000	81	0.8%
	35 to 44	\$78,910	333	5.8%
	45 to 54	\$85,000	460	8.4%
	55 to 64	\$83,411	666	13.4%
	65 to 72	\$71,000	437	8.5%
Male	34 and younger	\$70,001	149	1.9%
	35 to 44	\$87,530	598	11.8%
	45 to 54	\$95,363	768	14.8%
	55 to 64	\$97,405	955	19.0%
	65 to 72	\$83,256	500	10.0%
All	34 and younger	\$72,214	230	3.5%
	35 to 44	\$83,967	931	18.9%
	45 to 54	\$90,052	1228	24.6%
	55 to 64	\$90,996	1621	33.2%
	65 to 72	\$76,855	937	19.8%

Compensation by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

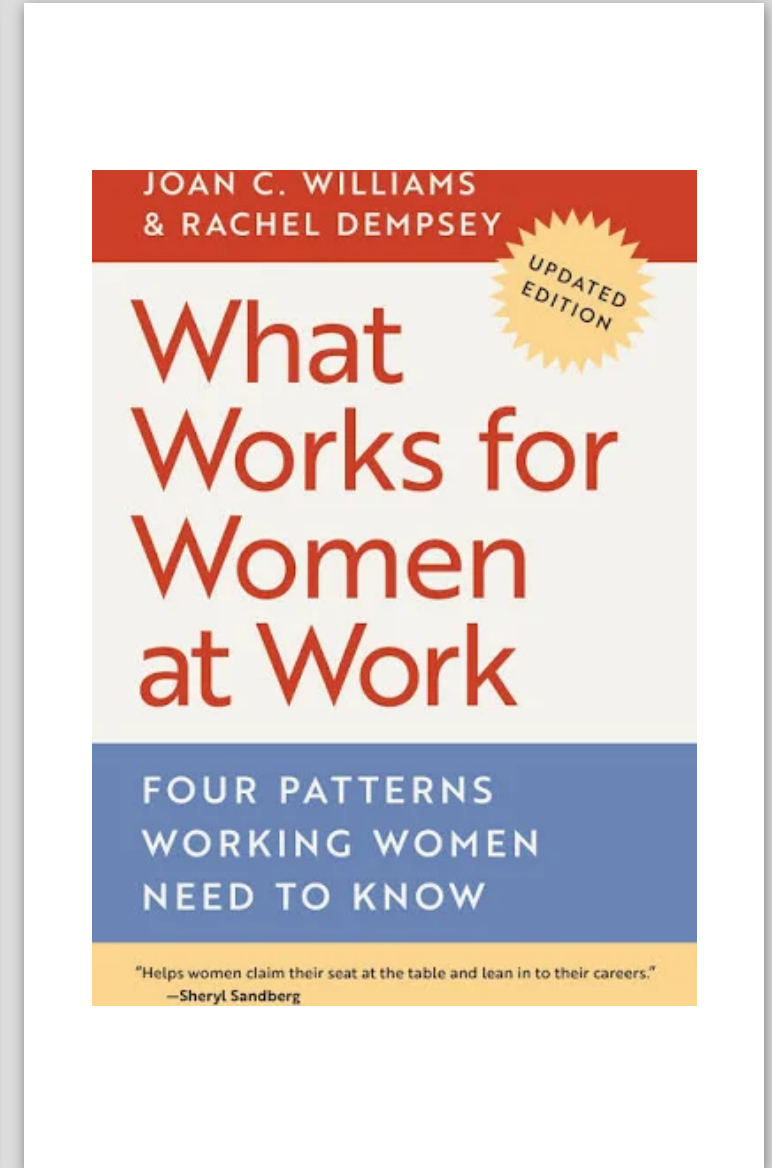
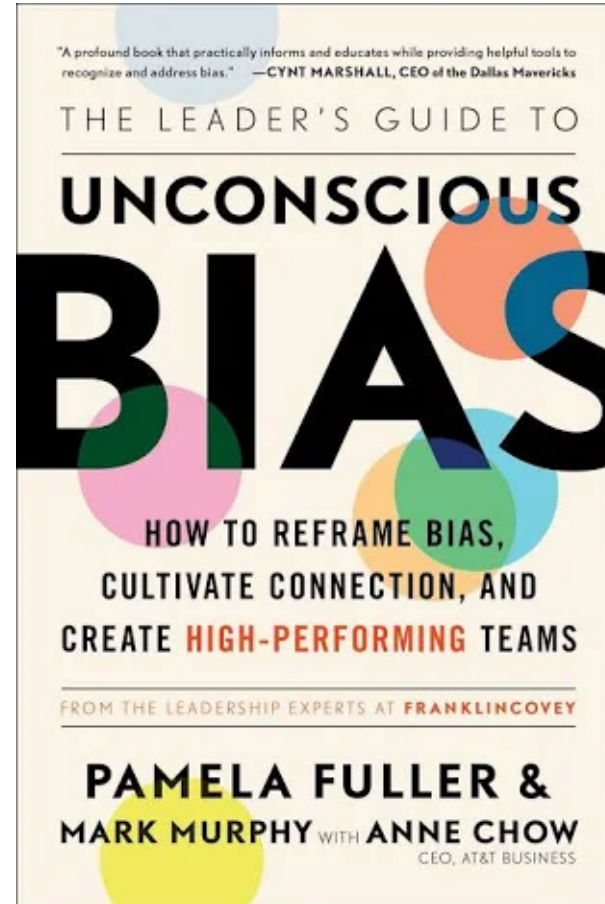
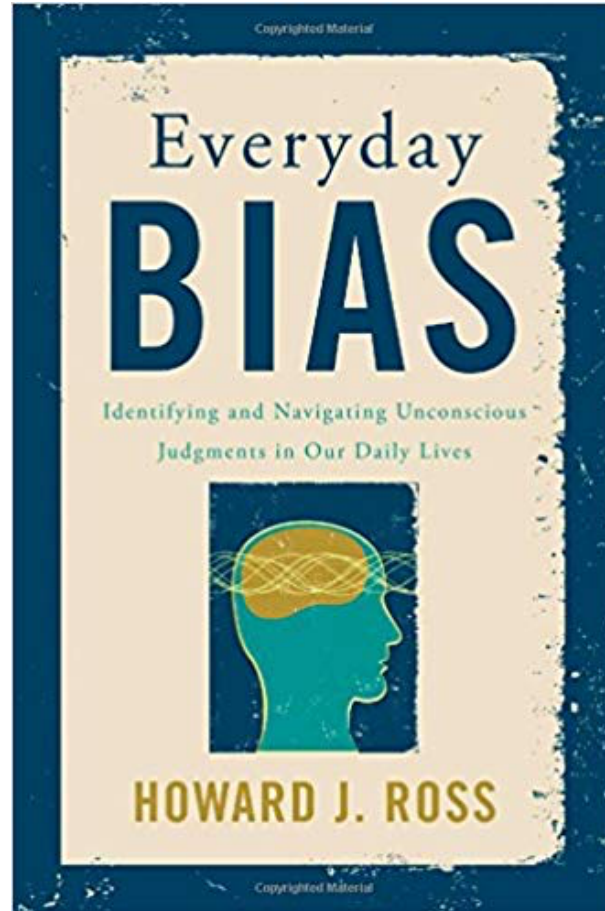
Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Median	Number	% of Total
Female	American Indian/Alaska Native	NR	3	0.13%
	Asian	\$90,000	15	0.66%
	Black/African American	\$95,000	49	2.15%
	Hispanic/Latino	\$68,328	17	0.75%
	White	\$81,576	881	38.69%
	Multiple Races	\$83,952	21	0.92%
	Other	NR	3	0.13%
Male	American Indian/Alaska Native	\$76,875	7	0.31%
	Asian	\$84,890	25	1.10%
	Black/African American	\$99,679	66	2.90%
	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	NR	2	0.09%
	Hispanic/Latino	\$89,449	49	2.15%
	White	\$91,502	1,105	48.53%
	Multiple Races	\$97,760	33	1.45%
Other	NR	1	0.04%	
All	American Indian/Alaska Native	\$97,200	9	0.41%
	Asian	\$87,197	39	1.77%
	Black/African American	\$99,679	110	4.99%
	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	NR	2	0.09%
	Hispanic/Latino	\$88,187	63	2.86%
	White	\$88,143	1,926	87.35%
	Multiple Races	\$90,143	52	2.36%
Other	NR	4	0.18%	

Set the
compensation
package as soon
as the position is
posted.

- This helps bridge the pay gap and also prevents gender and racial bias regarding negotiation to enter the discernment process.

- Members of the Vestry might be more likely than they would have been to spot bias when it pops up in the new Rector/PIC's ministry.
- Not to police bias, but to gently correct it and to cheerlead for the new Rector/PIC.
- Use members of the Vestry/Writing Committee to seed the welcome committee.

Welcoming



Questions?