



Sexual Misconduct Policy and Reporting Requirements

Approved by Session March 21, 2023, Effective April 1, 2023

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy¹ of Central Presbyterian Church that all church members, church officers, non-member employees, and volunteers are always to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship. Sexual misconduct is a comprehensive term which includes items described in Attachment A. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct are in violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, and of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship. It is never permissible or acceptable for a church member, officer, employee, or volunteer to engage in sexual misconduct.

The ethical conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church because through these representatives an understanding of God and the gospel's good news is conveyed. "Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world" (Book of Order, G-2.0104a.)

The basic principles of conduct guiding this policy are as follows:

Sexual misconduct is a violation of the role of pastors, employees, volunteers, counselors, supervisors, teachers, and advisors of any kind who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship. It breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of parishioners, clients, co-workers, and students.

Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trusted relationship to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual contact in the relationship, it is the pastor's, counselor's, officer's, or supervisor's responsibility to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.

Sexual misconduct takes advantage of the vulnerability of persons who are less powerful to act for their own welfare, including children. It is antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world. It violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm.

REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION²

Anyone suspecting or having knowledge of sexual misconduct should report this promptly to the pastor, a serving elder or the clerk of session. All allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously. Every allegation will be received, investigated, and acted upon in accordance with the terms of the Sexual Misconduct Policy and its associated response and investigation procedures. The accused person is always presumed innocent until proven guilty. In this context, no allegations will be made public or revealed against an accused person, except on a need-to-know basis, until a full investigation has been completed and it has been determined that the allegation has been properly substantiated.

For incidents of alleged sexual harassment, the complainant (if adult) may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual(s) accused of sexual harassment or may report the matter as described above.

If anyone is uncomfortable reporting sexual misconduct locally, he or she may report it to the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area's Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk (651-357-1150). The Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area shall respond.

The protection of children and youth is a priority and the special requirements for reporting child abuse are included in Central's Child Protection Policy.

Procedures and Training

The Personnel Committee will maintain and manage the sexual misconduct response procedure and investigation procedure.

The Personnel Committee will provide training for serving elders and deacons during February each year on this policy and the procedure for handling allegations.

¹ This policy is derived from Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Sexual Misconduct Policy (2013.)

² This section on reporting and investigation is taken from the PTCA Procedure for Handling Allegations of Sexual Misconduct.

ATTACHMENT A to Sexual Misconduct Policy

Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:

- Child sexual abuse - including, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.
- Sexual abuse - as defined in the Book of Order: "Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position" (Book of Order, D-10.0401c).
- Sexual harassment - unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or their continued status in an institution; submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual; such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment; or an individual is subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes, unwelcome or inappropriate touching, or display of sexual visuals that insult, degrade, and/or sexually exploit men, women, or children.
- Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
- Sexual conduct - offensive, obsessive, or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.
- Sexual Malfeasance - the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.
- Misuse of technology - use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting, or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.