

IN-CARE PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Appendix F: Pastoral Sexual Misconduct¹

PASTORAL SEXUAL MISCONDUCT (page 1 of 2)

Pastoral sexual misconduct is defined as a range of behaviors that includes verbal or physical sexual harassment, sexual advances, sexual contact, and/or other sexualized behavior between an ordained, licensed, or commissioned minister and his or her parishioners, clients, or those the authorized minister supervises or serves in a professional capacity. Such behavior crosses appropriate professional boundaries and is an abuse of the trust placed in and the responsibilities and privilege of the pastoral role. Such misconduct violates pastoral ethics.

In all instances, the ordained, licensed, or commissioned minister is responsible for maintaining professional boundaries, regardless of the behavior of other persons. Authorized ministers within the United Church of Christ are accountable to the Association for living out with integrity the vows they have taken. This includes the statement repeated in all three codes for authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ: “I will not use my position, power or authority to exploit any person.” The codes are detailed in the “Partners in Authorizing Ministry” section of *Manual on Ministry*.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment³ is generally defined to include sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such is made either explicitly or implicitly a term of an individual’s employment (in this case, paid or volunteer) or his or her continued status in an institution.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individuals.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment based on the declared judgment of the affected individual.
- Such conditions create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for another individual regardless of the specific setting or circumstances or the relationship between the two individuals most directly involved.

³ This definition is adapted from the policy of sexual misconduct by the Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ. The definitional work is based on the federal law on sexual harassment.

¹ Page 36 of 51; Guidelines for Response Teams; © September, 2000 Local Church Ministries Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team.

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PASTORAL SEXUAL MISCONDUCT (page 2 of 2)²

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct includes any of the following:⁴

1. Sexual contact with a minor.
2. Sexual harassment.
3. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
4. Sexual malfeasance, which is defined as a breach of trust resulting from sexual contact (contact with breasts, buttocks or pubic area) within a ministerial or professional relationship. This definition is not meant to cover relationships between spouses nor is it meant to restrict church professionals from having respectful, social and/or marital relationships.
5. Unwelcome or offensive behaviors, including winks, leers, suggestive comments, crude language, pinching or tickling someone, or inappropriate hugs and kisses.
6. In addition to pastoral sexual misconduct, there have been a number of situations within the United Church of Christ in which a concern about a minister's fitness for ministry has arisen due to alleged inappropriate sexual behavior that allegedly occurred beyond the pastoral relationship. Examples include a pastor facing criminal charges of child molestation, although the child in question was not a parishioner, or a married pastor purportedly engaging in an extra-marital sexual relationship with a person who is not a parishioner or client.

⁴ Adapted from the policy of the Iowa Conference policy.

I affirm that I have read this document (as adapted) on Pastoral Sexual Misconduct from *Guidelines for Response Teams*, pages 36 and 37 (of 51); © September, 2000 Local Church Ministries Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team. I fully understand this document and I accept its authority for my ordained ministry, if it should be granted, in the United Church of Christ.

Signed

Date Signed

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