

Sexual Ethics Policy

Chappell Hill United Methodist Church

Adopted by the Church Council on September 11, 2007

Policies and Procedures

The promise of Galatians 3:26-29 states, all are one in Christ, “26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” We, the people and leaders of Chappell Hill United Methodist Church, support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender.

It is the right of every Chappell Hill United Methodist Church member, guest, employee, and volunteer to have an environment at Chappell Hill United Methodist Church free from sexual harassment and to stop unwelcome sexual conduct at the earliest opportunity. This sexual ethics policy is intended to define the standards of conduct in sexual ethics for all persons in a ministerial role of leadership (lay or clergy, pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) in Chappell Hill United Methodist Church and is intended to be a definition of the ideals of the Christian life.

Chappell Hill United Methodist Church affirms the 2004 Book of Resolutions, “Sexual Abuse Within Ministerial Relationships” (p. 150, Resolution, No. 36) and “Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the United Methodist Church and Society” (p. 155, Resolution, No. 37), which states that sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church are incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. In accordance with The 2004 Book of Discipline, Para. 161F, all human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ.

What constitutes a “ministerial relationship”? This is a relationship in which a person is receiving pastoral care from a Church leader. Whenever a person begins a relationship with any person in his or her capacity as a church official or leader, a ministerial relationship is created. This applies to: Clergy; Lay ministers, lay pastoral associates, Lay Leaders, youth ministers, liturgical ministers; church official or leader; Spiritual directors and pastoral counselors; Sunday School personnel, faculty, staff, and administrators; Religious education teachers, church camp counselors, choir directors, etc. (“Ministerial Leader”).

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a Ministerial Leader engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee,

student, staff member, co-worker, visitor or volunteer as defined in the Texas Annual Conference Sexual Ethics Policy.

Sexual harassment is an “unwanted sexual comment, 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 or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender” (2004 Book of Discipline, Para. 161I). It also includes intimidating or coercive behavior that threatens or results in a tangible employment action such as hiring, firing or salary adjustment.

Gender harassment is behavior that is harassing in nature against a woman because she is a woman or against a man because he is a man.

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 and gender harassment are usually understood as exploitation of power relationships rather than as exclusively sexual or gender issues.

Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interferes with its moral mission. Chappell Hill United Methodist Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong, and commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse or misconduct of a sexual nature within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the Book of Discipline.

Further, Chappell Hill United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of these sins and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ. We all bear responsibility to be stewards of God’s community of hospitality where there is not only an absence of harassment, but also the presence of welcome, respect, and equality.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS/MISCONDUCT

Reporting:

Some instances of harassment can be resolved informally by conversation between parties or facilitated mediation. In all instances, the conduct must be reported immediately to the pastor and the chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (unless the conduct involves a clergy person or the chairperson). It is the intent of Chappell Hill United Methodist Church and this Sexual Ethics Policy, when possible, to rely on reconciliation and resolution as a first response or solution to reported instances.

- If the conduct involves a clergy person it must be reported to the clergy person's supervisor, district superintendent or the bishop in accordance with Texas Annual Conference Sexual Ethics Policy (Attachment 1 to this document).
- If a minor is involved, reporting under Texas law and Chappell Hill United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy is required. (See Attachment 2 to this document).
- Incidents of a criminal nature must be reported immediately to the police, the pastor and the chair person of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. If a police report is filed, the pastor or the chair person of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee must advise the district superintendent that a police report has been filed.
- Reporting of any sort of incident may be oral or in writing, signed or unsigned. All allegations, including oral or unsigned allegations will be handled appropriately. In order to initiate a supervisory response within the United Methodist system, a signed, written complaint is required.

Investigation:

- When the respondent is a clergy member of an annual conference or a local pastor, investigation will be conducted under the provisions of the 2004 Book of Discipline, Para. 2703.2.
- When the respondent is a layperson, the provisions of the 2004 Book of Discipline, Para. 2703.4 will apply. "In all cases, the pastor or district superintendent should take steps to resolve any complaints. If such pastoral response does not result in resolution and a written complaint is made against a professing member for any of the offenses in Para. 2702.3., the pastor of the local church, in consultation with the district superintendent and the district lay leader, may appoint a committee on investigation..."
- The confidences and sensitivities of all persons involved in the incident will be respected to the extent reasonably possible in the context of a complete investigation. We must be sensitive to the needs of the accused and the accuser and shall consider appropriate support, including making counseling available during the investigation.
- Where appropriate, individuals against whom complaints have been raised may be suspended from their duties with pay while an investigation is conducted.

Action:

- Upon reaching a conclusion as to the appropriate course of action, the pastor or district superintendent will meet with the accused and other appropriate persons to communicate the results of the investigation and the proposed resolution.
- Possible courses of action to address substantiated allegations include all reasonable actions including but not limited to counseling, education, termination of an employee or volunteer, or requesting a member to withdraw their membership.
- Where validity of the complaint cannot be determined, other options will be made available to both parties. One option may include additional education and awareness of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct and the policy regarding these matters at Chappell Hill United Methodist Church.
- If the investigation reasonably establishes that the alleged conduct did not occur, the complainant shall be informed that false sexual harassment claims or sexual misconduct claims will not be tolerated under this policy. Appropriate action may be recommended to assure the wrongly accused person that the false charge will not affect his/her employment by or volunteer involvement at Chappell Hill United Methodist Church.
- If the investigation reasonably establishes that the alleged conduct did not occur and that the complainant intentionally submitted a false sexual harassment claim or sexual misconduct claim, possible courses of action to address intentional false allegations include all reasonable actions including but not limited to counseling, education, termination of an employee or volunteer, or requesting a member to withdraw their membership.

Non-retaliation:

- This policy and Chappell Hill United Methodist Church prohibits retaliation against any person who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct or assists in investigating charges. All staff, leaders and volunteers are expected to immediately report any knowledge of retaliation to any one of the persons listed above. Prompt and appropriate investigation of the alleged retaliation and corrective action will be taken, including discipline in accordance with the 2004 Book of Discipline.

CONFIDENTIALITY

While Chappell Hill United Methodist Church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, it will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing information about the complaint only on a “need to know” basis and as necessary to promote God’s call for justice, reconciliation and healing.

TRAINING

- Initial training will be coordinated/performed by the West District and/or Pastor (or responsible person in charge), then performed on a periodic basis or when a new staff member is hired or volunteer is invited to be in service. This will include a review of the policies and procedures. Reviews of the policy are also recommended as needed and subsequent background checks may be made as appropriate to ensure continued adherence to the standards of conduct in sexual ethics for all Ministerial Leaders in Chappell Hill United Methodist Church.
- Outside Groups may be given Sexual Ethics Policy training if the pastor feels the nature and duration of their participation is such as to warrant it.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Revisions:

1. The Chappell Hill United Methodist Church Council will review this policy annually.
2. Proposed revisions shall be submitted in writing to the Council, who shall have the power to adopt such revisions as needed.

Implementation:

This policy shall be effective September 11, 2007 for all Church-related activities, events and functions. All initial training is to be completed by December 31, 2007, with ongoing training as needed for new leaders, volunteers and employees.

Building Requirements:

All offices and classroom doors will have an uncovered window. Any counseling that occurs behind a closed door should allow for the viewing of the counselor through the office door window.

Media Response:

If investigations or allegations should come to the attention of the media, all queries shall be directed to the pastor, the Office of the District Superintendent, or the Office of the Bishop. Any responses or interviews shall come from them.

Questions:

Anyone who has any questions or concerns about this policy or the issues addressed is encouraged to air these concerns to the Pastor and the chair person of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

Sexual Ethics Policy Committee:

The Sexual Ethics Policy Committee was created by the Chappell Hill United Methodist Church Council August 13, 2007 for the express purpose of drafting this Sexual Ethics Policy; having it then adopted by the Church Council; responding to questions of the congregation and presenting it to the 2007 annual Charge Conference. The Sexual Ethics Policy Committee is comprised of Pastor Paula Behrens Lopez, Robert Stodgill and Greg Copeland. The committee will be disbanded effective December 31, 2007.

Adopted by the Church Council on September 11, 2007

Steve Evans
Chairperson, Church Council

Dated