

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH POLICY STATEMENT ON MISCONDUCT OF A SEXUAL NATURE

Grace United Methodist Church affirms the 2016 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 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016*, ¶ 161.F, all human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29, states all are one in Christ, we support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, gender, or gender identity.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership, whether a layperson or paid staff) 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 comment, advance, or demand, either verbal or physical, exhibited by either a lay person or staff, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive, intimidating or offensive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender or gender identity. (*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016*, ¶ 161.J)

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 an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue.

Misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interferes with its moral mission. **Grace United Methodist Church** stands in opposition to the sin of misconduct of a sexual nature in the Church and society at large and commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any charge of sexual misconduct within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016*. Further, **Grace United Methodist Church** bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, regardless of gender identity, which is free of misconduct of a sexual nature and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ. **Grace United Methodist Church** also affirms that misconduct of a sexual nature by any congregant or other person on church property or attending church activities is in conflict with our moral mission and such conduct will be investigated and action taken deemed appropriate according to *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016*.

Misconduct of a sexual nature should be reported to the chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the pastor in charge. The pastor in charge shall then consult with the District Superintendent regarding the necessary process for resolution. If the conduct involves a clergy person, it should be reported to the District Superintendent or the presiding bishop.

Approved by Grace UMC Church Council:

Church Council Secretary

Church Council Chair

Date