

Kent Island United Methodist Church

Policy on Sexual Misconduct

Kent Island United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment in keeping with God's sacred trust. Sexual misconduct on the part of any clergy person, employee, or volunteer violates the mission of the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Sexual harassment is expressly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Sexual misconduct includes sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation. The guidelines for the prohibition of sexual abuse or molestation of a minor (under 18 years of age) are set forth more specifically in the Safe Sanctuary Policy (see separate policy document).

Kent Island United Methodist Church believes that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), that all Christians are equal in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28), and that we are called to love our neighbors as well as enemies (Matthew 5:42). We are committed to the prevention of sexual misconduct in any form and to address allegations justly. "Contrary to the nurturing community, sexual harassment creates improper, coercive, and abusive conditions wherever it occurs in society. Sexual harassment undermines the social goal of equal opportunity and the climate of mutual respect between men and women." (Book of Discipline 2012, ¶161.I). Furthermore, "Violent, disrespectful, or abusive sexual expressions do not confirm sexuality as God's good gift." (Book of Discipline 2012, ¶161.H).

Kent Island United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons that encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ. We will neither condone nor tolerate instances of sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse.

Definitions

Sexual misconduct within ministerial relationships is a betrayal of sacred trust. It is a continuum of unwanted sexual or gender-directed behaviors by either a lay or clergy person within a ministerial relationship (paid or unpaid), even if that behavior is consensual. It can include child abuse, adult sexual abuse, harassment, rape or sexual assault, sexualized verbal comments or visuals, unwelcome touching and advances, use of sexualized materials including pornography, stalking, sexual abuse of youth or those without capacity to consent, or misuse of the pastoral or ministerial position using sexualized conduct to take advantage of the vulnerability of another." (Book of Resolutions 2012, p. 136).

Sexual harassment [is] any unwanted sexual comment, 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." (Book of Discipline 2012, ¶161.I). "[I]t is unwanted sexual or gender-directed behavior within a pastoral, employment, ministerial (including volunteers), mentor, or colleague relationship that is so severe or pervasive that it alters the conditions of employment or volunteer work or unreasonably interferes with the employee or volunteer's performance by creating a hostile environment that can include unwanted sexual jokes, repeated advances, touching,

displays, or comments that insult, degrade, or sexually exploit women, men, elders, children, or youth.” (Book of Resolutions 2012, p. 136)

“Sexual abuse [in ministry] is a form of sexual misconduct and occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (lay or clergy, pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, coworker, or volunteer.” (Book of Resolutions 2012, p. 136) 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.

Furthermore, “the use of pornography in church programs, on church premises or with church property by persons in ministerial roles (lay and clergy) is a form of sexual misconduct.” (Book of Resolutions 2012, p. 162)

Reporting abuse of children and youth

Anyone who has cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental welfare has been or is being adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person has a legal responsibility to report it to the appropriate state or law enforcement agency. In addition, any allegation of child abuse in church settings shall be reported to the Bishop. Anyone who becomes aware of sexual abuse or molestation involving a minor shall also follow the reporting procedures outlined in the Safe Sanctuaries policy of Kent Island United Methodist Church.

Reporting sexual misconduct between adults

Nothing in this policy requires the person alleging sexual misconduct, harassment, or abuse to report the matter to the individual who is the subject of the allegation. Any person who believes that he or she is being subjected to any type of sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse in the church is encouraged to bring the matter to:

Pastor: David Bennett, phone 410-643-5647 or 410-643-5361

SPRC Chair: Vali Galasso, phone 410-827-5635

If the conduct involves clergy or chair of SPRC, reports are encouraged to be sent to:

Bishop: Peggy Johnson, phone 610-666-1442 OR

District Superintendent: Gary Moore, phone 410-770-9673

Investigations

Kent Island United Methodist Church is committed to a prompt and thorough investigation of allegations, in compliance with The Book of Discipline and the Sexual Misconduct Response Guidelines as outlined by the Peninsula-Delaware Conference Care Team. It is intended that the privacy of the persons involved be protected, except to the extent necessary to conduct a proper investigation and to provide appropriate disclosure to affected parties. We will cooperate fully in any criminal investigation.

Non-retaliation

Kent Island United Methodist Church will not retaliate against anyone who reports sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse in good faith.

Corrective action

If the investigation substantiates that the allegation is valid, immediate corrective action designed to stop the sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse and prevent its recurrence will be taken. Such corrective action may include discipline, up to and including discharge or dismissal of the offending person from church leadership and/or membership.

In conjunction with this policy statement, Kent Island United Methodist Church affirms the following policies and procedures on related issues:

- Safe Sanctuaries

- Church Staff and Personnel

- Peninsula-Delaware Conference CARE Team Response Guidelines

Each of these policies is available on the church website: www.kiumc.org

This is a policy statement of Kent Island United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 308, 2739 Cox Neck Road, Chester, MD21619.

Approved by the Servant Leadership Team.

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