

Anti-Harassment Policy

Template for congregations

Mission determines the forms and structures needed for the church to do its work. Administration is the process by which a council implements its decisions. Administration enables the church to give effective witness in the world to God's new creation in Jesus Christ and strengthens the church's witness to the mission of the triune God. ... All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council's policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.

Excerpted from G-3.0106 - Administration of Mission (2023)

Introduction

[NAME OF CHURCH] strives to create and maintain an environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. When the people of the church gathers for worship, study, mission, and other work of the church, it is committed to providing an environment that is characterized by mutual trust and is safe and free from harassment, bullying, and intimidation in any form. The [name of church] leaders and members will not and does not tolerate any type of harassment of its members, elders, deacons, volunteers, guest or staff. Through enforcement of this policy and by education The [Name of Church] seeks to prevent, correct and discipline behavior that violates this policy.

Members, Volunteers, Participants and Staff

All members, volunteers, participants and employees/staff of the [Name of church] regardless of their role or position, are covered by and are expected to comply with this policy and to take appropriate measures to ensure that prohibited conduct does not occur.

Appropriate disciplinary action, in accordance with the Book of Order and the [Name of church] Personnel Policy, will be taken against any member or employee of the church who does not follow this policy.

Prohibited Behavior

As used in this policy, the term “harassment” includes sexual as well as actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual’s sex, race, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected characteristic.

Any action may be considered harassing if it:

- creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive work environment,
- unreasonably interferes with an employee’s or volunteer’s work performance; or
- adversely impacts an individual’s employment or volunteer opportunities.

Examples of prohibited conduct include:

Microaggressions

A microaggression is a verbal or nonverbal slight that impacts an individual who might identify as being from a marginalized or non-mainstream community.

Microaggressions are typically indirect, subtle, even unintentional, but nonetheless are considered discriminatory to the recipient.

Anti-Bullying

Bullying is a pattern of behavior in which the bully attempts to intimidate their victim. Examples of bullying behavior range from teasing, to extortion, to physical assault. In addition to physical interactions, bullying includes any form of interpersonal, including electronic, communication.

Workplace Violence

Workplace violence is acting or using words to make an individual feel endangered. This includes actions that create actual harm to another individual or words that result in another individual having a reasonable belief that they are in danger.

Conduct that threatens, intimidates, or coerces another employee, presbytery member, or a member of the public at any time will not be tolerated, this includes any form of electronic communication.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual advances, or visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition includes many forms of

offensive behavior and includes gender-based harassment of a person of the same sex as the harasser. This includes any form of electronic communication.

Prevention Practices

The session of [Name of church] provides for regular anti-harassment training to ensure an environment free of sexual and other unlawful harassment. All church staff, officers, session and deacon members, and teachers (*add others as needed*) are expected to complete an initial training event/program and participate regularly in anti-harassment education training opportunities.

Reporting Procedures

The Session has established the following procedure for lodging a complaint of harassment, discrimination or retaliation. The session will treat all aspects of the procedure confidentially to the extent reasonably possible.

- Complaints should be submitted as soon as possible after an incident has occurred, preferably in writing to either the pastor, chair of personnel or clerk of session.
- The session shall appoint a team to review (or a predetermined team or committee) the complaint.
- The session leadership may call upon the Presbytery of the Highlands for assistance.

Responding Procedures

Matthew 18:15-17

"If your sibling sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector."

Remembering that Jesus continued to associate and eat with gentiles and tax collectors, the recommended means of response is to focus on grace rather than judgment, and education more than discipline, in all but the most intentional acts of harassment.

To err on the side of grace is

- not to dismiss or diminish the offense, but to name it , gently rather than in anger;
- to recognize that people come into this subject matter from a variety of backgrounds and history;
- to acknowledge that, consequently, the time, length, and intensity of new understanding will vary from person to person.

This requires mutual conversation, and formal or informal courses of study, designed to equip more than reprimand or punish.

As a final resort one can turn to appropriate measures within the Constitution's *Church Discipline*. It is incumbent to remember, however, that despite its title, "*The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath, so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ.*" (D-1.01 Power Vested in Christ's Church).

Responding Structure

[The session should add the structure on how they will respond]

Review of policy

This policy shall annually reviewed by the session and recorded in the minutes of that review and any changes made to the policy. (*this is a requirement and needs to be included in the policy*)