

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

Washington Street 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 [2016 Book of Discipline ¶161F](#), all human beings 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 sexual orientation.

Sexual abuse occurs when a person within a role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, employee of the church, youth leader or other position of lay leadership) 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 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 ([2016 Book of Discipline ¶161J](#)).

Sexual abuse involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of a leadership 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. **Washington Street 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.

Further, **Washington Street United Methodist Church** bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons which is free of misconduct of a sexual nature and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Some instances of sexual harassment can be resolved easily and informally between the parties. In all other instances, misconduct of a sexual nature should be reported to the chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the pastor in charge. If the conduct involves a clergy person, it should be reported to the district superintendent or the presiding bishop.