

**UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HARTFORD'S
SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

PURPOSE

The United Methodist Church of Hartford affirms the 2000 Book of Resolutions, Sexual Abuse Within the Ministerial Relationship and Sexual Harassment Within the Church, which states that sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church as incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. In accordance with the 2000 *Book of Discipline*, 161.F, all human beings, both female and male, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29 states that all are one in Christ, we support equality for all persons, without regard to gender.

LAW AND SCOPE

Sexual abuse is a crime. Sexual Harassment is illegal. The United Methodist Church of Hartford prohibits sexual abuse and sexual harassment, in any form, by its employees, volunteers and other persons in positions of leadership. Any employee, volunteer or other person in a position of leadership who violates this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment and/or opportunity to serve in a volunteer or leadership capacity.

DEFINITIONS

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person in a position of leadership (e.g. pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, officer, elected official) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer. Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile environment resulting from gender based discrimination. (*Book of Discipline* ¶65.I). Sexual harassment also includes harassment that, although not sexual in nature, is based on the recipient's gender.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role, and exploitation of those who are vulnerable. Similarly, sexual harassment must be understood as exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue.

Both sexual abuse and sexual harassment within the life of the Church interferes with its moral mission. The United Methodist Church Of Hartford stands in opposition to the sins of sexual abuse and sexual harassment in the church and society at large, and commits itself to a fair and expedient investigation and resolution of any charge of a violation of this policy. Further, the United Methodist Church of Hartford seeks to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, female and male, which is free of sex discrimination, sexual abuse and sexual harassment, and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ. When interacting with others in the church, it is important to be sensitive to the way in which others may perceive words and actions. If they could reasonably be perceived as offensive and unwelcome, they could be unlawful harassment. Normal, courteous, respectful, pleasant and non-coercive interaction between individuals, which is acceptable to all, is not considered to be sexual harassment.

SEXUAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Any employee, volunteer, congregant or other person who believes s/he has experienced sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment, or has witnessed sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment by any employee, volunteer and/or other person in a position of leadership should bring the matter to the immediate attention of the pastor and/or the chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. If the conduct complained of involves a clergy person, the person should report the matter directly to the District Superintendent, and/or the presiding Bishop. Complaints against clergy shall be processed in accordance with The 2000 Book of Discipline, 359 and 2701.

Failure to report the conduct to the individuals named herein shall not constitute a waiver of the right to make a complaint, so long as the complaint is made to a person in a leadership position in the church. The Church will not tolerate violations of this policy and strongly encourages victims of sexual abuse and/or harassment to report such conduct promptly.

INVESTIGATION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS

The Pastor and/or the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee will initiate an investigation of all reported incidents of sexual abuse and/or harassment, and to determine what remedial actions, if any, are needed. The investigation of a reported incident will be initiated within five (5) business days of the receipt of a report and conducted and concluded/resolved in a timely fashion.

- All investigations will be conducted in as confidential a manner as possible.
- The complaint will be reduced to writing and signed by the complainant.
- Both the complainant and the alleged abuser/harasser will be interviewed as part of the investigation and both will be informed of the non-retaliation provisions of this policy. Usually, the alleged abuser/harasser will be interviewed after all other parts of the investigation are completed.
- The complainant will be asked for corroborating evidence, and corroborating witnesses, if any, identified will also be interviewed.
- The investigator's notes will be kept confidential and will not be included in any personnel files.
- The investigator will report findings as designated by the Pastor and or the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. The Pastor, with input from the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee will make the final decision on what appropriate action should be taken to stop the offending conduct, to preclude further offending conduct, and to restore good relations within the church. Such actions may include written warnings, transfer, demotion and even termination from employment and/or the opportunity to serve as a volunteer or leader.
- The complainant will be informed of what action, if any, the church has taken on her/his complaint in a timely manner.

RETALIATION FOR REPORTING SEXUAL ABUSE and/or HARASSMENT IS PROHIBITED

Retaliation against anyone who reports sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment, who object to sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment or assist in a sexual abuse and/or sexual harassment investigation, is prohibited by law and by the Church.

Adopted by unanimous vote of all members present and voting at the regular meeting of the Church Council of the United Methodist Church of Hartford, on November 27, 2012. The complete text is available in the Church Office upon request and the most current update is posted on the www.umcofhartford.org website.

CONTACT INFORMATION (updated 8/26/2014)

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