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3 **CLERGY SEXUAL ETHICS POLICY OF**  
4 **THE CENTRAL PA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
5 **Adopted June 6, 2008**

6 All references to *The Book of Discipline* are to the 2004 edition. Paragraph numbers are for easy  
7 reference and may change with future editions of *The Book of Discipline*. Unless there are  
8 substantive changes to the content of the Discipline, the Policy will be updated to reflect the  
9 current Book of Discipline as editorial changes without the need to re-approve the Policy. Future  
10 name changes of The Central PA Conference will also be updated as editorial changes.

11 ***Introduction***

12 Those who are ordained, consecrated, commissioned and licensed are set apart for a covenant life  
13 with God, with one another, and with the laity with whom they are called to serve in the local  
14 church and beyond the local church in extension ministries. This covenant is a sacred trust that  
15 all ordained, consecrated, commissioned, and licensed professionals must uphold in order to  
16 further the mission of the Annual Conference. This policy applies to all those persons under the  
17 care and appointment or assignment of the Resident Bishop of the Central Pennsylvania  
18 Conference: all who are ordained, consecrated, commissioned, licensed, or assigned.

19 The Central Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church affirms the Resolutions  
20 adopted, revised and readopted by the General Conference regarding "Sexual Abuse Within  
21 Ministerial Relationships" and "Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the United Methodist Church  
22 and Society."

23 Sexual abuse, harassment or misconduct by either a lay or clergy person within a ministerial  
24 relationship and sexual harassment within the church are incompatible with biblical teachings of  
25 hospitality, justice and healing.

26  
27 Recognizing that sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct are chargeable offenses  
28 (*The Book of Discipline* ¶ 2702), this policy statement addresses the process to be followed when a  
29 written complaint is filed. This policy is not intended to supplant or substitute for the formal  
30 complaint process and its attendant fair process protection in The 2004 Book of Discipline (or its  
31 subsequent editions), which, where applicable, must be followed in addition to this policy.  
32 Failure by church authorities to use or follow any of the procedures herein is not a chargeable  
33 offense, nor can it be used as grounds for an appeal of a formal grievance, complaint, review or  
34 trial as defined in The 2004 Book of Discipline (or its subsequent editions).

35 The intent of this policy is to protect the relationship between church professionals and  
36 parishioners, staff members, colleagues and others. The primary focus of this policy shall be  
37 the search for truth to assure justice for the complainant and the accused, and to initiate the  
38 healing process for all parties involved and/or impacted by the process. Part of the rationale  
39 for this policy is found within the Social Principles of *The Book of Discipline*, particularly ¶161,  
40 The Nurturing Community: F - Women and Men; G - Human Sexuality; and I - Sexual  
41 Harassment.

42 ***Biblical and Theological Foundation***

43 We read in the book of Genesis that all human beings, both male and female, are created in the image  
44 of God. God created us as embodied beings and there is no separation between body and spirit. In  
45 Deuteronomy we read that God calls us to honor the integrity of our neighbors, and their authority

46 over their own personhood. The gospels contain stories of Jesus ministering to both men and women,  
 47 teaching and healing all who came to him, treating them with dignity and respect. Jesus embodied the  
 48 image of God as agape (unconditional love) when he spoke of a new commandment stated in 1 John  
 49 4:7-8. "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of  
 50 God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love."

51 Wrapped within this love ethic is the command to do no harm to another person, which is the  
 52 foundation of John Wesley's Doctrine and Discipline in the Christian Life as found in *The Book of*  
 53 *Discipline* 1101. Agape is the antithesis of power when power is used to dominate, coerce or  
 54 manipulate another for one's selfish desires. Sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and sexual abuse  
 55 are evidence that the love ethic is replaced by a power ethic showing our inability to live in the light of  
 56 God's love.

57 The Social Principles specifically state, "We call upon women and men alike to share power and  
 58 control, to learn to give freely and to receive freely, to be complete and to respect the wholeness of  
 59 others" (*The Book of Discipline* ¶ 161F). "We reject all sexual expressions that damage or destroy the  
 60 humanity God has given us as birthright, and we affirm only the sexual expression which enhances  
 61 that same humanity" (*The Book of Discipline* ¶ 161G).

62 Persons serving within a local church in a pastoral role often deal with individuals who are  
 63 emotionally fragile or personally vulnerable. Thus they are always responsible for the emotional,  
 64 spiritual and physical protection of those persons who come to them for help or over whom they have  
 65 any kind of authority. Persons serving within a local church in a pastoral role are responsible for  
 66 knowing appropriate professional boundaries and ministering to persons without using those  
 67 relationships to meet their own needs.

68  
 69 Forgiveness is also a sacred teaching of the church, but this teaching in no way protects a person  
 70 guilty of sexual misconduct from the discipline of the church. Representing the church as a  
 71 church professional is a privilege requiring the highest ethical conduct. Forgiveness by God or  
 72 by any persons harmed by sexual misconduct does not automatically restore to the offender the  
 73 privilege of serving as a church professional. It is not appropriate for church authorities to  
 74 pressure persons harmed by sexual misconduct to forgive the offender as a way to restore to the  
 75 offender the privilege of serving as a professional in the church. Central to the task of church  
 76 authorities is the protection of the vulnerable and the eradication of sexual misconduct from the  
 77 church.

78

## 79 **Definitions**

80

81 *These definitions are not official or binding. They are intended to be helpful, broad statements to*  
 82 *give a snapshot of how some key words are used in the Disciplinary paragraphs on the*  
 83 *supervisory, judicial and administrative processes.*

84

85

86 **Certified Lay Minister or Certified Lay Minister Candidate:** persons assigned to a local  
 87 church in a pastoral capacity according to the provisions of *The Book of Discipline*, ¶ 272. A  
 88 CLM is a lay person, not clergy.

89

90 **Chargeable Offense:** Complaints may be filed against any clergy or Lay person who are alleged  
 91 to have committed one or more of the offenses found in *The Book of Discipline*, ¶2702 which

92 include immorality, sexual misconduct, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and child sexual abuse.  
 93 (§2702.1 deals with clergy, §2702.3 deals with Lay persons)

94

95 **Clergy:** A Bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (includes Elders, Deacons and  
 96 Commissioned persons who are Full, Associate or Probationary Members whether active or  
 97 retired), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister.  
 98 Ministers of other denominations serving in a United Methodist Church are amenable to the  
 99 Annual Conference and held to the same ethical standards. The provisions of §362 are  
 100 applicable except the provisions which apply specifically to termination of conference  
 101 membership and surrender of UM credentials.

102

103 **Complaint:** As set forth in § 362, a written and signed statement alleging a chargeable offense.  
 104 A complainant initially may make a “complaint” verbally, which may trigger an investigation  
 105 and supervision by the cabinet. However, in order for a Complaint to be processed formally as  
 106 an administrative or judicial matter, it must be in a signed, written statement. The complaint  
 107 should be written with specifications containing as many facts as are available, such as date,  
 108 place, and specific events alleged to have occurred. A Bishop or District Superintendent may  
 109 initiate the complaint.

110 **Clergy Sexual Misconduct Response Team (CSMRT):** Persons appointed by the Bishop to  
 111 facilitate the process of healing following a written complaint of sexual abuse, sexual  
 112 harassment, or sexual misconduct.

113

114 **Lay person in a ministerial role:** This may include any lay person who serves as paid staff or  
 115 volunteer in a local church or other ministry setting. This includes, but is not limited to, serving  
 116 as a Youth Minister, Discipleship Coordinator, Small Group Coordinator, Minister of Visitation,  
 117 etc.

118

119 **Complainant:** The person signing the original Complaint, sometimes referred to in *The Book of*  
 120 *Discipline* as “the person making the original complaint.”

121

122 **Respondent:** The person against whom an administrative or judicial complaint has been filed (§  
 123 362 and §2701).

124 **Sexual misconduct** may include sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which  
 125 a person serving in a pastoral role takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person to whom the  
 126 inappropriate, professional behavior(s) is directed by causing or allowing that person to engage in  
 127 sexual behavior with the person serving in a pastoral role within the professional relationships.  
 128 Sexual contact between a person in a ministerial role of leadership and a recipient, counselee,  
 129 employee, student, staff member, co-worker, or volunteer, is unethical and unprofessional behavior  
 130 and is a betrayal of a sacred trust and an abuse of power.

131 **Sexual harassment** is "any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is  
 132 reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment  
 133 must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual  
 134 issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working  
 135 environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender." (*The Book of Discipline* §161.1)

136

137 **Sexual abuse** may include sexual contact with the body by force, coercion, or emotional  
 138 manipulation. Sexual abuse includes more violent forms of the violation of the body such as rape, but

139 it is also the subtle manipulation of a vulnerable person for sexual gratification. Consent by the  
140 recipient is not a legal or moral defense for sexual abuse.

141 **Supervisory response** means the pastoral and administrative procedure administered by the  
142 Bishop and directed toward a just resolution among all parties. It is not a part of any judicial  
143 process.

144  
145 **Suspension:** While all persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty, when deemed  
146 appropriate to protect the well-being of the complainant, the congregation (or other context for  
147 ministry), and/or the respondent, the Bishop may suspend the person against whom the  
148 complaint is filed from all ministerial responsibilities (§363.1.c). Salary, housing and benefits  
149 shall be provided during the suspension. The suspension may last no more than 90 days.

150 ***Procedures for Reporting Allegations of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Harassment, or Sexual***  
151 ***Misconduct***

152  
153 1. In order to present an allegation of sexual misconduct, a person must contact the District  
154 Superintendent or the Bishop. If, for any reason, a person finds it difficult to report his or her  
155 concerns directly, the person may contact the coordinator of the Clergy Sexual Misconduct  
156 Response Team who will assign an advocate to assist with the process of making a complaint.  
157 Any supervisory response shall follow the provisions outlined in *The Book of Discipline* ¶362.1b.

158 2. When a formal written complaint is filed, the provisions of *The Book of Discipline* ¶362 shall  
159 determine the procedure.

160  
161 3. When an allegation of misconduct is subject to mandatory reporting requirements by the state  
162 or federal government (as in the case of a minor or an adult incapable of self-reporting), it shall  
163 be reported to the Bishop and to the appropriate authorities. In the case of a minor, CHILDLINE  
164 will be contacted (1-800-932-0313) and the church's Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be followed.

165  
166 4. Upon receipt by a District Superintendent or the Bishop of a complaint of sexual misconduct,  
167 a prompt response to the allegations will be initiated and appropriate action, if called for based  
168 upon all the facts, shall be taken according to *The Book of Discipline*. The scope and details of  
169 the response will depend on the nature of the report and the related circumstances. In each  
170 instance the situation will be handled with as much discretion as the circumstances permit to  
171 protect the privacy of all the individuals involved.

172  
173 5. No retaliation will be tolerated on account of a good faith report of sexual misconduct.  
174 Prohibited retaliation will be considered a separate and independent violation of this policy, and  
175 appropriate action may be taken against the retaliator. Anyone who believes they have been  
176 retaliated against may also report such retaliation as detailed above. The person is encouraged to  
177 report retaliation immediately to a District Superintendent or the Bishop, or contact the assigned  
178 advocate for assistance in reporting the concern.

179  
180 ***Role of the Clergy Sexual Misconduct Response Team***

181 1. To assist the Bishop, by invitation, in assessment, intervention, or healing as provided for in  
182 *The Book of Discipline*, ¶362.1e

183

184 2. To provide support, compassion and direction for the persons directly (and, if appropriate,  
185 indirectly) affected by the allegations of sexual misconduct (which may include the assignment  
186 of advocates to appropriate persons), and for the affected Congregation(s); and

187 3. To provide information and education about this Central Pennsylvania Conference Policy and the  
188 issue of professional sexual misconduct to persons who contact the Clergy Sexual Misconduct  
189 Response Team.

### 190 *The Make-up of the Clergy Sexual Misconduct Response Team*

191 1. Team members will be named by the Bishop.

192 2. Training of the Clergy Sexual Misconduct Response Team on the issues of sexual abuse, sexual  
193 harassment, and sexual misconduct shall fall within the responsibility of the office of the Bishop.

### 194 195 *Education and Training*

196 Education and awareness for both clergy and congregations are key elements in the prevention of  
197 sexual misconduct and in effective intervention when misconduct does occur.

198 The Central Pennsylvania Conference makes a commitment to the provision of training and  
199 resources on the subject of clergy sexual misconduct for clergy and designated laity.

200 This education shall include knowledge of ethical standards of behavior, information about  
201 appropriate professional boundaries and personal self care, a description of the complaint process and  
202 resources available to affected individuals and congregations.

203  
204 The Sexual Ethics Boundaries Task Force is in the process of developing educational materials  
205 and a schedule of mandatory training that will be implemented as soon as it is completed. It will  
206 encompass the following:

207  
208 **Basic Boundaries Training** is required of all clergy under appointment and all lay persons  
209 assigned as pastoral leaders. Those who have previously completed the basic course do not need  
210 to retake the course. If proof of completion is not on file with or provided to the District Office,  
211 the basic course must be taken within six months of an appointment or assignment to serve a  
212 church. Four Basic Boundaries Trainings will be offered each calendar year to be sure that a  
213 training opportunity is available within a reasonable time frame for all who are required to take  
214 it.

215  
216 **Advanced Boundaries Training** will consist of modules developed by the Sexual Ethics  
217 Boundaries Task Force and further information will be forthcoming. It is expected that at least  
218 two modules will be offered and required of all persons serving churches every quadrennium.  
219 Some of these modules may be available online.

### 220 *Clergy*

221 1. Because clergy are charged with the responsibility for knowing and maintaining appropriate  
222 boundaries in ministerial relationships, they must access relevant training available to them in  
223 preparation for parish ministry as well as in continuing education. Many seminaries now provide this  
224 training to students and this information shall be provided in the orientation and mentoring process

225 within the Central Pennsylvania Conference.

226 2. Clergy are encouraged to seek appropriate supervision and consultation if they are engaged in  
 227 counseling ministries. Clergy who provide ongoing/in depth counseling are particularly in need of  
 228 supervision to be fully aware of the unique dynamics of such relationships and the great potential for  
 229 idealization of the pastor in this process and thus are required to seek appropriate supervision and  
 230 consultation.

231 3. Knowing when to refer is critically important. Clergy need to be able to identify those presenting  
 232 problems which lie outside of the scope of their expertise and clearly indicate the need for referral to  
 233 a medical or mental health specialist. Relationships with such specialists should be cultivated by  
 234 clergy both for consultation and referral purposes.

235 4. Clergy are encouraged to learn and practice self care. Balancing one's time and attention among  
 236 the competing needs of congregants, community, family and self is a special challenge for clergy.  
 237 Therefore clergy are advised to seek balance, peer support, and professional help and guidance when  
 238 needed.

### 239 ***Congregations***

240

241 1. Congregations are encouraged to stay informed about issues related to appropriate professional  
 242 boundaries and clergy sexual misconduct. Attendance at training events should be encouraged for  
 243 Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee members and these persons should be aware of relevant  
 244 literature and conference resources.

245 2. Congregations are strongly urged to develop, approve and follow a written local church policy  
 246 on Sexual Harassment and Misconduct of a Sexual Nature. (Helpful information on developing  
 247 these policies as well as sample policies is found at [www.gcfa.org/lcshmemo.pdf](http://www.gcfa.org/lcshmemo.pdf) .

248 3. Congregations need to show concern for their own health and that of their clergy. Laity must strive  
 249 to be aware of the demands on clergy time and establish reasonable expectations for work loads as  
 250 well as leisure time. Laity are also urged to replace pedestal images of clergy with a more authentic  
 251 understanding of pastors as human beings with gifts, talents, skills and strengths as well as faults,  
 252 wounds and weaknesses that may require intervention and care.

253 4. All allegations of inappropriate behavior shall be taken seriously. Local church leadership shall  
 254 hold clergy and laity accountable for boundary violations. Response to such allegations shall be in  
 255 accordance with *The Book of Discipline*, this policy, and local church policies. Ministering to the  
 256 needs of persons harmed by clergy misconduct is essential for congregations affected by this issue.

257 5. Clergy need the support of their congregations in the pursuit of continuing education, training,  
 258 consultation, and peer connections to help deal with the complexity of personal and professional needs  
 259 in the parish.

260 NOTE: This revision is replaces all previous CPCUMC sexual ethics policies.