



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THE REVEREND DR. J. HERBERT NELSON, II
STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Initial _____

January 9, 2020

Friends and colleagues in Christ:

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has spoken out against sexual abuse and misconduct for decades. The 205th General Assembly (1993) approved the Sexual Misconduct Policy and its Procedures, and the 219th General Assembly (2010) updated it. As the policy states:

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.

As of 2011, the *Book of Order* required all councils to implement a sexual misconduct policy (G-3.0106). The 222nd General Assembly (2016) approved the Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Its Procedures, and as of 2017 the *Book of Order* requires all councils to implement a child and youth protection policy (G-3.0106).

While we as a denomination have talked about providing a safe space for individuals to live, work, and play while carrying out the mission of God in Christ, our sexual misconduct policies have not always been effective in protecting vulnerable persons among us. Tragically, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has sometimes failed to listen to the long-silenced voices of survivors of sexual misconduct by church leaders.

We must do better—as individuals and as a church.

I write to remind you of our obligations as followers of Jesus Christ, and to admonish you to keep the prevention of sexual abuse and the protection of the vulnerable a priority in your mission and service to God, your councils, and the people of God. If your council has not implemented a sexual misconduct policy or a child and youth protection policy—or if you have such policies but have not updated them—make them a priority in the coming year. Train staff, your council leaders, and all who supervise and care for minors on your policies and best practices to protect children and other vulnerable persons.

For guidance and assistance in drafting or revising policies, there are a number of resources available:

1. Contact your synod and presbytery offices and ask to review a copy of their sexual misconduct and child and youth protection policies to determine if they can be adapted for use by your council.
2. The **Creating Safe Ministries** page [<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/legal-resources/creating-safe-ministries/>] can be found by scrolling down on the pcusa.org homepage. It includes resources such as the General Assembly's anti-sexual abuse and misconduct policies, guidance on creating policies, prevention, and how to make a report of misconduct or abuse.
3. Review the **workbench from the Insurance Board** [<https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/safeconduct-workbench/>], available to all PCUSA councils.
4. Victims of sexual misconduct or abuse can call **866-607-7233** to make a report concerning abuse by anyone who is in any way affiliated with the PC(USA). This Helpline was set up by the Office of the General Assembly with its partners the Insurance Board and Praesidium. Councils can also call the Helpline for resources.

The 223rd General Assembly (2018) “encourage[d] mid councils, while respecting confidentiality, to voluntarily submit the number of sexual misconduct allegations and charges within their bounds to the Stated Clerk to be reported to each General Assembly.” Presbytery stated clerks will see this question on the year-end report from now on, and I ask them to respond with this important information.

All of God's children are precious—but some, such as minors, are more vulnerable. Our church should take all steps possible to prevent sexual abuse and misconduct, and to send a message to those who would prey upon victims that the PC(USA) is watching and determined to protect those they would seek to victimize. We must also listen to the voices of survivors, to learn from grave mistakes of the past in order to avoid them in the future.

In the Faith that we share,



The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)



Life Together in the Community of Faith:
Standards of Ethical Conduct for
Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Life Together in a Community of Faith:
Standards of Ethical Conduct for
Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Life Together in a Community of Faith:
Standards of Ethical Conduct for
Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Integrated Version—References and Examples

Korean Version OGA-04-082

Initial _____

Professional Code of Ethics

Approved by the
210th General Assembly (1998)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Developed by
The Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics

Published by
The Office of the General Assembly
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

September 1, 1998

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As you may be aware, the 210th General Assembly (1998) approved a report submitted by the Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics. The report, as approved, is titled "Life Together in the Community of Faith:

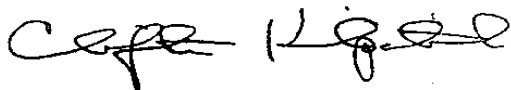
- A. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- B. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- C. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);"

The General Assembly took several actions to implement the use of "Life Together in the Community of Faith." Though it was not the first action taken, the action that is perhaps of the most interest to you is that the General Assembly commended the Standards, as a model, to presbyteries and synods for study, approval, and inclusion in manuals of operations, and to congregations, as a model, for study, approval, and use with sessions, new member classes, adult education classes, personnel committees, and in contracts. In addition, the General Assembly commended the Standards to seminaries for inclusion in curricula. The General Assembly approved A and B as Standards of Ethical Conduct for those serving in General Assembly entities and instructed those entities to include the Standards in personnel policies.

To make the report available to governing bodies and the seminaries, I have been instructed to publish and distribute the full report, including references and examples. I am pleased to put this important report in your hands. Some may ask why we need "Life Together in the Community of Faith." After all, we have the Bible, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*. However, the 207th General Assembly (1995) recognized there were a number of different perspectives from which the issue of misconduct might be viewed. The committee was given the task of providing a resource that can help the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) prevent harm to individuals and the community of faith and provide an example of ethical conduct to the world.

I hope that in your session, presbytery, synod, or seminary faculty, the study of this report and implementation of the standards it upholds will be an enriching experience and will help produce a life together that reflects the shalom that God intends for us.

Yours in Christ,



Clifton Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR
MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, I accept Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of the church, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore I will:

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my life's work and church membership, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

I will conduct myself within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that nothing need be hidden from sisters and brothers in Christ. Therefore I will:

1. Bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise my witness and relationships within the community of faith;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit to others where due and observe copyrights;
9. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me; and
10. Accept the discipline of the church.

III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for sisters and brothers in Christ;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR
EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As an employee or volunteer in an entity, governing body, or congregation associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that will support the ministry of my workplace. Therefore I will:

1. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
2. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern;
3. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my position, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
4. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs; and
5. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech.

II

I will conduct myself at my workplace in a manner that will support its ministry. Therefore I will:

1. Honor relationships within the workplace and observe appropriate boundaries;
2. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my position;
3. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my work;
4. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the workplace for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
5. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
6. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
7. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
8. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria;
9. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and, upon leaving a position, speak and act in ways that support the work of my successor;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Accept the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable;
12. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
13. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues; and
14. Cooperate with persons of other faith traditions.

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR
ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry. Therefore I will:

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will:

1. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;

12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
- **15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;
- **16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
- **17. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

** These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

IV. INTEGRATED VERSION—REFERENCES AND EXAMPLES*

LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH: STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our *Confessions*, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God’s grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

References

Ordination vows—G-14.0405b [ministers]; *G-14.0207* [elders and deacons]:

- “(1) Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?”
- “(2) Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God’s Word to you?”
- “(3) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?”
- “(4) Will you be a minister of the Word and Sacrament [elders and deacons: Will you fulfill your office] in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and continually guided by our confessions?”
- “(5) Will you be governed by our church’s polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God’s Word and Spirit?”
- “(6) Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?”
- “(7) Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?”
- “(8) Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?”

Ordination vows—G-14.0405b(9) [ministers]

- “(9) Will you be a faithful minister, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith, and caring for people? Will you be active in government and discipline, serving in the governing bodies of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”

Ordination vows—G-14.0207 [elders and deacons]:

- i. (For elder) Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”
- j. (For deacon) Will you be a faithful deacon, teaching charity, urging concern, and directing the people’s help to the friendless and those in need? In your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?”

Jesus Christ as pattern for my life and ministry

Matthew 20:26–28: “. . . whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” See also [G-6.0101](#).

Philippians 2: 1–5: “If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus . . .” See also *1 Peter 1:15–16*.

C-9:24 (The Confession of 1967): “The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death.”

G-14.0103: “The purpose and pattern of leadership in the church in all its forms of ministry shall be understood not in terms of power but of service, after the manner of the servant ministry of Jesus Christ.”

Relying on God’s grace

C-9.22–23 (The Confession of 1967): “The new life takes shape in a community in which men know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no man has any ground on which to stand, except God’s grace.

“The new life does not release a man from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, fear. He still has to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as he matures in love and faithfulness in his life with Christ, he lives in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others.”

Commit myself to the following ethical standards

I Corinthians 10:31–11:1: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

Philippians 1:27: “. . . live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”

James 1:22: “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.”

James 3:1: “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.”

C-5.167 (Second Helvetic Confession):

“SYNODS. Nevertheless, there ought to be proper discipline among ministers. In synods the doctrine and life of ministers is to be carefully examined. Offenders who can be cured are to be rebuked by the elders and restored to the right way, and if they are incurable, they are to be deposed, and like wolves driven away from the flock of the Lord by the true shepherds.”

G-2.0200: “These confessional statements are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. While confessional standards are subordinate to the Scriptures, they are, nonetheless, standards. They are not lightly drawn up or subscribed to, nor may they be ignored or dismissed. The church is prepared to counsel with or even to discipline one ordained who seriously rejects the faith expressed in the confessions. . . .”

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry.

References

Titus 2:7–8: “Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.”

Hebrew 13:7: “Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

C-4.032 (Heidelberg Catechism):

“Q. 32. But why are you called a Christian?”

“A. Because through faith I share in Christ and thus in his anointing, so that I may confess his name, offer myself a living sacrifice of gratitude to him, and fight against sin and the devil with a free and good conscience.”

G-6.0106a: “To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.”

G-6.0202a: “. . . When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice. . . .”

G-6.0303: “Elders should be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel, both within the church and in the world. (G-6.0106)”

G-6.0401: “The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office.”

Therefore I will:

I.1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;

References

Exodus 20:8: “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.”

Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Romans 12:11–13: “Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.”

Ephesians 6:18: “Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

C-5.164 (Second Helvetic Confession): “But in order that the minister may perform all these things better and more easily, it is especially required of him that he fear God, be constant in prayer, attend to spiritual reading, and in all things and at all times be watchful, and by a purity of life to let his light to shine before all men.”

W-2.2004: “.... Those responsible for teaching and preaching the Word have a special responsibility to ensure that in their personal worship they observe a discipline of reading from the fullness of Scripture.”

W-2.2007: “.... Preaching requires diligence and discernment in the study of Scripture, the discipline of daily prayer, cultivated sensitivity to events and issues affecting the lives of the people, and a consistent and personal obedience to Jesus Christ.”

W-5.1004: “The life of a Christian is empowered by grace, is expressed in obedience, and is shaped by discipline. God has given as means of grace the elements of worship to be used by households and by individuals as well as by congregations.”

W-5.2001: “Daily personal worship is a discipline for attending to God and accepting God’s grace. The daily challenge of discipleship requires the daily nurture of worship. Daily personal worship may occur in a gathered community of faith (*W-1.1006*; *W-1.3012*; *W-3.4000*), in households and families (*W-5.7000*), or in private. Scripture, prayer, self-offering, and commitments to service are elements of daily personal worship. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are by their nature communal, but preparing for and remembering these Sacraments are important in daily personal worship. An aspect of the discipline of daily personal worship is finding the times and places where one can focus on God’s presence, hear God’s Word, and respond to God’s grace in prayer, self-offering, and commitment to service.”

W-5.5004–.5005: “Giving has always been a mark of Christian commitment and discipleship. The ways in which a believer uses God’s gifts of material goods, personal abilities, and time should reflect a faithful response to God’s self-giving in Jesus Christ and Christ’s call to minister to and share with others in the world. Tithing is a primary expression of the Christian discipline of stewardship. (*W-1.3030*; *W-2.500*)

“Those who follow the discipline of Christian stewardship will find themselves called to lives of simplicity, generosity, honesty, hospitality, compassion, receptivity, and concern for the earth and God’s creatures. (*W-7.500*)”

W-6.2006: “The primary standard and resource for the nurture of the church is the Word of God in Scripture. The central occasion for nurture in the church is the Service for the Lord’s Day, when the Word is proclaimed and the Sacraments are celebrated. All members of the community, from oldest to youngest, are encouraged to be present and to participate. . . .”

Examples

- *An elder always takes his ten-year-old daughter to Sunday School and returns home to read the Sunday paper and drink a cup of coffee*
- *A minister becomes so wrapped up in church responsibilities that she drops her daily personal time for prayer and study.*

- + *A deacon who teaches the high school Sunday School class leads the class in establishing a recycling program.*
- + *When an elder's son asks why they say prayers every night before they go to sleep, she explains why Christians pray and the variety of prayers she says each day.*

I.2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;

References

Exodus 20:16: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

Ephesians 4:15: "...speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"

Ephesians 4:25: "So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another."

Colossians 3:9–10: "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator."

G-1.0304: "That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness, according to our Savior's rule, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' And that no opinion can be either more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a man's opinions are. On the contrary, we are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty. Otherwise, it would be of no consequence either to discover truth or to embrace it."

Examples

- *When a conflict arises in a church, the minister tells only partial truths and withholds some of the relevant facts to avoid taking appropriate responsibility for his actions.*
- *An elder with access to the church's tax exempt identification number uses it for his personal benefit.*
- + *A minister puts the wrong date in publicity for a church-wide dinner. Instead of blaming the error on the church secretary, she accepts responsibility for her mistake.*
- + *A deacon discovers an error in his favor on his bill at the hardware store and returns to the store to correct the mistake.*

I.3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;

References

Genesis 21:22–34: Story of the covenant of Abraham with Abimelech.

Exodus 20:14: "You shall not commit adultery."

Exodus 20:17: ". . . you shall not covet your neighbor's wife. . . ."

Matthew 19:4–6: "He answered, 'Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"?' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'"

Hebrews 13:4: "Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."

C-6.123 (Westminster Confession of Faith): [Re: keeping covenants]

"An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation. It cannot oblige to sin; but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt: nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics or infidels."

C-6.131 (Westminster Confession of Faith): "Christian marriage is an institution ordained of God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, established and sanctified for the happiness and welfare of mankind, into which spiritual and physical union one man

and one woman enter, cherishing a mutual esteem and love, bearing with each other's infirmities and weaknesses, comforting each other in trouble, providing in honesty and industry for each other and for their household, praying for each other, and living together the length of their days as heirs of the grace of life." See also *G-6.0106b*.

C-9.47 (Confession of 1967): "... Man's perennial confusion about the meaning of sex has been aggravated in our day by the availability of new means for birth control and the treatment of infection, by the pressures of urbanization, by the exploitation of sexual symbols in mass communication, and by world overpopulation. The church, as the household of God, is called to lead men out of this alienation into the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ. Reconciled to God, each person has joy in and respect for his own humanity and that of other persons; a man and woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life, and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality. The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by man when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time."

G-6.0106b: "Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament."

[An amendment is before the presbyteries that would revise the language of this section. This reference will reflect the current constitutional language.]

Examples

- *A minister regularly promises to do more than is humanly possible, undercutting the credibility of the office and leading people to see her interest in them as shallow and short-lived.*
- + *An elder who finds himself attracted to a member of a committee begins marriage counseling with his wife in order to strengthen his marriage.*
- + *A single minister discusses with her session the need for an office door with a window so that counseling sessions can be confidential yet observed.*
- + *A Stephen Ministries Committee decides to make home visits in teams after one of their Stephen Ministers is met by parishioner wearing a swimming suit.*

I.4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;

References

Exodus 23:9: "You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

Leviticus 19:15: "You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor."

Matthew 25:37-40: "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

Mark 12:28-31: "One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, 'Which commandment is the first of all?' Jesus answered, 'The first is, "Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.' " See also *Matthew 19:19 and 22:39, Romans 13:9, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8-9*.

Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.'"

1 Corinthians 11:19–22: “Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?”

C-7.232 (Larger Catechism):

“Q.122. What is the sum of the six Commandments which contain our duty to man?”

“A. The sum of the six Commandments which contain our duty to man is, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do to others what we would have them to do to us.”

C-8.19–20 (Barmen Declaration): “ ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant.’ (Matt. 20:25, 26)

“The various offices in the Church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation.”

C-9.44 (Confession of 1967): “God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love, he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore, the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellowmen, however, subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith they profess.”

C-9.46 (Confession of 1967): “. . . A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.”

G-6.0304: “It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge. Together with the pastor, they should encourage the people in the worship and service of God, equip and renew them for their tasks within the church and for their mission in the world, visit and comfort and care for the people, with special attention to the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those who are oppressed.”

Examples

- *A minister spends so much time with members whom he particularly enjoys that he neglects pastoral care for the part of the congregation towards whom he feels less affinity.*
- *A session makes decisions favored by more wealthy/active/powerful members of the church at the expense of less noticeable members.*
- + *A minister makes an effort to talk with other members of presbytery with whom she disagrees.*
- + *An elder on the personnel committee meets weekly for coffee with the congregation’s obnoxious custodian to provide moral support during the custodian’s divorce.*

I.5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;

References

Exodus 20:8–10: “Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work . . .”

Exodus 20:12: “Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”

Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

C-9.47 (Confession of 1967): See I.3. above.

Examples

- *A minister becomes so absorbed in local school politics that he stops giving adequate pastoral care and leadership in developing church programs.*
- + *A deacon negotiates with her family to schedule one dinner hour a week organized around Scripture, prayer, and reflection on family life before anyone flees to the Internet.*
- + *A session discusses the balance of responsibilities the minister carries, so that the session understands her work and the demands on her time and attention. The elders covenant to share in the ministry more fully, expanding their understanding of ordination and providing the minister adequate time to have meals with family, engage in regular exercise, participate in a hobby or sport, and maintain a Sabbath.*
- + *A church secretary asks the session for permission to take a church administration course offered by the continuing education department at a local seminary in order to update her skills and get some new ideas.*

I.6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;

References

Exodus 20:15: “You shall not steal.”

Proverbs 20:1: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray is not wise.”

Proverbs 23:29–35: “Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger late over wine, those who keep trying mixed wines. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last, it bits like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. ‘They struck me,’ you will say, ‘but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.’”

1 Corinthians 3:16–17: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”

Galatians 5:13–15: “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”

C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism):

“Q.141. What are the duties required in the Eighth Commandment?”

“A. The duties required in the Eighth Commandment are: truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man; rendering to everyone his due; restitution of goods unlawfully detained from the right owners thereof; giving and lending freely, according to our abilities, and the necessities of others; moderation of our judgments, wills, and affections, concerning worldly goods; a provident care and study to get, keep, use, and dispose of those things which are necessary and convenient for the sustentation of our nature, and suitable to our condition; a lawful calling, and a diligence in it; frugality; avoiding unnecessary lawsuits, and suretyship, or other like engagements; and an endeavor by all just and lawful means to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own.

“Q.142. What are the sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment?”

“A. The sins forbidden in the Eighth Commandment besides the neglect of duties required, are: theft, robbery, man-stealing, and receiving anything that is stolen; fraudulent dealing; . . . injustice and unfaithfulness in contracts between man and man, or in matters of trust; . . . all other unjust or sinful ways of taking or withholding from our neighbor what belongs to him, or of enriching ourselves; covetousness, inordinate prizing and affecting worldly goods; distrustful and distracting cares and studies in getting, keeping, and using them; envying at the prosperity of others; as likewise . . . we do unduly prejudice our own outward estate; and defrauding ourselves of the due use and comfort of that estate which God hath given us.”

G-6.0106a: “Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the church.”

cf: *Freedom and Substance Abuse. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993), 2f, (Minutes, 1993, Part I, p. 762)*:

“Three principles guide this exploration of substance abuse.

“(1) God wills wholeness for each person, and wills the healthy interdependence of family and friends, congregation and community; rather than the loneliness and alienation of dependency.

“(2) The use of mind-altering substances is to be judged by their effect on health, creativity, reason, conscience, and respect for self and others.

“(3) Reformed theology calls on believers as individuals, households, congregations, denomination, and participant in society to accept social responsibility for substance dependency and its public consequences.”

Examples

- *A minister continually yells at his inexperienced secretary when she doesn't "read his mind" and do exactly what he thought she should do.*
- *An elder logs onto a sexually explicit web site each night, gradually increasing his time online.*
- + *A minister takes education opportunities to develop supervision skills to foster growth and professionalism in the staff.*
- + *A personnel committee of a session organizes an intervention for an alcoholic minister of music in which members of the committee, family, and choir participate.*

I.7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and

References

Exodus 20:16: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

Leviticus 19:16: “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people . . .”

Proverbs 20:19: “A gossip reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a babbler.”

2 Timothy 2:16–17: “Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene . . .”

James 4:11–12: “Do not speak evil against one another, brothers and sisters. Whoever speaks evil against another or judges another, speaks evil against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?”

1 Peter 2:1: “Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander.”

C-7.254–.255 (Larger Catechism): See also *C-4.112 (Heidelberg Catechism)*.

“Q. 144. What are the duties required in the Ninth Commandment?”

“A. The duties required in the Ninth Commandment are: the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors, loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocence; a ready receiving of good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatters, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requireth; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

“Q. 145. What are the sins forbidden in the Ninth Commandment?”

“A. The sins forbidden in the Ninth Commandment are: all prejudicing of the truth, and the good name of our neighbors as well as our own, especially in public judicature; . . . speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling; . . .”

G-1.0304: See I.2. above.

Examples

- *A minister repeats a story about the mayor without checking the facts.*

- *An elder perpetuates an unverified rumor about misuse of money by the denomination.*
- *A member yells, swears, and calls the minister names in order to intimidate the minister into a particular action.*
- *A minister talks negatively about the chair of a committee who won't acquiesce to the minister's wishes.*
- + *A recently ordained elder attempts to dispel unfounded rumors about the personal life of the moderator of the property committee when a conflict develops over a building renovation.*

I.8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

References

Psalms 51: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions," et seq.

Proverbs 28:13: "No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

Matthew 18:21–22: "Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy times seven.'"

Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves." See also *Proverbs 22:4*, *1 Peter 5:5–6*.

James 1:21: "Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls."

James 5:16: "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."

1 John 1:8–9: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

C-4.088–.089 (Heidelberg Catechism): See also *C-4.090–.091*.

"Q. 88. How many parts are there to the true repentance or conversion of man?"

"A. Two: the dying of the old self and the birth of the new."

"Q. 89. What is the dying of the old self?"

"A. Sincere sorrow over our sins and more and more to hate them and to flee from them."

C-7.254–.255 (Larger Catechism): See I.7. above.

C-6.086 (Westminster Confession of Faith):

"As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof, upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy: so he that scandalizeth his brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended; who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him."

C-9.21 (Confession of 1967):

"The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis in the life of mankind. His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope for men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed. In this experience, the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to men, moves them to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ."

Examples

- *A minister threatens to sue whenever she disagrees with the actions of presbytery concerning her behavior in the pastorate and the possible dissolution of her pastoral relationship.*
- *A trustee refuses to acknowledge mistakes, blaming them on the financial secretary.*

- + *A minister organizes a feedback group to assist in his growth and development and help him see past his blind spots.*
- + *A member apologizes for unkind words, mistaken statements, or failure to follow through on task.*

II

I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry.

References

Joshua 7:19: “Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.’ ”

Psalms 69:5: “O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.”

I John 1:5–7: “. . . God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” See also *Ephesians 5:8–12*.

G-1.0303: “That our blessed Savior, for the edification of the visible Church, which is his body, hath appointed officers, not only to preach the gospel and administer the Sacraments, but also to exercise discipline, for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, and upon the whole Church, in whose name they act, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous, observing, in all cases, the rules contained in the Word of God.”

Therefore I will:

II.1. Preach, teach and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;

References

Leviticus 19:15: See I.4. above.

2 Samuel 12: Story of Nathan’s encounter with David, the king regarding Bathsheba, at v. 7: “Nathan said to David, ‘You are the man! Thus says the Lord . . .’ ”

Jeremiah 26: “Jeremiah’s Prophecies in the Temple.” See especially vs. 14–15: “But as for me, here I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the Lord sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.” See also *Jeremiah 28*, story of Jeremiah and the yokes of wood and iron.

Acts 10:34: See I.4. above. See also *James 2:8–9*.

Acts, Chapters 24–26: Story of Paul’s trial in Jerusalem and imprisonment in Caesarea. See especially 26:22–23: “To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

1 Peter 3:13–18: “Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God’s will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God.”

C-7.269 (Larger Catechism):

“Q.159. How is the Word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?”

“A. They that are called to labor in the ministry of the Word are to preach sound doctrine, diligently, in season, and out of season, plainly, not in the enticing word of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; faithfully, making

known the whole counsel of God. . . .”

G-6.0304: “It is the duty of elders, individually and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation committed to their charge. . . . They should cultivate their ability to teach the Bible and may be authorized to supply places which are without the regular ministry of the Word and Sacrament.”

G-6.0402: “It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress. They shall assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the session.”

G-14.0801c: “When a presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a commissioned lay pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in (1)–(6) below.”

Examples

- *A minister fails to address a particular issue from the pulpit even though the text and context warrant it because she knows it will offend a member of the congregation.*
- *A minister does not express his opinion openly regarding local pollution because he pastors a church in a small company town.*
- + *A deacon risks addressing racism and poverty in his affluent Anglo congregation even though he suspects the challenge will not be welcome.*
- + *An elder defends a person under her supervision from racist attacks from the elders’s own supervisor.*

II.2.Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;

References

Genesis 38: Story of Judah and Tamar.

Genesis 39: Story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife.

Psalms 55:20: “My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me. . . .”

Matthew 26:48–49: “Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.’ At once he came up to Jesus and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed him.”

C-4.105:

“Q.105. What does God require in the sixth commandment?”

“A. That I am not to abuse, hate, injure, or kill my neighbor, either with thought, or by word or gesture, much less by deed, whether by myself or through another, but to lay aside all desire for revenge; and that I do not harm myself or willfully expose myself to danger. This is why the authorities are armed with the means to prevent murder.”

G-3.0101b: “God liberated the people of Israel from oppression; God covenanted with Israel to be their God and they to be God’s people, that they might do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with the Lord; God confronted Israel with the responsibilities of this covenant, judging the people for their unfaithfulness while sustaining them by divine grace.”

cf. *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly (1993) (Minutes, 1993, Part I, p. 572), Section II.B.2, Standards of Conduct*:

“Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation 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 content 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.”

Examples

- *A single minister has sexual relationships with a single member of his congregation.*

- *A minister of pastoral care whose primary role is counseling fails to arrange for regular supervision.*
- *A male head of staff begins each staff meeting with a brief devotional period, then transitions into the business of the meeting by telling an off-color joke. The nervous laughter of the staff (both male and female) registers their disapproval of this behavior. The head of staff considers the laughter as reinforcement and refuses to stop the behavior.*
- + *A single minister who desires to date a member of the congregation arranges for spiritual direction and counseling to explore the meaning of that desire.*
- + *A church's youth director arranges for an adequate number of male and female adult chaperones for every youth trip event.*

II.3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;

References

2 Samuel, Chapters 11 and 12: Story of David and Bathsheba.

Matthew 20:25–28: “But Jesus called them to him and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.’”

Matthew 23:8, 10–12: “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. . . . Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

1 Peter 5:1–3: “Now as an elder myself and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed, I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.”

C-5.157 (Second Helvetic Confession):

“THE POWER OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH. Now, therefore, it is fitting that we also say something about the power and duty of the ministers of the Church. Concerning this power some have argued industriously, and to it have subjected everything on earth, even the greatest things, and they have done so contrary to the commandment of the Lord who has prohibited dominion for his disciples and has highly commended humility (Luke 22:24 ff.; Matt. 18:3 f.; 20:25 ff.) There is, indeed, another power that is pure and absolute, which is called the power of right. According to this power all things in the whole world are subject to Christ, who is Lord of all, as he himself has testified when he said: ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’ (Matthew 28:18), and again, ‘I am the first and the last, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Hades and Death’ (Rev. 1:18); also, ‘He has the key of David, which opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens’ (Rev. 3:7).”

C-9.40 (Confession of 1967): “. . . Different orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A presbyterian polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition.”

G-1.0307: “That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declarative; that is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no Church governing body ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God. Now though it will easily be admitted that all synods and councils may err, through the frailty inseparable from humanity, yet there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made, and common to all who profess the gospel, although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be lodged with fallible men.”

G-6.0102: “One responsibility of membership in the church is the election of officers who are ordained to fulfill particular functions. The existence of these offices in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church. These ordained officers differ from other members in function only.”

G-11.0403b: “The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.”

G-14.0405b(5), G-14.0207e: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

W-7.4002: “Reconciliation: Justice and Peace:

“Justice is the order God sets in human life for fair and honest dealing and for giving rights to those who have no power to claim rights for themselves. The biblical vision of doing justice calls for

- “a. dealing honestly in personal and public business,
- “b. exercising power for the common good,
- “c. supporting people who seek the dignity, freedom, and respect that they have been denied,
- “d. working for fair laws and just administration of the law,
- “e. welcoming the stranger in the land,
- “f. seeking to overcome the disparity between rich and poor,
- “g. bearing witness against political oppression and exploitation,
- “h. redressing wrongs against individuals, groups, and peoples in the church, in this nation, and in the whole world.”

Examples

- *A head of staff calls upon others to take assignments without giving time to prepare, changes schedule without warning, does tasks that fall in others’ areas of responsibilities.*
- + *The chair of the nominating committee keeps before the committee and the session the importance of extending opportunities to serve, to be looking for “Who is not here.”*
- + *A minister sees that the new chair of the property committee is insecure with her new responsibility and devotes special time for leadership training, enabling her to do this job well.*
- + *A minister gathers information for the session and invites outside resource persons to assist the session regarding how to invest a large bequest.*

II.4.Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;

References

Matthew 6:24: “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” See also *Luke 16:13*.

G-6.0202a: “. . . When a minister of the Word and Sacrament is called as pastor or associate pastor of a particular church or churches, she or he is to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commend the gospel to all persons and that communicate its joy and its justice.”

Examples

- *An elder recommends buying insurance coverage whose premiums are higher than those of another agent because she is related to the first agent.*
- *A minister tries to persuade an auto mechanic member of the congregation to provide free service for her car.*
- *A minister has a joint discretionary bank account with the church that no one is permitted to review.*
- + *A minister whose spouse owns a local business encourages her not to solicit business or clients from the congregation.*
- + *A Committee on Ministry member recuses himself from the committee’s discussion of a conflict in the congregation where he is pastor.*

II.5.Refrain from exploiting relationships within the covenant community for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;

References

2 *Samuel 11*: David and Bathsheba story.

Psalms 55:20: “My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me.”

C-5.157 (*Second Helvetic Confession*):

“THE POWER OF MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH.” See II.3. above.

C-9.47 (*Confession of 1967*): See I.3. above.

D-10.0401:

“b. 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 office or position.”

Cf: *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures* at II.2. above.

Examples

- *A minister requests loans and gifts from a parishioner, i.e., an auto loan, tickets to sports events, or use of a vacation home.*
- *A minister uses a church member's business connections to lobby the chairperson of a pastor nominating committee in another church where the minister is seeking a new call.*
- + *A tent-making minister refrains from soliciting business for his secular employment from members of the church.*
- + *An elder, acting as youth group sponsor, sensitively declines sexual invitation by teenager from an abusive home and assists teen to find counselor.*

II.6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;

References

Proverbs 11:13: “A gossip goes about telling secrets, but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a confidence.”

Proverbs 25:9–10: “Argue your case with your neighbor directly, and do not disclose another's secret; or else someone who hears you will bring shame upon you, and your ill repute will have no end.”

C-7.254–.255 (*Larger Catechism*): See I.7. above.

cf: *A Resolution on Clergy Confidentiality*. Adopted by the 199th General Assembly (1987)

“... the 199th General Assembly (1987) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

“1. Reaffirms the historic position of the Presbyterian Church that it is a spiritual and professional duty of clergy to hold in confidence matters revealed to them in their counseling, caring, and confessional ministries, and that being called to testify in a court of law does not negate this sacred obligation, the law of God being prior to the laws of human courts.”

D-9.0101: “A member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who feels injured by rumor or gossip may request an inquiry for vindication by submitting to the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery a clear narrative and statement of alleged facts.”

Examples

- *A minister uses confidential information as thinly veiled sermon illustrations.*

- *An elder tells a church member about the personal problems shared during a session's prayer time.*
- + *At the presbytery's request, a session maintains confidentiality concerning allegations of embezzlement by the pastor until the presbytery's investigation process is complete.*
- + *A minister breaks the bond of confidentiality when he knows a child is abused and at risk for suicide.*

II.7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;

References

Romans 12:3–8: “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.”

Ephesians 4:7, 11–12: “But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. . . . The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, . . .” See also [I Corinthians 3:6–7](#).

C-5.151 (Second Helvetic Confession):

“ORDINATION. And those who are elected are to be ordained by the elders with public prayer and laying on of hands. Here we condemn all those who go off of their own accord, being neither chosen, sent, nor ordained (Jer. ch 23). We condemn unfit ministers and those not furnished with the necessary gifts of a pastor.”

G-6.0105: “Both men and women shall be eligible to hold church offices. When women and men, by God’s providence and gracious gifts, are called by the church to undertake particular forms of ministry, the church shall help them to interpret their call and to be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others. As persons discover the forms of ministry to which they are called, and as they are called to new forms, they and the church shall pray for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit upon them and upon the mission of the Church.”

W-1.1005a: “. . . The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, orders and empowers the new community of the covenant. To each member, that Spirit gives gifts for building up the body of Christ and for equipping it for the work of ministry.”

W-6.3003–3004: “Some in the community of faith who have special gifts and appropriate training are called in the church to the particular ministry of pastoral counseling with individuals and with groups formed for this purpose.

“In certain circumstances the ministry of pastoral care may call for referral to specialized ministers or others qualified by credentials and faith-perspective to provide appropriate counseling or therapy.”

Examples

- *A minister advises members on their financial investments and retirement planning.*
- *A minister continues to counsel a member even though the person's needs are beyond the minister's level of competence.*
- + *A minister declines to serve as executor of a member's estate.*
- + *A church preschool director refers parents of deeply troubled toddler to child psychologist.*

II.8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;

References

Exodus 20:15: “You shall not steal.”

Proverbs 20:17: “Bread gained by deceit is sweet, but afterward the mouth will be full of gravel.”

Romans 13:7: “Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”

Galatians 6:3: “For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves.”

C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism): See I.6. above. See also *C-4.110 (Heidelberg Catechism)*.

Examples

- *A minister purchases books of published sermons and preaches them as her own, and uses prayers for worship published by others without citing the source.*
- *A music director photocopies music for the choir’s use.*
- *A minister censured by presbytery for sexual misconduct deletes the final page required page of his Personal Information Form (certifying no sexual misconduct findings or charges) as he seeks a new call.*
- *A church member who is a therapist is found to have misrepresented his professional qualifications.*
- + *An elder who is a church educator gives proper credit for copyrighted intergenerational materials and lesson plans instead of using them as if they are her own.*

II.9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness which might compromise my ministry;

References

Exodus 20:15: “You shall not steal.”

Proverbs 22:7: “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.”

Matthew 6:24 and *Luke 16:13*: See II.4. above.

Luke 12:29–31: “And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”

Romans 13:8: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

Hebrews 13:5: “Keep your lives from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ ”

C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism): See I.6. above.

Examples

- *A minister with heavy seminary debts and undergraduate guaranteed student loans defaults on the student loans and is later embarrassed by being pursued by the government for defaulting.*
- *A minister buys expensive furniture from a church member who owns a furniture store. When the minister moves to a new call, none of the debt has been satisfied and the store owner pursues collection through the new presbytery.*
- + *Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry makes financial management counseling and assistance with debt available as a part of its service to ministers. A minister with large debts seeks and accepts financial management counseling.*

II.10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;

References

Exodus 20:15: “You shall not steal.”

Luke 16:1–3, 10–13: “Then Jesus said to the disciples, ‘There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. So he summoned him and said to him, “What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.” . . . Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. . . . if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’ ”

I Corinthians 4:1–2: “Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.”

C-7.251–.252 (Larger Catechism): See I.6. above.

Examples

- *A wealthy church member learns that the minister has been enriching his family for five years with frequent thousand dollar gifts that the member had intended for the church’s emergency fund.*
- *An elder who serves as treasurer pays her personal bills with church funds.*
- + *At the end of the year, a minister discovers that she was overpaid for continuing education expenses and returns the money to the church.*
- + *A minister starts an accounting system for the pastor’s discretionary fund with accountability to the finance committee.*

II.11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;

References

Exodus 23:8: “You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.”

Ecclesiastes 7:7: “Surely oppression makes the wise foolish, and a bribe corrupts the heart.”

Acts 4:32–5:11: See story of Ananias and Sapphira’s sale of land, concealing their holdback of part of the proceeds forwarded to the congregation.

I John 2:15–16: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world.”

C-7.251 (Larger Catechism): See I.6. above.

G-10.0102n: [The session . . . has the responsibility and power]

“to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including . . . personnel policies, and the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff . . .”

G-11.0103f: [The presbytery . . . has the responsibility and power]

“to provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of . . . equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

G-12.0102f: [Synod . . . has the responsibility and power]

“to consult with its member presbyteries with regard to . . . equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

G-13.0201i: [. . . General Assembly . . . Council . . . shall have the following responsibilities:] “to consult with the synods with regard to equitable compensation, personnel policies, and fair employment practices;”

Examples

- *Without disclosing his sources, a minister accepts expensive gifts from wealthy members and friends of the church, such as season tickets to sports events, membership in the local country club, all-expenses paid cruises, use of vacation houses, new cars, and payment of private school or college tuition for his children.*
- + *A minister receives two frequent flier tickets as a gift from a church member in order to take a winter vacation in a warm climate. When negotiating with the session for the time away, the minister discloses the gift of the tickets.*
- + *A presbytery staff member trained as a certified leader in a program area is asked to help a congregation in another presbytery. He discusses with the personnel committee whether an honorarium may be received, and what limitations should apply.*
- + *A tent-making minister entering a new presbytery negotiates the secular part of employment with the committee on ministry and shares the details with the session so that all parties are aware of the extent of this employment and its compensation.*

II.12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;

References

Joshua 7: Story of Achan. See especially vs.19–20: “Then Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and make confession to him. Tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.’”

“And Achan answered Joshua, ‘It is true! I am the one who sinned against the Lord God of Israel. This is what I did.’”

2 Corinthians 5:19–20: “. . . in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13: “But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”

C-5.165 (Second Helvetic Confession):

“DISCIPLINE. And since discipline is an absolute necessity in the Church and excommunication was once used in the time of the early fathers, and there were ecclesiastical judgments among the people of God, wherein this discipline was exercised by wise and godly men, it also falls to ministers to regulate this discipline for edification, according to the circumstances of the time, public state, and necessity. At all times and in all places the rule is to be observed that everything is to be done for edification, decently and honorably, without oppression and strife. For the apostle testifies that authority in the Church was given to him by the Lord for building up and not for destroying (II Cor. 10:8). And the Lord himself forbade the weeds to be plucked up in the Lord’s field, because there would be danger lest the wheat also be plucked up with it. (Matt. 13:29f.)”

C-5.167 (Second Helvetic Confession): See Above, Introduction, “Commit myself to the following ethical standards.”

C-6.109 (Westminster Confession of Faith): “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.” See also *G-1.0301*.

G-1.0302: “That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in this case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.”

G-1.0305: “. . . while under the conviction of the above principle we think it necessary to make effectual provision that all who are admitted as teachers be sound in the faith, we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” See also *G-1.0307* at II.3. above.

G-2.0200: See Introduction above, “Commit myself to the following ethical standards.”

G-6.0108:

“a. It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve in it as officers shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in The Book of Confessions and the Form of Government. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.

“b. It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the governing body in which he or she serves. (G-1.0301; G-1.0302)”

G-14.0405b(3) (5), G-14.0207c, e: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

D-1.0101: “Church discipline is the church’s exercise of authority given by Christ, both in the direction of guidance, control, and nurture of its members and in the direction of constructive criticism of offenders. Thus, the purpose of discipline is to honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ; to preserve the purity of the church by nourishing the individual within the life of the believing community; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration; to restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and to secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of proceedings. In all respects, members are to be accorded procedural safeguards and due process, and it is the intention of these rules so to provide.”

Examples

- *An elder whose viewpoint does not prevail at a session meeting threatens to resign unless the decision is reversed.*
- *In a triennial visit, the Committee on Ministry discovers that a minister is making improper use of a pastor’s discretionary fund. The minister refuses to discuss this matter with COM, insisting that this is purely between the minister and the session.*
- + *A minister refuses to leave the session meeting during a triennial visit, seeing no value in giving the elders a chance to discuss anything on their minds which they might be uncomfortable saying in her presence.*
- + *When asked to conduct a private baptism for the grandchild of a church member, a minister uses The Book of Confessions to explain that baptism is an act of the covenant community to be conducted in the context of corporate worship. Even when the member suggests that no one needs to know about the baptism and offers a substantial honorarium, the minister holds firm.*

II.13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;

References

Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel.” See also *Neh. 8:13*.

Psalms 32:8–9: “I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Do not be like a horse or a mule without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.”

Proverbs 9:9: “Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous, and they will gain in learning.”

Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.”

Titus 1:9: “He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.”

Re mentoring: Note especially Paul's relation to Timothy, as expressed in *1 Timothy*:

4:16: "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers."

6:20–21: "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith.

"Grace be with you."

2 *Timothy* 3:10–11; 14–17: "Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. . . . But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work."

C-9.49 (Confession of 1967): ". . . effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world."

G-10.0102k: [re: the session's responsibility and power]: "to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session;"

G-11.0103f: "The presbytery is responsible for the mission and government of the church throughout its geographical district. It therefore has the responsibility and power . . . to provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of leadership development, church officer training, . . ."

G-14.0305j(2): "By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament by . . . presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth . . ."

G-14.0801d: "The commissioned lay pastor shall work under the supervision of the presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served or through the committee on ministry. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor."

Cf. Minutes of the 204th General Assembly (1992), ACC Opinion L, paragraphs 21.257–258, p. 323.

"*Request 89-6* asks whether elders and deacons who have been previously ordained and, at a later time, reelected to be active officers may be required by session to be trained or examined for their new service.

"Session may require such training or examination under *Book of Order*, G-10.0102j that lists as one of the responsibilities and powers of a session 'to engage in a process for education and mutual growth of the members of the session.' "

Examples

- *A minister fails to participate in any continuing education program, merely spending his study leave money on books for his library.*
- *A minister diverts continuing education funds to vacation activities.*
- + *An elder participates in presbytery-sponsored lay spirituality training events.*
- + *A presbytery designs a mentoring program for every pastor entering the presbytery.*

II.14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office, speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;

References

Deuteronomy 34:9: "Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses."

2 Kings 2:1–14: Elisha inherits Elijah's mantle.

Romans 13:7: “Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due.”

1 Corinthians 3:3–9: “. . . For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? For when one says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ and another, ‘I belong to Apollos,’ are you not merely human?”

“What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession):

“THE NATURE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. Paul explains simply and briefly what we are to think of the ministers of the New Testament or of the Christian Church, and what we are to attribute to them. ‘This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God’ (I Cor. 4:1). Therefore, the apostle wants us to think of ministers as ministers. Now the apostle calls them *uphretaV*, rowers, who have their eyes fixed on the coxswain, and so men who do not live for themselves or according to their own will, but for others—namely, their masters, upon whose command they altogether depend. For in all his duties every minister of the Church is commanded to carry out only what he has received in commandment from his Lord, and not to indulge his own free choice. And in this case it is expressly declared who is the Lord, namely, Christ; to whom the ministers are subject in all the affairs of the ministry.”

G-14.0405b(5), (7), G-14.0207e and g: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

Examples

- *A minister talks openly about the mistakes her predecessor made and characterizes him as a poor pastor and administrator.*
- + *A new minister takes his predecessor to a lunch at which they agree that when a family in the church asks that previous pastor to conduct a wedding or funeral, the new pastor will conduct the service, assisted by the previous pastor.*
- + *A congregation celebrates the accomplishments of prior ministries at anniversaries of the church.*
- + *A former pastor is approached by members of the congregation complaining about the new pastor. The former refers the members back to their new pastor for candid conversation.*

****II.15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;**

References

1 Corinthians 3:3–9: See II.14. above.

C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession): See II.14. above.

G-11.0502: (Re: Committee on Ministry)

“f. It shall counsel with sessions regarding stated supplies, interim pastors, interim co-pastors, interim associate pastors, and temporary supplies when a church is without a pastor, and it shall provide lists of pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and qualified lay persons who have been trained and commissioned by the presbytery to supply vacant pulpits. Concurrence of the presbytery through its committee on ministry is required when a session invites an interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor as provided for in G-14.0513b and c. . . .

“i. It shall serve as an instrument of presbytery for promoting the peace and harmony of the churches, especially in regard to matters arising out of the relations between ministers and churches. . . .”

G-14.0405b(7), G-14.0207g: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

G-14.0605: “When any pastor or associate pastor retires, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect him or her as pastor emeritus or emerita, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after

consultation with the committee on ministry of the presbytery concerning the wisdom of this relationship for the peace of the church. This action shall be subject to the approval of presbytery, and may take effect upon the formal dissolution of the pastoral or associate pastoral relationship or anytime thereafter.”

Examples

- *A minister who moves from one church in a metropolitan area to another undermines the continuing ministry of her former parish by encouraging persons from that church to transfer their memberships to her new church.*
- *A minister moves seven hundred miles away from his former parish, but five years later continues to accept telephone calls from elders and to comment on issues before the session.*
- + *A minister whose retirement date is six months away declines to recommend names of interim pastors to the session as his replacement, telling the session that committee on ministry will provide them with such names.*
- + *On the last Sunday prior to leaving a call to become chaplain at a nearby hospital, a minister reads to the congregation the presbytery’s ethics policy for ministers who leave a call. The departing minister assures the members of his love for each of them and indicates that all member contact by him will cease.*

****II.16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and**

References

I Corinthians 3:3–9: See II.14. above.

C-5.155 (Second Helvetic Confession): See II.14. above.

G-14.0405b(5): See ordination vows above at Introduction.

G-14.0606: “Former pastors, associate pastors, and assistant pastors may officiate at services for members of a particular church, or at services within its properties, only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session.”

Examples

- *A minister leaves youth work in a Presbyterian church to work for a nearby church of another denomination in direct competition for the youth of the community.*
- *A minister agrees to do wedding for charter member’s granddaughter without first talking with his successor and being invited to participate.*
- + *A minister from a small town is in the city making hospital calls when she discovers that an elder whom she knows from a presbytery committee is in the hospital. She contacts the elder’s pastor before stopping in for a brief pastoral visit with the elder.*
- + *A minister calls her successor before agreeing to participate in the funeral of a close friend in that congregation.*

****II.17. Consult with the committee on ministry in presbytery of residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.**

References

I Corinthians 3:19–23: “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their craftiness,’ and again, ‘The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’ So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—All belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.”

G-11.0412b: “Honorably retired ministers are encouraged to transfer their membership to the presbytery in which they live and the presbytery is encouraged to receive them. If they are active in presbytery, additional elders may be elected to keep a

proper balance between ministers and lay persons at the presbytery meetings. (G-11.0101b) Presbyteries should encourage honorably retired ministers to use their experience and skills in creative and meaningful ways. Those who are able and willing to reengage in ministry and service to others should relate to a particular church or presbytery. For those who do not or cannot, the presbytery should provide nurture and support.”

G-14.0606: See II.16. above.

Examples

- *A retired minister moves to a new community and strikes up a friendship with the associate pastor of the church where he worships. He is drawn into becoming the associate’s advocate as the committee on ministry and the session negotiate with the associate pastor about leaving the call.*
- *A retired minister joins a holistic health clinic as its “spiritual advisor” without contacting the committee on ministry.*
- + *A retired minister who moved to a new presbytery approaches committee on ministry to offer his services for supply preaching and for moderating sessions of churches without an installed pastor.*
- + *A retired minister requests permission to act as the chaplain in a retirement home located within a presbytery that is not his presbytery of membership.*

III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the church universal.

References

Galatians 6:9–10: “So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest-time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

C-5.127 (Second Helvetic Confession):

“PARTS OR FORMS OF THE CHURCH. The Church is divided into different parts or forms; not because it is divided or rent asunder in itself, but rather because it is distinguished by the diversity of the numbers that are in it.”

G-4.0200–.0203: “The unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it. The Church is fellowship of believers which seeks the enlargement of the circle of faith to include all people and is never content to enjoy the benefits of Christian community for itself alone.

“There is one Church. As the Bible speaks of the one body which is the Church living under the one Spirit of God known through Christ, it reminds us that we have ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all.’ (Ephesians 4:5–6)

“Visible oneness, by which a diversity of persons, gifts, and understandings is brought together, is an important sign of the unity of God’s people. It is also a means by which that unity is achieved. Further, while divisions into different denominations do not destroy this unity, they do obscure it for both the Church and the world. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), affirming its historical continuity with the whole Church of Jesus Christ, is committed to the reduction of that obscurity and is willing to seek and to maintain communion and community with all other branches of the one, catholic Church. (G-15.0000)”

G-15.0101: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seeks to manifest more visibly the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ and will be open to opportunities for conversation, cooperation, and action with other ecclesiastical bodies and secular groups.”

Therefore I will:

III.1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;

References

Ephesians 4:4–6: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

C-5.126 (Second Helvetic Confession):

“ONLY ONE CHURCH FOR ALL TIMES. And since there is always but only one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, Jesus the Messiah, and one Shepherd of the whole flock, one Head of this body, and, to conclude, one Spirit, one salvation, one faith, one Testament or covenant, it necessarily follows that there is only one Church. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. We, therefore, call this Church catholic because it is universal, scattered through all parts of the world, and extended unto all times, and is not limited to any times or places. . . .”

C-9.40 (Confession of 1967): See II.3. above.

G-1.0303: See II, Introduction above.

G-4.0200–.0203: See Introduction to Section III, above.

G-15.0101: See Introduction to Section III, above.

G-14.0405b (7), (9), G-14.0207g, i: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

Examples

- *A minister votes in favor of the presbytery’s budget, then recommends to the session that it withhold funds from the presbytery.*
- + *A minister who serves as interim pastor in churches around the country changes presbytery membership each time in order to have closer accountability and better relationship with the presbytery in which each church is located.*
- + *A retired elder spends three months as a volunteer in mission.*
- + *An elder agrees to represent the presbytery at the regional council of churches meetings.*

III.2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;

References

1 Corinthians 12: 26–30: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. . . . Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13: See II.12. above.

C-6.186 (Westminster Confession of Faith): “By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers being vitally united to Christ, who is the head, are thus united one to another in the Church, which is his body. He calls and anoints ministers for their holy office, qualifies all other officers in the Church for their special work, and imparts various gifts and graces to its members. He gives efficacy to the Word and to the ordinances of the gospel. By him the Church will be preserved, increased, purified, and at last made perfectly holy in the presence of God.”

G-14.0405b(5), G-14.0207e: See ordination vows above at Introduction.

Examples

- *Some ministers develop a negative climate in presbytery by competing with, judging, and demeaning their colleagues.*
- + *A presbytery sponsors cluster support groups for ministers, elders, and other lay leaders.*
- + *Retired ministers and members-at-large in a presbytery voluntarily step forward to preach on occasion without honorarium so that each installed minister can have an occasional Sunday off.*
- + *An elder takes time to listen to the pain felt by a fellow elder over the direction of the congregation’s evangelism pro-*

gram.

III.3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations;

References

Exodus 20:17: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Matthew 7:12: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

C-7.256–.257:

“Q.146. Which is the Tenth Commandment?”

“A. The Tenth Commandment is, ‘Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s.’”

“Q.147. What are the duties required in the Tenth Commandment?”

“A. The duties required in the Tenth Commandment are: such a full contentment with our own condition, and such a charitable frame of the whole soul towards our neighbor, as that all our inward motions and affections touching him, tend unto and further all that good which is his.”

G-4.0104: “Each particular church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall be governed by this Constitution. Its officers are ministers of the Word and Sacrament, elders, and deacons. Its government and guidance are the responsibility of the session. It shall fulfill its responsibilities as the local unit of mission for the service of all people, for the upbuilding of the whole church, and for the glory of God.”

Examples

- *A minister calls on persons who are members of other congregations when they are hospitalized, develops a relationship with them, then encourages them to join his church.*
- + *An elder encourages an active member of another congregation to assume volunteer leadership positions in the church where that person is a member.*
- + *A minister leads session in cooperating with presbytery in new church development in nearby community, inviting members to transfer to the small organizing congregation.*
- + *A minister provides pastoral care for a member of a colleague’s congregation while the colleague is on vacation. She then gently discourages the member’s interest in transferring her membership, and consults with her colleague about the request.*

III.4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

References

Micah 6:8: [The Lord] “has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

C-9.41–.42 (Confession of 1967): “The church in its mission encounters the religions of men and in that encounter becomes conscious of its own human character as a religion. God’s revelation to Israel, expressed within Semitic culture, gave rise to the religion of the Hebrew people. God’s revelation in Jesus Christ called forth the response of Jews and Greeks and came to expression within Judaism and Hellenism as the Christian religion. The Christian religion, as distinct from God’s revelation of himself, has been shaped throughout its history by the cultural forms of its environment.

“The Christian finds parallels between other religions and his own and must approach all religions with openness and respect. Repeatedly God has used the insight of non-Christians to challenge the church to renewal. But the reconciling word of the gospel is God’s judgment upon all forms of religion, including the Christian. The gift of God in Christ is for all men. The church, therefore, is commissioned to carry the gospel to all men whatever their religion may be and even when they profess none.”

C-9.46 (Confession of 1967): “The reconciliation of man through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God’s good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world’s poor is the cause of his disciples. The church cannot condone poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding, or rapid expansion of populations. The church calls every man to use his abilities, his possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to him by God for the maintenance of his family and the advancement of the common welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise men’s hopes for better conditions and provide them with opportunity for a decent living. A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.”

G-3.0401:

“The Church is called:

“a. to a new openness to the presence of God in the Church and in the world, to more fundamental obedience, and to a more joyous celebration in worship and work;

“b. to a new openness to its own membership, by affirming itself as a community of diversity, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, and conditions, and by providing for inclusiveness as a visible sign of the new humanity;

“c. to a new openness to the possibilities and perils of its institutional forms in order to ensure the faithfulness and usefulness of these forms to God’s activity in the world;

“d. to a new openness to God’s continuing reformation of the Church ecumenical, that it might be a more effective instrument of mission in the world.”

G-15.0104: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will seek new opportunities for conversation and understanding with non-Christian religious bodies in order that interests and concerns may be shared and common action undertaken where compatible means and aims exist.”

G-15.0105: “The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will initiate and respond to approaches for conversation and common action with movements, organizations, and agencies of the business, educational, cultural, and civic communities that give promise of assistance toward accomplishing the mission of the Church in the world.”

W-7.4003: “There is no peace without justice. Wherever there is brokenness, violence, and injustice the people of God are called to peacemaking

“a. in the Church universal fragmented and separated by histories and cultures, in denominations internally polarized by mutual distrust, and in congregations plagued by dissension and conflict;

“b. in the world where nations place national security above all else, where the zealotry of religion, race, or ideology explodes in violence, and where the lust for getting and keeping economic or political power erupts in rioting or war;

“c. in communities racked by crime and fear, in schools and workplaces marked by vicious competition and rebellion against order, and in households and families divided against themselves, scarred by violence and paralyzed by fear.”

Examples

- *A minister refuses to participate in ministerial groups and community projects that include persons outside the Christian faith.*

- *An elder makes disparaging, negative comments about other Christian groups and other faith traditions.*

+ *A minister takes her turn as the volunteer police chaplain in her community.*

+ *An elder participates in a Presbyterian-related mission trip to the Middle East, visiting with both Muslim and Jewish communities.*

* The examples are intended to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

** These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

+ Indicates example of appropriate conduct.

- Indicates example of inappropriate conduct.

Abbreviations for Sources and References:

The Book of Confessions: C

Form of Government: G

Directory for Worship: W

Rules of Discipline: D

Translation of the Bible—New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND ITS PROCEDURES

I. Policy Statement

Initial _____

It is the policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (hereinafter referred to as PC(USA)) that all church members, church officers, non-member employees, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and entities of the church are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship at all times. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct are in violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, and also 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.

Distribution

Copies of this policy and its procedures shall be made available to all council and entity offices. It is intended as guidance for churches, mid-councils, and related entities and if properly implemented by them can be used by church members, church officers, employees, and volunteers. This is a policy of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), which governs and protects employees of the General Assembly Mission Council and the Office of the General Assembly. This policy and its procedures should be made available to persons who accuse others of misconduct, including those who are or claim to be victims of sexual misconduct and their families. Other councils of the PC(USA) may use this policy as a guide to develop their own policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct.

II. Standards of Conduct

... As [God] who called you is holy, be
holy yourselves in all your conduct;
... Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, ...
not under compulsion but willingly, ...
not for sordid gain but eagerly. ...
not lord it over those in your charge,
but be examples to the flock.

... You know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

1 Pet. 1:15; 5:2–3; Jas. 3:1, NRSV

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:

1. 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.
2. Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation 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 content 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.
3. 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.

Definitions

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; defined for this policy is as follows: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- a. 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;
- b. submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such an individual;
- c. 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

d. 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 is 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; is defined by 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.

III. Church Response to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

A. *Principles*

In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of the church should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible, the privacy of persons should be respected and confidentiality of communications should be maintained.

In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of the church should seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of sexual misconduct, and the families and communities of each.

The PC(USA) has jurisdiction over its members, officers, and employees such that if a member, officer, or employee is alleged to have committed an offense against Scripture or the PC(USA) Constitution, the church has the duty to inquire into the allegations and, if the allegations are proven, to correct the behavior of the member, officer, or employee and ensure the safety of others in the community. Allegations of sexual misconduct are always considered allegations of offense against Scripture or the PC(USA) Constitution that trigger the disciplinary processes of the PC(USA) set forth in the *Book of Order*. In the case of an active non-member who is employed or volunteers with the church, the individual will be covered by

the procedures of the written personnel policies of the council or entity.

If the person accused of sexual misconduct is no longer a member, officer, or employee of the PC(USA), but the conduct occurred while the person was acting on behalf of the PC(USA), the church does not have jurisdiction to correct the behavior, but it does have a duty to hear the allegations of offense and to take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm. The council may appoint an administrative committee or commission to hear the allegations of sexual misconduct. The council may also take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm through education and policy.

B. *Reporting Requirements*

1. *Reporting Sexual Misconduct*

A person needing to report that a member, officer, employee, or volunteer of the PC(USA) has committed sexual misconduct is encouraged to seek guidance from a PC(USA) teaching elder or ruling elder regarding filing the report.

Congregation: If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a member, ruling elder, deacon, volunteer, or employee of a congregation, the report of allegations should be made to the teaching elder, the clerk of session, or the chair of the personnel committee. If the accused is a member or officer of the church, the church will respond by using the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the accused is a nonmember employee or volunteer, the church will respond by using procedures set forth by the session of the congregation.

Presbytery: If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a teaching elder member, the report of allegations should be made to the stated clerk of the presbytery. If the report of allegations is placed in writing, the presbytery will respond by using the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is a volunteer or nonmember employee of the presbytery, the report of allegations may be made to any of the staff or volunteers of the presbytery. The presbytery will respond by using procedures set forth by policy or bylaws of the presbytery.

Higher Council or Entity of the General Assembly: If the person who is accused of committing sexual misconduct is an employee or volunteer of the higher council or entity, contact the council or entity directly for the appropriate person to receive the

report of allegations. The report of allegations may be made to any person with supervising capacity. The entity will respond by using procedures set forth by policy or bylaws of the entity.

2. *Receiving Reports of Sexual Misconduct*

Reports of allegations of sexual misconduct will occur in a variety of ways.

Because a council or entity cannot control to whom the victim of sexual misconduct will speak first, it is important that officers, employees, and persons highly visible to church members and visitors understand how reports of incidents are channeled to the proper person. The allegations may come from persons who have or who do not have a formal relationship with the PC(USA) and may be made to a variety of officers or leaders within the PC(USA). It is the duty of these officers to see that any allegation of sexual misconduct is reported appropriately keeping in mind the mandatory reporting requirements for allegations of child abuse.

Reports of allegations of sexual misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the victim, the accused, and the church. Reports of allegations should be dealt with as matters of highest confidentiality, both before and after they have been submitted to appropriate authorities as outlined below.

The first person to learn of an incident of sexual misconduct should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the victim or the accused unless the incident is divulged in the process of pastoral care, counseling, or a therapy session. If the victim is hesitant to talk to “higher authorities,” the person who has received the initial report has a special pastoral responsibility to build trust and willingness to speak with the accuser, lest the church be unable to respond because no one is able to give firsthand information.

The person receiving the initial report of allegations of sexual misconduct shall analyze the relationship of the person accused of sexual misconduct with the PC(USA) and shall make sure that the allegations of offense are filed with the council with jurisdiction over the person accused. This may be done by the person alleging harm or by any member of the PC(USA).

If the report is made orally, the person receiving the report of allegations should request that the person making the report of allegations place it in writing. A report of allegations of sexual misconduct in writing from a member of the PC(USA) alleging another member or officer of the PC(USA) committed an offense must be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If a clerk or stated clerk receives a report of allegations in writing from a nonmember of the PC(USA) alleging another member or officer of the PC(USA) committed sexual misconduct, the report also should be acted on according to the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. If the person who makes the report is unwilling or unable to place it in writing,

any member of the PC(USA) may make the written statement that will automatically trigger the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*.

3. *Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse*

All ruling elders, deacons, Certified Christian Educators, and teaching elders are required to report knowledge of child abuse to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities according to the *Book of Order*. The *Book of Order* requires that

- “Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse” (G-4.0302)

Further

“In the exercise of pastoral care, teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament) and ruling elders who have been commissioned by a presbytery to limited pastoral service (G-2.10), shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing care and all information relating to the exercise of such care.

When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a teaching elder or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information.

A teaching elder or a ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service may reveal confidential information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person (G-4.0301). All persons covered by this policy have an additional duty to report knowledge of child sexual abuse to the employing entity, supervisor, or council representative. All persons should be informed of and must comply with state and local laws regarding incidents of actual or suspected child sexual abuse. These reports should be made within a reasonable time of receiving the information.

These provisions of the *Book of Order* attempt to balance conflicting moral duties for officers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

For teaching elders, the provision strives to balance the duty to protect children from future harm with the duty of a teaching elder to hold in confidence any information revealed to them during the exercise of pastoral care in any ministry setting as defined in G-4.0301 in the *Book of Order*.

For ruling elders, deacons, and certified Christian educators, the provisions strive to balance the duty of an officer of the church to protect children from harm and any secular duty the officer may have to hold in confidence any information revealed as a result of a secular relationship such as attorney/client, counselor/client, or physician/patient. The secular duties will be a function of secular law and may vary from state to state.

C. *Responding*

The appropriate council or entity response will vary according to the relationship of the PC(USA) with the person who is accused of sexual misconduct. Church members and officers are subject to inquiry and discipline (censure and correction) under the *Book of Order*. Non-church member employees and volunteers are subject to oversight and correction by the council or entity that employs them.

1. *Accused Covered by Book of Order*

When an allegation of offense of sexual misconduct has been received by the clerk of session or stated clerk of the presbytery, the clerk of the council will report to the council that an offense has been alleged and that the council will proceed according to the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the *Book of Order*. The council should appoint an investigating committee to inquire into the allegations. The investigating committee must promptly begin its inquiry into the allegations. Delay may cause further harm to the victim and/or the accused.

Councils and entities must cooperate with civil authorities in an investigation of child sexual abuse or other criminal sexual misconduct. Church disciplinary proceedings cannot interfere with a criminal investigation by civil authorities and may have to be suspended until these are completed.

The session has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving members, ruling elders, and deacons of the church, each congregation having jurisdiction only over its own members.

A presbytery has original jurisdiction in disciplinary cases involving teaching elders. A presbytery may dissolve a pastoral relationship when the “Word imperatively demands it” (G-2.0904). However, a presbytery may only place a teaching elder on administrative leave when allegations of child abuse have been received and the presbytery has followed the *Book of Order* procedures to conduct its risk evaluation to determine whether or not a teaching elder member accused of child abuse should be placed on administrative leave (D-10.0106). It is recommended that the permanent judicial commission (PJC) members who will conduct this risk evaluation based upon the allegations and a hearing should also take into account secular legal advice.

When a church officer renounces jurisdiction, the clerk or stated clerk shall report the renunciation at the next meeting of the council and shall record the renunciation in the minutes of the council. The status of any pending charges may be shared with the council at that time.

2. *Accused Not Covered by Book of Order*

When a council or entity of the General Assembly receives an accusation of offense of sexual misconduct against a nonmember employee or volunteer, the procedural response of the council or entity will be guided by the written personnel policies of the council or entity. Usually the council or entity will have a personnel committee that will be responsible for the

inquiry. If a council does not have a personnel committee, it may appoint either a committee or administrative commission for the review of the allegation.

The committee or commission that will respond to the allegation of offense of sexual misconduct will do the following:

- a. Determine whether or not the allegation gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of sexual misconduct by the accused.
- b. If so, gather additional information necessary to make a decision about correcting the behavior.
- c. Determine any remedies, including limiting ministry, suspension, or termination necessary and advisable under the circumstances. If the accused is a member of another denomination, that denomination will be notified of the allegations and the response.
- d. Inform the victim and the accused of the remedy.
- e. In all cases, the personnel committee shall prepare a written report, which shall be included in the accused's permanent personnel file. The accused shall be allowed to attach any written statements to said documents, also for permanent inclusion in the permanent file.

All procedures shall follow the guidelines set forth by the council, employing agency, or entity of the General Assembly.

3. Council or Entity Record Keeping

The council or entity should keep detailed records of its actions and minutes of its deliberations and its conversations with the accuser, the accused, and other parties involved, correspondence, and copies of the reports received from committees or commissions. Such records will be kept confidential as far as possible. In Case # 208-6, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) interpreted the Rules of Discipline to say that a council or entity may share the contents of inquiry reports with other councils or entities of the PC(USA) when necessary. The clerk of the council or director of the entity will maintain the records while the inquiry is in process.

IV Prevention and Risk Management

A. Implementation

The Book of Order requires that all councils adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy (G-3.0106). The General Assembly urges all councils and related entities including colleges, universities, and theological institutions to establish policies, procedures, that make it a violation of the employer's work rules to engage in sexual misconduct and that encourage reporting of sexual misconduct. Councils and entities are strongly encouraged to take appropriate steps to inform members, employees, volunteers, and students of the council's sexual misconduct policy and the standards of conduct and

the procedures for effective response when receiving a report of sexual misconduct.

B. Liability and Insurance

A council or entity can be held liable for harm caused by sexual misconduct of an officer, teaching elder or employee based on a number of legal theories. Councils and entities should take such potential liability into consideration when establishing hiring and supervisory practices.

Councils and entities should regularly inform their liability insurance carriers of the activities and programs they operate or sponsor and of the duties and responsibilities of officers, employees, and volunteers. The standard insurance policy should usually be enhanced by endorsements to cover specific exposures such as camps, day-care operations, shelters, or other outreach programs.

It is also recommended that councils and entities obtain an endorsement to their general liability insurance policy specifically covering sexual abuse and molestation. Such coverage may provide for legal defense expenses and judgments in civil suits brought against the council or entity, its officers, directors, or employees.

C. Employment Practices

1. Record Keeping

Accurate record keeping is an essential part of hiring and supervision practices of churches, middle governing, bodies and related entities. Every council and entity should maintain a personnel file on every employee, including teaching elders. The file should contain the application for employment, any employment questionnaires, background checks, references responses, and all other documents related to an employee's employment, except records which may be required, by law, to be kept in separate files.

2. Prescreening Applicants

Councils and entities are urged to establish thorough and consistent hiring practices. If an applicant is unknown to the employer, the employer should confirm the applicant's identity by requiring photographic identification such as a driver's license. The council should perform a background check, including a national criminal background check, on all applicants that may have interaction with children and youth.

Part of pre-employment screening should include specific questions related to discovering previous complaints of sexual misconduct. See Appendix B: Sample Exhibit E.

3. References

The employing council or entity is responsible for contacting references for prospective

teaching elders , employees, or volunteers. A written record of conversations or correspondence with references should be kept in the teaching elder or employee's personnel file. (See Appendix B: Sample Exhibit B for a sample reference form).

A council should delegate responsibility for previous employer reference checks.

The person within the council or entity authorized to give a reference is obligated to give truthful information regarding allegations, inquiries, and administrative or disciplinary action related to sexual misconduct of the applicant.

If false or misleading information is given by the applicant, or relevant information is withheld, the applicant should be eliminated from consideration.

Applicants should be informed of negative comments regarding sexual misconduct and shall be given an opportunity to submit additional references or to give other evidence to correct or respond to harmful information obtained from a reference.

V. Educating and Training- Awareness

Since the issue of sexual misconduct has become an ever more present reality, there is an emerging need to educate and train a wide variety of persons. Persons needing this specific education include: teaching elders ; volunteers; officers; nonprofessional and professional staff; ministerial candidates; professionals who will be working with this issue within the denomination; members of the congregation; and council staff including supervisors, employees, and stated clerks.

Education for these persons and groups will be different on a group-by-group basis. A primary requirement for all persons should be common knowledge regarding professional and ministerial boundaries, the General Assembly Sexual Misconduct policy and their own specific council or entity policy.

Theological institutions should include material in their existing curriculum on sexual ethics including the appropriate use of ministerial power, the General Assembly policy and its procedures on sexual misconduct, and other resources. It is further urged that the appropriate presbytery committee(s) include training for inquirers, candidates, newly ordained pastors, and new pastors to their presbyteries regarding sexual misconduct, especially including education on their specific policy and procedures.

Much of a congregation's education currently happens in response to an actual case of sexual misconduct. However, it is recommended that the congregation be as proactive in this area as possible offering education in a variety of settings. There are already numerous resource materials available that could be adapted to a congregation's setting.

Employing entities need to make sure all employees are well acquainted with, understand, and abide by their policy and procedures. Employing entities should offer additional training and resources, such as: a workshop during staff meeting; lunchtime discussion group; articles and books made available; etc.

Any professional (therapists, attorneys, advocates, mediators, arbitrators) used by a council should have access to experts qualified in the field of sexual misconduct if they themselves are not.

Appendix A

Definitions

Accused is the term used to represent the person against whom a claim of sexual misconduct is made.

Accuser is a term used to represent the person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct by a person covered by this policy. The accuser may or may not have been the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct. A person such as a family member, friend, or colleague may be the accuser.

Church when spelled with the initial capitalized refers to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Church when spelled with the initial in lowercase refers to local churches. The word congregation is used loosely for members and participants.

Employee is the comprehensive term used to cover individuals who are hired or called to work for the Church for salary or wages.

Entity is the term used to refer to any program or office managed by a board, committee, council, or other body whose membership is elected by a council.

Council is a representative body composed of ruling elders and teaching elders: sessions, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly. A council may establish entities such as day-care centers, conference centers, camps, or homes for the aged. A council may have both church members and nonmembers as employees.

Inquiry is the term used in the Rules of Discipline to determine whether charges should be filed based upon allegations of an offense received by a council. See *Book of Order*, D-10.0000.

Mandated Reporter includes a person under the PCUSA constitution who is mandated to report to the civil authorities any reasonably held belief that there will be future harm and is also described by some states' laws as a person who is required to report any and all suspected incidents of child abuse, including child sexual abuse that come to their attention. State laws vary from defining "all persons having knowledge" as mandated reporters to specifying very limited lists of professions whose members are required to report.

Persons Covered by this policy includes church members, church officers, teaching elders, and nonmembers who are employees or volunteers of the General Assembly of the PC(USA). All other councils or entities of the General Assembly are urged to create a sexual misconduct policy using the guidelines set out in this policy.

Response is the action taken by the council or entity when a report of sexual misconduct is received. It may include (1) inquiry into facts and circumstances, (2) possible disciplinary action (administrative or judicial or both), (3) pastoral care for victims and their families and others, and (4) pastoral care and rehabilitation for the accused and care for their families.

Civil Authorities are the governmental bodies, whether city, county, state, or federal, who are given the responsibility to investigate, criminally prosecute, and/or bring civil charges against individuals accused of sexual crimes or offenses against adults and children.

Secular Law is the body of municipal, state, and federal laws and is often referred to collectively as civil and criminal law. Prohibited behavior addressed by this policy may result in criminal and/or civil charges filed under secular law.

Victim is a person claiming to have been harmed and/or abused by a person covered under this policy.

Volunteer is the term used for those who provide services for the General Assembly of the PC(USA). Volunteers include persons elected or appointed to serve on boards, committees, and other groups. For purposes of this policy, volunteers are treated the same as employees.

Appendix B

Employment Procedures-With Forms

Each "Employing Entity" should have already established and implemented entity personnel policies that include employment procedures for the search, selection, and call of entity staff. The employment procedures should spell out the process to be followed during the election of chief administrative officers and other staff, the appointment of exempt and nonexempt staff, and the call of teaching elders, chief administrative officers, and elected staff. These employment procedures should also include candidate/applicant reference checks prior to employment. Employing entity personnel policies should contain a clearly defined grievance process, a periodic performance review process, and a section that prohibits sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment). These provisions should be applicable to all full-time, part-time, temporary, and interim staff. The personnel policies should also provide for confidential communication channels whereby staff members can voice concerns or apprehensions without fear of retribution.

Churchwide and public advertisement of vacant positions as a part of an employing entity's search procedures to fill vacant positions is required of General Assembly entities and related bodies and is recommended as a guideline for councils by the churchwide personnel policies as well as the Churchwide Plan for Equal Employment and Affirmative Action. In support of this policy and its procedures on sexual misconduct, all vacant positions of religious leadership forwarded to publications for advertisement, distributed to units of the church, as well as posted on local bulletin boards will include the following statement:

"The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is an equal opportunity employer. In addition the church has a strong policy opposing sexual harassment or abuse. References and records will be checked during the employment process."

This statement will also be included in all information distributed through the Personnel Referral Services of the Church Vocations Ministry Unit.

The following forms are included in this appendix: Exhibit A, Employee Questionnaire; and Exhibit B, Confidential Employee References. These two forms will be used by General Assembly entities and institutions, and are recommended for use by all other employing units of the church. Exhibit C, a form for Implementing Policy of Sexual Misconduct, is to be used by each employing entity as it distributes its sexual misconduct policy to employees and others. Exhibit D, Report of Suspected Sexual Misconduct, is for gathering basic information to be passed along to the appropriate person or group handling sexual misconduct cases for a unit or other entity.

As required by acceptable personnel procedures, an employee handbook should be written, published, and distributed to each employee of church employing entities. All existing personnel policies and employee handbooks should be updated to include a sexual misconduct policy.

It is advisable to seek legal advice as other councils, related bodies, and entities develop and publish policy and procedures on sexual misconduct using this General Assembly policy as a guide. All forms should be checked for compliance with state laws.

Why did you leave? _____

Employed by: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Supervisor: _____ Phone: _____

Supervisor's Title _____

Employed from (month/year) to _____ (month/year) _____

Why did you leave? _____

I certify that (a) no civil, criminal, ecclesiastical complaint has ever been sustained or is pending against me for sexual misconduct; (b) I have never resigned or been terminated from a position for reasons related to sexual misconduct.

Signature Date

Note: If you are unable to make the above certification you may instead give in the space provided a description of the complaint, termination, or the outcome of the situation and any explanatory comments you care to add.

Release

The information contained in this questionnaire is accurate to the best of my knowledge and may be verified by the employing entity. I hereby authorize (*Name of Employing Entity*) to make any and all contacts necessary to verify my prior employment history, and to inquire concerning any criminal records or any judicial proceedings involving me as a defendant. By means of this release I also authorize any previous employer and any law enforcement agencies or judicial authorities to release any and all requested relevant information to the (Name of Employing Entity) _____.

I have read this release and understand fully that the information obtained may be used to deny me employment or any other type of position from the employing entity. I also agree that I wily hold harmless the employing entity or judicial authority from any and all claims, liabilities, and cause of action for the legitimate release or use of any information.

Signature _____

Witness _____

Witness _____

Sample Exhibit B

This is a sample form that may be used to keep a record of all face-to-face or telephone reference checks. Additions that have to do with sexual misconduct or child abuse may be needed by the entity to justify to a court of law that they have done reasonable and prudent screening before hiring a person for a position within that entity.

Confidential Employment Reference

1. Name of applicant: _____

2. Reference or church contacted (if a church, identify both the church and person contacted):

3. Date and time of contact: _____

4. Person contacting the reference or church: _____

5. Method of contact (phone, letter, personal conversation): _____

6. Summary of conversation (summarize the reference's remarks concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for the position, any convictions for or actions pending related to sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or child abuse): _____

Name _____ Title _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Sample Exhibit C

This is a sample designed to implement the sexual misconduct policy. It is necessary that all employees acknowledge being in receipt of the sexual misconduct policy. The policy provides protection and empowerment for die employee.

Form for Implementing Policy of Sexual Misconduct Acknowledgement of Receipt

I hereby acknowledge that I received on _____ (date), a copy of the "Policy and Its Procedures on Sexual Misconduct of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" dated _____ that I have read the policy, understand its meaning, and agree to conduct myself in accordance with the policy.

Signature _____

A similar acknowledgement should be signed at the time amendments to the policy are made and distributed.

Sample Exhibit D

This exhibit provides entities with a sample Report of Suspected Sexual Misconduct. It provides space for the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of victims, the accused, possible witnesses, and others involved. It also provides space for a description of the offending behavior as well as other pertinent information. This form or a revision of it should be filed with the appropriate supervisor, office, or administrator of an entity who is required to file this with the constituting authority or its response coordination team (See section on Subsequent Reporting in this policy and its procedures.)

Report of Suspected Sexual Misconduct

Reported by: _____

Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

City, State, and Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Date of Report: _____

Person suspected of misconduct:

Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

City, State, and Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Other person(s) involved (witness or victims):

Name _____ Title _____

Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

City, State, and Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Report of Suspected Sexual Misconduct

Describe incident(s) of suspected sexual misconduct, including date(s), time(s), and location(s):

Identify eyewitnesses to the incident, including names, addresses, and telephone numbers, where available: _____

Sample Exhibit E

Employment Questions to ask of potential employees:

Councils and entities should ask persons seeking ministerial calls or employment in nonordained positions questions such as:

a. Has a civil, criminal, or ecclesiastical complaint ever been sustained against you involving sexual misconduct by you?

b. Have you ever resigned or been terminated from a position for reasons relating to allegations of sexual misconduct by you?

c. If so, indicate the date, nature and place of these allegations, and the name, address, and telephone number of your employer at that time.

d. Have you been required to receive professional treatment, physical or psychological, for reasons related to sexual misconduct to you?

e. If so, please give a short description of the treatment including the date, nature of treatment, place, and name, address, and telephone number of the treating physician or other professional.

A sample employment questionnaire is attached as Exhibit A for adaptation by councils and entities. The questions included in this sample may be integrated into a standard employment questionnaire along with other necessary questions.

Appendix C Meeting the Needs of All Involved

In cases of sexual misconduct there are needs that have to be met for the good of all persons, groups, and entities. To ensure that the council is ready to meet the variety of needs present, an independent response coordination team may be named. This team will not investigate the allegation or in any way function as an investigating committee for disciplining members or officers, but should confine itself to coordinating a process that will meet the specific needs of victims and their families (if any), the accused and family (if any), employing entities, congregations, and councils:

A. The Needs of the Victim

The council, employing entity, and response coordination team should assure that adequate treatment and care are available for alleged victims of sexual misconduct and their families. Sometimes, the victim or family is so angry and alienated from the church, that offers of help may be perceived as insincere or as attempts of a cover-up. If the victim or family at first refuses, the church should continue to offer help. Above all the church should not act in a self-protective manner by ignoring the victim and their families.

The extent of the damage to the victims of sexual misconduct will vary from person to person, and is influenced by such factors as the degree or severity of abuse, the age and emotional condition of the victim, human dynamics, and the importance of one's religious faith. The council, entity, and response coordination team is to assume in all cases that the victim has been wounded by the experience.

Feelings of guilt, shame, anger, mistrust, lowered self-esteem, unworthiness, and feelings of alienation from God, self, the religious community, and family are frequent injuries suffered by victims. It is important for the response coordination team to be sensitive to the victim's pain and need for healing, and to act by making appropriate pastoral care available.

The following are some of the needs of the victim:

1. To be heard and taken seriously. From the time that the victim is first able to indicate that sexual misconduct has occurred, that person should receive immediate attention and serious consideration from all church representatives.
2. To receive pastoral and therapeutic support. The victim may require spiritual and professional assistance as a result of sexual misconduct. The response coordination team should offer to help arrange for such support from a pastor and therapist, if the victim desires. Discussions with such people would be confidential, privileged conversations.
3. To be informed about church process and progress with regard to the accusation. One member of the response coordination team should be the church contact person for the victim. Frequently, this contact person will give the victim information as to what is happening in the church as a result of the accusation.
4. To receive legal advice. The response coordination team should suggest that the victim might benefit from independent legal advice. (Legitimate claims might be more effectively pursued and flimsy

or false claims discouraged.) If requested, the response coordination team should suggest ways in which independent legal advice can be obtained.

5. To be assured of an advocate of one's own choosing. A victim may need continuing moral support from one individual who is present while the church process deals with the accusation. This advocate may be a relative, friend, or someone suggested by the response coordination team. This advocate could speak for the victim, if necessary.

- To be assured that justice will be pursued. The victim needs to be told by the response coordination team, and shown by the processes of the church, that justice is being pursued through fact-finding, truth-telling, confrontation, and agreement that may include removal or temporary exclusion of the accused from office or adjudication of the complaint.
- To receive healing and reconciliation. In addition to specific forms of restitution mentioned above, the victim needs to receive a sense of healing and reconciliation with all concerned—the self, the family, the church and, ideally, the accused. The response coordination team can help bring this about using the church's processes and resources. While the above are needs of the victim, one recognizes that all of these needs may also not be met through a reasonable handling of a specific case, but may only occur over a lengthier period of time. All of these needs, however, should be taken seriously and compassionately, and the rights of the victim respected.

B. The Needs of the Accused

The council or entity shall offer treatment and care for the accused as well as alleged victims and families. If the accused is a teaching elder, this is the primary responsibility of the presbytery (Book of Order, G-3.0307).

Feelings of guilt, shame, anger, mistrust, lowered self-esteem, depression, unworthiness, and feelings of alienation from God, self, the religious community, and family are often experienced by the accused. In addition, there may be fear of job loss, incarceration, and indignation if an allegation is false.

When a person is found not guilty of charges of sexual misconduct, it is important for the council or entity to see that the decision is disseminated as widely as possible within their power, unless doing so would further injure the person accused.

1. Personal Care

Whether the allegations about the accused are eventually found to be true or not, the accused deserves to be treated with Christian kindness and respect.

The response coordination team may suggest that the accused seek spiritual support or professional counseling. People in staff positions, such as presbytery executives or stated clerks, should not engage in personal counseling of the accused because of their potential involvement in disciplinary process.

2. Economic Security and Care for Family of Accused

When an allegation of sexual misconduct has been made against a teaching elder, the economic security of the accused is directly threatened, along with reputation, career, and family relationships. Again, the presbytery can be of assistance.

The response coordination team may alert the presbytery to the possible spiritual, emotional, and financial needs of the family of the accused and recommend expert resources.

C. The Needs of a Congregation in a Context of Sexual Misconduct

The council, employing entity, and response coordination team should be aware of the problems a congregation or employing entity may experience following allegations of sexual misconduct by a teaching elder, employee, or volunteer. The allegations may polarize the congregation or organization, damage morale, create serious internal problems, and even limit the trust a congregation may place in succeeding pastors. Efforts should be taken to recognize and identify the problems and heal any damage that may be done to the congregation or organization.

When there is sexual misconduct on the part of a teaching elder, non-ordained staff, or volunteer in a particular congregation, a number of needs unique to that congregation will emerge since sexual misconduct impacts congregations in different ways. Therefore, these needs will not necessarily emerge in the same sequence in each situation. Depending on the parties involved in the sexual misconduct, some of the needs may not emerge. In any event, those managing the church's response to the sexual misconduct will want to know that the following needs may emerge:

1. Pastoral Care

Members and staff of the congregation will need pastoral care. If it is the pastor who is involved in the sexual misconduct, care will need to be provided by another member of the ordained staff (if the church is a multiple-staff church) or by a trained interim pastor. If the pastor leaves as a result of sexual misconduct, in extreme cases a trained interim pastor or consultant in sexual misconduct may need to work with the congregation for an extended period of time.

If it is not a pastor who is involved in the sexual misconduct, then the pastor will provide the needed care for the congregation. The pastor, if not previously trained in this specialty area, will need to consult with denominational specialists who will advise him or her how to proceed and any anticipated problems.

2. Information About the Case

Members of the congregation will need opportunities both to receive and give information. If a case of sexual misconduct becomes a matter of public knowledge within a congregation and if a pastor has been found guilty of sexual misconduct, the interim pastor or consultant may hold appropriate meetings with individuals, small groups, or with the whole congregation. Such meetings should provide information about sexual misconduct in general, Presbyterian polity and our judicial process, and how others who may have been victimized may be heard and ministered to. If the offender is not the pastor, then the pastor may perform these functions. At such meetings, one may expect members to vent their feelings. An opportunity for this to happen should be provided. If this venting does not take place, then it may create serious problems for the future of the congregation, for future pastors, and for the governing

body.’ Dynamics may differ somewhat in racial ethnic churches, but no empirical studies have yet demonstrated different dynamics.

3. Resource Persons

In light of the above needs, the following are several resource persons whose services would be valuable to a congregation in the context of sexual misconduct: a trained interim pastor, a presbytery representative knowledgeable in polity and the effects of sexual misconduct in the church, a consultant or therapist with knowledge and experience in dealing with sexual misconduct, an attorney who can discuss legal aspects of a case, an insurance agent who can advise the congregation about their exposure to liability or coverage.

It is the responsibility of the council to establish policy and its procedures governing cases of sexual misconduct in that jurisdiction. The PC(USA) policy and its procedures are intended to guide the development of council policy and procedures.

**Presbytery of the Northwest Coast, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy**

Initial _____

It is the policy of the Presbytery of Northwest Coast that all church members, church officers, nonmember employees and/or contractors, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and entities of the church are to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy applies to all Presbytery sponsored activities that involve children, youth, and vulnerable adults. As of 2018-19 those activities include Presbyterian Youth Triennium, Presbytery Leadership Summits where childcare is provided, and grant sponsored events such as the Winter Unite Middle School Youth retreat at Tall Timber. This policy will also govern Campbell Farm, a ministry of the Presbytery, until Campbell Farm has a policy in place that is approved by THE Executive Board and take priority over this one.

DEFINITIONS

The following is a comprehensive list of definitions of terms and their intended use in this particular policy. For purposes of this policy:

Child: A child is a person between the ages of 0–11.

Youth: A youth is a person between the ages of 12–17.

Minor: A minor is any child or youth.

Child/Youth Worker: Any person, volunteer or paid staff or contractor, who participates at any level at a Presbytery entity sponsored events or activities involving children and/or youth.

Vulnerable Adult: Any person eighteen-years-old or older without the developmental, cognitive or physical capacity to consent.

Vulnerable Adult Abuse: Any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

Child/Youth Abuse: Any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of a child or youth.

Sexual Abuse: As defined in the Book of Order, sexual abuse 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).

Misuse of technology: The use of technology that results in the harassing or abusing of a child/youth. This includes using technology to send suggestive message and images to a child or youth. Adults should not have any technological contact with a child or youth that is not either preapproved by the child/youth’s legal guardian with a signed waiver, or the contact is on an open public medium, such as a church website or other social media program.

Safe Child Response Team: The Safe Child Response Team is a team comprised of a minimum of three members of or appointed by the Permanent Judicial Commission who are specifically trained to respond to allegations and reports of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse.

SCREENING, TRAINING, AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

The following is required for every child/youth worker, whether on a paid staff, contractor, or volunteer basis:

1. The presbytery must receive completed, signed, and approved application and background check authorization forms, including a signed form verifying the event policy has been read. The application should include a minimum of two references.
2. All child/youth workers must be at least twenty-years-old and four years older than the oldest youth whom they are serving.
3. The applicant must consent to a criminal background check. These checks shall be run no more than six months prior to the event. (This time restraint is also at the discretion of the presbytery's insurance company's requests. Child/Youth workers who participate annually in events may only be required to have one background check per calendar year, depending on insurance company standards.)
4. All child/youth workers, paid, contracted, or volunteer, must participate in training sometime within the year prior to the event. The training is to be provided by the presbytery and shall cover the event child/youth protection policy thoroughly as well as methods of abuse prevention and a detailed plan of reporting. The presbytery may contract with others to provide these trainings.
5. No person may serve as a child/youth worker who has a conviction on his/her record of certain felonies or misdemeanors, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
 - Criminal homicide;
 - Aggravated assault;
 - Crimes related to the possession, use, or sale of drugs or controlled substances;
 - Sexual abuse;
 - Sexual assault;
 - Injury to a youth;
 - Incest;
 - Indecency with a youth;
 - Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a youth;
 - Possession or promotion of child pornography;
 - The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor;
 - Employment harmful to youth;
 - Abandonment or endangerment of a youth;
 - Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;
 - Public lewdness or indecent exposure; and enticement of a youth;
 - Any crime that involves sexual misconduct or sexual abuse, particularly if it involves misconduct or abuse with a minor;
 - Any crime that involves misuse of technology for sexual purposes, such as collecting or distributing photographs of minors who are naked or in sexual or inappropriate poses (child pornography);
 - Any crime that involves the use of force, such as assault or endangerment;
 - Any crime that involves abduction and kidnapping;
 - Any crime that involves drinking and driving, such as driving while intoxicated.

In addition, if the presbytery or a local congregation is aware that a child/youth worker has a prior conviction for one of the aforementioned crimes or a related crime, the child/youth worker shall

NWCP Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy

Executive Board; 12/12/2019



be ineligible to attend a child/youth event in any capacity unless given specific permission by Commission on Ministry or Personnel Committee following review.

6. Whenever the presbytery organizes an event for minors that invites minors from local congregations who will be supervised by child/youth workers, the sponsoring entity of the presbytery shall:
 - a) Provide guidance to the congregations that are sending child/youth workers about best practices for securing child/youth workers and eligibility requirements.
 - b) Provide guidance to the congregations that are sending child/youth workers concerning the requirement that the presbytery perform and pay for background checks for potential child/youth workers and how to evaluate the background check for offenses that would disqualify a person from being a child/youth worker with minors.
 - c) Provide guidance to congregations on when to perform the background checks and with what background check provider.
 - d) Identify someone on the presbytery staff to be the designated recipient of background checks and train that person:
 - (1) To review every background check received;
 - (2) To identify criminal convictions on background checks that should disqualify a person from being a child/youth worker;
 - (3) To notify the event sponsor if the staffer believes the council has erred in selecting a child/youth worker whose background check indicates that the person should not act as a child/youth worker;
 - (4) Report to the event sponsor of the event of each potentially disqualifying background check and related concerns so that a formal decision can be made to inform the council that the person whose background check is in question is not eligible to attend the event as a child/youth worker.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

The presbytery shall maintain all child/youth worker applications, results of background checks, and related information in confidential, secured files.

REPORTING

The sponsoring entity of the presbytery will publicize a procedure for reporting any prohibited actions and have copies available at all times in a public place at the event. Anyone suspecting or having knowledge of a violation of child abuse may report such violation to any leader of the presbytery sponsored event. Any child or youth who suspects or has knowledge of any type of minor abuse is invited to share the knowledge with any adult leader of the presbytery sponsored event. Anyone who has knowledge or suspicion of child/youth abuse should be made aware that state law requires the immediate reporting of such abuse to the civil authorities. Any adult leader should report such violation to the Stated Clerk.

To Report child/youth abuse or neglect in WA State see: <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/safety/report-abuse>

To report child/youth abuse in Alaska see
<http://dhss.alaska.gov/ocs/Pages/publications/reportingchildabuse.aspx> | 1-800-478-4444 |
reportchildabuse@alaska.gov

SAFE CHILD RESPONSE TEAM

The Safe Child Response Team is a team comprised of a minimum of three members of or appointed by the Commission on Ministry or Permanent Judicial Commission who are specifically trained to respond to allegations and reports of child, youth, or vulnerable adult abuse. The response team will familiarize itself with the terms of this policy as well as established procedures under the Rules of Discipline, Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for responding to complaint(s) of alleged child/youth abuse against any teaching elder, ruling elder, employee, or volunteer in a leadership position(s) with the sponsoring entity and any events they may sponsor.

The Safe Child Response Team shall have the following responsibilities in response to allegations of child/youth or vulnerable adult abuse or neglect incurred against any child/youth worker or event participant:

1. Immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved.
2. If the report alleges abuse or harassment of a minor, the response team will:
 - a. immediately ensure the allegation is reported to the civil authorities under state law;
 - b. immediately notify the parents or guardian of the minor;
 - c. notify the insurance company of the allegation and that no investigation has yet occurred.
3. Make immediate decisions concerning the temporary removal of the individual accused from any contact with children or youth pending an investigation and/or removal of the accused from the event until a resolution of the allegations has occurred.
4. Notify designated people at the presbytery immediately of the report of alleged abuse/neglect. Any possible media requests will be handled by a designated person or office with advice from the on-call attorney, taking care to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
5. Consult the presbytery about resources available for victims of the alleged abuse prior to each event and have those resources readily available at every event. This will provide victims and their families' immediate resources that may aid in the particular spiritual, psychological, or emotional needs and trauma that arise from the devastation of abuse.
6. Provide pastoral counseling for the principal parties involved (accuser(s), possible victim(s), accused, family members).
7. A written summary of any proceedings in such cases will be maintained by presbytery.
8. Any person bringing a report of abuse or assisting in investigating will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

MANDATORY EVENT RULES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The sponsoring entity of the presbytery shall ensure that the following measures be in place and actions taken for each event or activity involving children and youth:

1. Two-adult rule: Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of children and youth. The only exception is if an emergency situation deems this not immediately possible. All child

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and youth workers and volunteers must be a minimum of four years older than the age group they lead or supervise.

2. **Minimum Ratios:** The adult to child ratio for all child-related events/activities is a 2:10. The adult to youth ratio for all youth-related events/activities is 2:17. There shall also be one adult of each gender when there is one or more minors of each gender in a group. Only in emergency situations may the ratios and gender diversity be compromised.
3. **View Windows and Open Doors:** When minors and adult workers or volunteers are in a room, if the door is closed, the door must have a view window installed. If no view window is installed in the door, the door must remain open at all times. If event is held at a host site, such as Tall Timber Ranch or Campbell Farm, the host site's policy for view windows and open doors shall take priority because they know how best to keep youth and vulnerable adults safe in their facilities.
4. Adult workers/caregivers should respect the privacy of the children to whom they provide care. Responsible use of digital devices and cell phones is required in all situations.
5. Age appropriate training to children and youth should be provided regarding behavior that should be reported to caregiver or leader of the event.
6. **Transportation:** All adult drivers at child/youth events must have proper licensure and insurance on file with the organizing council. All vehicles used must have seat belts for the driver and each passenger. Minors who may sit in the front seat of any vehicle must conform to the legal rules set by Washington or Alaska state law. All drivers transporting minors and vulnerable adults must be over the age of twenty-five and must be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance would be primary if an accident occurs. If a charter bus is rented, or any outside carrier is contracted, the company hired must ensure criminal background checks on their drivers. Each vehicle must follow the ratio rules noted in point 2 in this section. Lastly, no minor may be a driver at any event or activity (this includes golf carts at events).
7. **Forms:** The legal guardians of each minor must provide the appropriate information and medical forms for each activity/event. The information form should include all contacts for legal guardians and the medical form must include a copy of the minor's health insurance card. Further consent forms must be signed by legal guardians for any off campus events. Any photos at the event that are used in social media or published material by the organizing council must be released by a signed consent form from a participant's legal guardian as well as the minor. All such forms must be stored at the event site, in a secure place with restricted access.
8. Each event/activity must ensure that rules are gone over with participants at each event/activity. These rules shall include but are not limited to a code of conduct specific to the event/activity, as well as a list prohibited and expected behaviors for the specific event/activity. The code of conduct and prohibited and expected behaviors list should be given in written form to each participant and legal guardians, as well as discussed thoroughly at the beginning of the event/activity.
9. All volunteers and employees at any presbytery entity sponsored events must also abide by a code of conduct that emphasizes the following prohibited behaviors. Some of these prohibited behaviors include but are not restricted to:
 - a. Display of sexual affection toward a child.
 - b. Use of profanity or off-color jokes.
 - c. Discussion of personal sexual encounters with or around children or in any way involving children in personal problems or issues.
 - d. Dating or becoming "romantically" involved with children (under the age of eighteen).
 - e. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children.
 - f. Possessing and/or viewing of sexually oriented materials—including printed or online

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- pornography—on church property or property being utilized for a church event.
- g. Having secrets with youth/children.
 - h. Staring at or commenting on children's bodies.
 - i. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children.
 - j. Working one-on-one with children in a private setting.
 - k. Abusing youth/children in anyway, including (but not limited to) the following:
 - 1. Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restraint.
 - 2. Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, or curse.
 - 3. Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations.
 - 4. Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly.
 - 5. Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter.
 - 6. Permit children or youth to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity.

Social Media—Electronic Communications

General Social Media Policy - No minister, employee, contractor, or volunteer of the presbytery and its entities shall create or use a media site (Web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent the Presbytery without the explicit written permission of the sponsoring council, presbytery, or event leadership. When clergy or staff, acting in their capacity as a representative of the presbytery or its entities, lead or coordinate a group activity using social media, each may use only official Presbytery entity sites/channels when they have been made available by the Presbytery. These may include Web pages, Facebook, e-mail, and similar means.

Social Media Communications

Persons who shall create public pages/posts/online groups on behalf of the Presbytery entity programs are responsible to monitor communications and to assure that employees and volunteers do not have private (and possibly inappropriate) conversations with children and youth.

Persons having social media publication privileges on behalf of the Presbytery entity shall not accept or solicit “friend” or “following” requests by minors with their *personal* social media accounts. Minors with approved social media accounts by their parent or guardians may follow or friend *public* social media pages that are monitored and viewable by the Presbytery entity or congregation seeking to publicize and coordinate ministry activities.

If a child or youth reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions with an adult, the person must report this information in the manner of any “suspected abuse.”

When using social media to communicate with children or youth, the authorized administrator shall inform parents/guardians of each child or youth that the latter is communicating with the person via social media, providing the parent/guardian the opportunity to disapprove or to participate in a group.

Social Networking Code of Conduct

Each person who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- Provide children, youth, and their parents with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children’s and youth interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind children and youth how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the code of conduct.

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At the institution of the use of social media, the authorized administrator shall present this Social Networking Code of Conduct to children or youth and parents/guardians.

SIGNING OF POLICY AND APPLICATION TO SERVE

Each adult engaged in the leadership of a Presbytery entity event shall acknowledge receipt of the Presbytery Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Its Procedures by signing an application to be employed, volunteer, or supervise. In addition, each person engaged in the leadership of a Presbytery entity event shall consent to all comprehensive background checks required and shall comply with any consequences of a reported violation of this policy.

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Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures

Initial _____

I. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (“the Presbytery”) that all church members, church officers, non-member employees, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and entities of the church are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship at all times. Persons who engage in sexual misconduct damage the safety and trustworthiness of the church, are in violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, and also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship. It is never permissible or acceptable for a person serving in ordered ministry, church member, officer, employee, or volunteer to engage in sexual misconduct.

Distribution

This is a policy of the Presbytery (and not its churches), which governs and protects employees, persons serving in ordered ministry, volunteers and officers of the Presbytery and shall be available to them. It will be provided to persons who believe they have been sexually harassed or abused. Other councils of and entities in partnership with the Presbytery may use this policy as a guide to develop their own policies and procedures related to sexual misconduct.

II. Standards of Conduct

*... As [God] who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct;
... Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, ... not under compulsion but willingly, ...
not for sordid gain but eagerly. . . not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock....
You know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 1 Pet. 1:15; 5:2–3; Jas. 3:1, NRSV*

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 guiding this policy are as follows:

1. We believe and proclaim that all people are created by God and bear the image of God. God values all human life and intends that everyone—men, women and children—have worth and dignity in all relationships.
2. As the church of Jesus Christ, we regularly invite people to place their trust, their life, death, and beyond in God’s care. This requires humans to take significant risks in turning over their lives to God’s care, leading and direction. Therefore, the relational, emotional, and psychological conditions of the people, who are the church, must be safe and trustworthy in order to make possible the invitation to place one’s life, death, and beyond in God’s care.
3. We further believe in justice for all persons. Sexual misconduct is an abuse of power and trust, therefore, unjust. Scripture asserts that religious leadership involves a covenant relationship that presumes the trustworthy exercise of power on behalf of those in our care. A betrayal of this trust is more than just a personal tragedy for the victim. It reflects a tragic

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breakdown in the character of the abuser that seriously threatens not only those immediately affected but the well-being of the church itself.

4. The Presbytery declares that the good of the Church can never be served by overlooking an abuse of power and trust, that sexual misconduct is wrong. We further declare that charges of misconduct must be dealt with promptly, fairly, thoroughly, and with compassion for both the alleged injured party and the alleged perpetrator. The purpose of this policy is to preserve the purity, unity, and purpose of the Church; to ensure fairness and justice for all involved, and when necessary and possible – to bring members to repentance and restoration. Church discipline is not a substitute for the civil judicial system, but rather is to build up and redeem the body of Christ.
5. 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 care in a trust relationship. It breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of parishioners, clients, co-workers, and students.
6. Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure or gain in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the parishioner, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content 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.
7. 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.

III. Definitions

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. Abuse can also occur between two children. It is still abuse, even if a child cooperates out of ignorance, innocence or fear.

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: defined for this policy is as follows: "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. [29 C.F.R. § 1604.11.](#)" and including, but not limited to:

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- Unwanted physical contact or conduct of any kind, including sexual flirtations, touching, advances, requests for sex, or propositions;
- Repeated unwelcome requests for a romantic relationship;
- Verbal harassment of a sexual nature, such as lewd comments, sexual jokes or references, and offensive personal references;
- Demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive comments about an individual;
- Graphic, verbal commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess, or sexual deficiencies;
- The display in the workplace of demeaning, insulting, intimidating, pornographic, or sexually suggestive objects, pictures, calendars, or photographs; and
- Demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive written, recorded, or electronically transmitted messages (such as email, text messages, instant messaging, and internet materials, including social media and social networking sites).

Sexual harassment can occur between individuals of the opposite sex or of the same sex.

Gender Harassment or Abuse: Behavior that may or may not be “sexual” in character, which demonstrates discrimination, abuse of power, or harassment of an individual related to gender. This behavior has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or volunteer performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, undermining, retaliating or otherwise offensive working environment and/or sabotage (negatively affects an individual's reputation with persons or groups other than the affected individual); Or otherwise adversely affects the individual's employment, volunteer and/or leadership opportunities.

Rape: sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.

Sexual Malfeasance: is defined by 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. Mutual seduction resulting in mutual victimization is also considered misconduct.

Sexual Impropriety: Sexual advances toward those for whose spiritual welfare one is responsible by one's position in the church. Such behavior can be verbal or physical conduct of an inappropriately sexual nature (e.g. risqué jokes, innuendoes, insults, ingratiating and overly solicitous behavior, including sexually inappropriate visits/phone calls/texts/posts, seductions and fondling).

Misuse of technology; use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting, emailing or posting 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.

IV. Response to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

A. Principles & Jurisdiction

In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, persons serving in ordered ministry, members, officers, volunteers and employees of the church should seek to uphold the dignity and safety of all

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persons involved, and when possible, the privacy of persons should be respected and confidentiality of communications should be maintained. For a full listing of expected ethical behavior please see *Life Together in the Community of Faith: Standards of Ethical Conduct in the PCUSA* (1998).

1. Minister members and commissioned pastors – If an allegation of sexual misconduct is received, the Presbytery will follow the Book of Order, Rules of Discipline, which includes an immediate decision regarding administrative leave, an investigation, possible mediations and if necessary a trial and censure.

2. Employees & Volunteers (who may be members of congregations) – If an allegation of sexual misconduct is received against such person, the presbytery will follow the process below, which includes an immediate decision regarding administrative leave, an investigation, possible mediation, and if necessary, a hearing, discipline or dismissal.

3. Ex-Members, Employees or Volunteers – If the person accused of sexual misconduct is no longer engaged in service to the presbytery, and the presbytery lacks jurisdiction ecclesiastically or as an employer its duty remains to receive and hear the allegations of offense and to take the necessary measures to prevent future occurrences.

B. Process

The process for responding to an allegation of sexual misconduct is the same for all categories of those accused. It is the intent of this policy that both accusers and accused be afforded the process and rights provided by the Rules of Discipline for Disciplinary Cases even though they may not directly apply in the case of employees or volunteers serving the presbytery. The status of the accused – employee, volunteer, minister member, or commissioned pastor – determines the entities that are responsible administrating the following process:

1. A complaint is received and stated in writing.
2. The complaint is immediately referred to an investigative body.
3. A determination is made regarding administrative leave.
4. The investigative body establishes whether there is probable grounds or cause to believe an offense was committed. If probable cause is established,
5. The accused is formally charged.
6. A hearing or trial is conducted to establish guilt or innocence.
7. A censure or employment action is decided and implemented by the appropriate body.

1. Reporting Sexual Misconduct

a. Persons who believe they are being harassed should firmly notify the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome.

b. A person who believes he or she has been sexually harassed or abused, or a person who believes he or she has witnessed an incident of sexual misconduct, or a person who believes he or she has received an account of sexual misconduct from an employee, member, officer or volunteer of the presbytery shall notify the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, Presbytery Moderator or Moderator of the Personnel Committee.

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c. Form of Complaint – Sexual misconduct complaints should be stated in writing. The person receiving the report may assist the complainant state the complaint in writing. If the complainant cannot or prefers not to state the complaint in writing, the person receiving the report must document in writing what was reported, when, and where, ask the complainant to review the document, and agree to it by signature.

d. Confidentiality, Sensitivity, Good Faith – Complaints and any subsequent investigation will be held in confidence as is practical and appropriate. Persons receiving complaints will make no judgements or conclusions, and shall investigate no further. They may share information with Presbytery officers or commissions on a need to know basis. All reports of sexual harassment shall be received in good faith with no retaliation, retribution, or reprisal against a reporter regardless of the results of an investigation.

2. Investigation Conducted By. If the accused is . . .

a. . . . A minister of the Word and Sacrament, or a commissioned pastor, the investigation is conducted according to the Rules of Discipline.

b. . . . An employee who is not a minister of the Word and sacrament, the investigation is conducted by an investigative committee appointed by the Personnel Committee.

c. . . . A volunteer church member serving on any entity of the Presbytery, the investigation is conducted by an investigative committee appointed by the Executive Board.

3. Administrative Leave. Administrative leave for any or all of the involved parties may be needed to ensure a safe working, meeting, or congregational environment. The accused or accuser may attempt to influence the narrative surrounding allegations and unfairly influence perceptions of themselves and others outside of due process. While the use of administrative leave is a sensitive matter that has the potential for reputational damage of either party, and it should be undertaken with due caution and concern, the primary importance is for the safety and protection of all. If the accused is . . .

a. . . . A minister of the Word and Sacrament, or a commissioned pastor, administrative leave is determined according to the Rules of Discipline. If an alleged offense is received from a minister member against another minister member, the Commission on Ministry, in consultation with the congregation, may decide to place the complainant on administrative leave as well. The presbytery alone (not a session) has the authority to determine administrative leave for a minister of the Word and Sacrament or commissioned pastor serving a congregation in a pastoral relationship.

b. . . . An employee who is not a minister of the Word and sacrament, administrative leave is determined by the Personnel Committee.

c. . . . A volunteer church member serving on any entity of the Presbytery, administrative leave from the areas of service is determined by a committee appointed by the Executive Board.

4. Process. All investigations, regardless of the responsible body will be conducted according to the Rules of Discipline, “Investigating Committee Responsibilities,” including the use of alternative forms of resolution (D-10.0202 at the time of writing).

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5. Charges. If the investigation determines that there is probable cause that an offense was committed, charges are filed. If the accused is . . .

a. . . . A minister of the Word and Sacrament, or a commissioned pastor, charges are filed according to the Rules of Discipline.

b. . . . An employee who is not a minister of the Word and sacrament, charges are filed with the Personnel Committee.

c. . . . A volunteer church member serving on any entity of the Presbytery, charges are filed with the Executive Board.

d. In the cases of an employee who is not a minister (a) or a volunteer (b), the following applies:

- i) If the investigating body has decided to file charges, it shall promptly inform the accused in writing of the charges it will make, including a summary of the facts it expects to prove trial to support those charges. It shall ask the accused if that person wishes to plead guilty to the charges to avoid a hearing and indicate the censure or form of discipline it will recommend.
- ii) If no charges are filed, the investigating body shall file a written report of that fact alone with the stated clerk of the presbytery, and notify the person who submitted the written complaint.
- iii) Each charge shall allege only one offense.
- iv) Several charges against the same person may be filed with the responsible body at the same time.
- v) Each charge shall be numbered and set forth the conduct that constituted the offense. Each charge shall state (as far as possible) the time, place, and circumstances of the commission of the alleged conduct.
- vi) Each charge shall also be accompanied by a list of the names and addresses of the witnesses and a description of the records and documents to be cited for its support.
- vii) Several charges against the same person may, in the discretion of the responsible body, be tried together.
- viii) Every charge shall be prepared in writing and filed with the clerk of the responsible body.

6. Trial or Hearing

a. If the accused is a minister of the Word and Sacrament or a commissioned pastor, a trial is conducted according to the Rules of Discipline.

b. If the accused is an **employee** who is not a minister of the Word and sacrament, a hearing is conducted by the personnel committee. If he accused is a **volunteer** serving the presbytery who is not a minister of the Word and Sacrament, the hearing is conducted by the Executive Board.

- i) The only parties in the case are the investigative committee and the accused.
- ii) Each of the parties is entitled to appear and may be represented by counsel.
- iii) The moderator shall read aloud sections D-1.0101 and D-1.0102, and shall enjoin the members to recollect and regard their high character as judges of a body of the Church of Jesus Christ and the solemn duties they are about to undertake.

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- iv) The charges are read and the accused shall be called upon to plead “guilty” or “not guilty” to each charge. The plea shall be entered on the record. If the accused declines to answer or pleads “not guilty,” a plea of “not guilty” shall be entered on the record.
- v) The parties shall be given an opportunity to present their cases.
- vi) After deliberation, the body shall vote on each charge separately.
- vii) Once guilt or innocence has been determined, a second phase to determine the censure, discipline, or employment status shall be held. Evidence may be offered by either party. The person who was directly harmed by the offense may submit a victim impact statement and shall not be subject to cross-examination. The body shall then meet privately to determine the degree of censure, discipline, or employment status.

C. Civil Authority.

Councils and entities must cooperate with civil authorities. Church disciplinary proceedings cannot interfere with a criminal investigation by civil authorities and may have to be suspended until these are completed. All records of church proceedings are subject to subpoena

D. Renunciation of Jurisdiction or Resignation

If a church member renounces jurisdiction during this process, or if an employee resigns, the need for appropriate disclosure, truth-telling, counseling, healing, and reconciliation may remain. Presbytery officers will ensure that all matters are addressed to achieve resolution and reconciliation.

E. Council or Entity Record Keeping

The council or entity will keep detailed records of its actions and minutes of its deliberations and its conversations with the accuser, the accused, and other parties involved, correspondence, and copies of the reports received from committees or commissions. Such records will be kept confidential as far as possible. In Case # 208-6, the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) interpreted the Rules of Discipline to say that a council or entity may share the contents of inquiry reports with other councils or entities of the PC(USA) when necessary. The clerk of the council or director of the entity will maintain the records while the inquiry is in process.

F. Pastoral Response Team

When a complaint is received, a response team or person shall be appointed by Presbytery staff or COM to provide pastoral care as a neutral third party, to all involved, ensuring that all parties are protected from any form of reprisal or retaliation. The team shall consult with the investigative body to ensure it does not in any way interfere with or participate in the investigative and hearing process. Members of the team must make no judgements about the truth or falseness of alleged facts nor the guilt or innocence of the accused. Responsibilities:

1. Assist a reporter to state a complaint in writing and refer it to the proper authority if this has not already occurred (see procedure above).
2. Consult with the Stated Clerk regarding the informing the accused and accusers of this policy and the procedures that will be used to administrate the complaint.
3. Provide a member of the team or another person to serve as an advocate for the accused or accuser in meetings with the investigators and at hearings if counsel is not present.

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4. Contact with the session and congregation (if a congregation is involved), based upon need-to-know decisions, in order to help the session and congregation care for the people involved and address what has happened. (If a Disciplinary case is involved the Stated Clerk will be the contact point for the Pastor and Session).
5. Contact others affected. (This may include other persons in the Presbytery or an agency. Contact persons will be determined by the RT and Presbytery Officers and Staff).

IV. Prevention and Risk Management

A. Implementation

The Book of Order requires that all councils adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy (G-3.0106). All councils and other church entities must inform members, employees, volunteers, and constituents of their sexual misconduct policies and the standards of conduct and the procedures for effective response when receiving a report of sexual misconduct.

B. Liability and Insurance

A council or entity can be held liable for harm caused by sexual misconduct of an officer, minister of the Word and Sacrament, commissioned pastor, employees or volunteers based on a number of legal theories. Councils and church entities must consider potential liability when establishing hiring and supervisory practices. They should regularly inform their insurance carriers of the activities and programs they operate or sponsor and of the duties and responsibilities of officers, employees, and volunteers. Insurance policies must carry endorsements for camps, day-care operations, shelters, or other programs. Congregations and other ministries of the Presbytery must carry insurance coverage for all forms of sexual misconduct, harassment, abuse, involving a child or adult.

C. Employment Practices

1. *Record Keeping* – Every council and entity must maintain a personnel file on every employee, including ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioned pastors, including, but limited to, the application for employment, any employment questionnaires, background checks, references responses, and all other documents related to an employee's employment.

2. *Prescreening Applicant Members and Employees*

a) The Presbytery will obtain a background check for all employees, ministers of the Word and Sacrament members, and Commissioned Pastors that includes a criminal history for sexual abuse or other crime, sexual harassment or abuse. Reference checks will include screening for previous complaints of sexual misconduct and their outcomes. Applicants should be informed of negative comments regarding sexual misconduct and shall be given an opportunity to submit additional references or to give other evidence to correct or respond to harmful information obtained from a reference.

b) The person within the council or entity authorized to give a reference is obligated to give truthful information regarding allegations, inquiries, and administrative or disciplinary action related to sexual misconduct of the applicant.

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c) Providing false or misleading information by an applicant, or withholding relevant information is grounds for disqualification or if discovered after employment (paid or volunteer), dismissal.

V. Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Training in the Presbytery

1. **Acknowledgment:** All candidates, ministers, and employees of the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast are required to sign a written acknowledgment indicating that they have received a copy of this Sexual Misconduct Policy, the Presbytery Child Protection Policy, the PCUSA Sexual Misconduct Policy, and Ethical Standards in the PC(USA) and that they understand that these are the procedures that will be followed should there be any accusation of sexual misconduct. Acknowledgments shall be kept in file.

2. **Seeking a Call within the Presbytery's Bounds:** All ministers seeking new calls within the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast shall complete the Personal Information Form currently being distributed by the Call Referral Services of the PC(USA), including Part IV, Sexual Misconduct Information or its successor form. Presbytery employees and volunteers other than ministers will complete an Employee/Volunteer Questionnaire.

3. **Employer Responsibility:** The employing body is responsible for contacting references for prospective ministers, employees, or volunteers.

4. **Adherence:** The Presbytery of the Northwest Coast and all its agencies, committees, and affiliates shall adhere to this policy, including its standards, procedures, and practices.

5. **Distribution:** This policy shall be distributed to all ministers, employees, volunteers, and entities of the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast. The policy shall be made available to all persons who accuse others of misconduct as well as those accused of misconduct.

6. **Education and Its Content:** The Presbytery of the Northwest Coast shall provide ongoing educational programs and training aimed at identifying and preventing sexual misconduct, and require such training of all ministers of the Word and Sacrament, commissioned ruling elders/commissioned pastors, certified Christian educators, and employees of the Presbytery. The goals of such education and training will include material on healthy boundaries in the professional relationship, recognition of the inherent power imbalance in our ministries, the challenges faced by the unique circumstances of ministry, the policies/procedures for the reporting of misconduct, and an encouragement of ongoing self-care. This same training is strongly recommended for ruling elders.

7. **Frequency of Training**¹. All ministers of the Word and Sacrament, commissioned pastors, and certified Christian educators are accountable to the Presbytery and are required to complete approved training **annually**:

Initial _____

- Those with no previous training must complete it before beginning service;
- Members transferring from other presbyteries must provide documentation of the content and attestation of completion of equivalent training which will satisfy the initial requirement if approved by COM at the time of joining the presbytery.

¹ Revised by Commission on Ministry, 12/2/2021.

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Executive Board; revised 12/12/2019

Training Requirements revised by COM 12/2/2021



- Chaplains & Counselors. Training required to maintain the position or credentials of chaplains, pastoral counselors or other presbytery members serving outside the jurisdiction of the church may satisfy the presbytery's requirement with their employer's requirements, if submitted and approved by COM. Request may be made to the Stated Clerk and must include a certification of completion and a summary of content.

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioned pastors not in compliance with this policy are "persisting in a disapproved work as delineated by G-2.0509: "When a minister of the Word and Sacrament persists in work disapproved by the Presbytery having jurisdiction, the Presbytery shall consult with the minister of the Word and Sacrament and shall be given notice of its disapproval. If after having been provided opportunity for consultation and upon written notice of its disapproval, the minister of the Word and Sacrament persists in the work, the Presbytery may then conclude that he or she has renounced the jurisdiction of the church. Renunciation of jurisdiction shall remove the minister of the Word and Sacrament from membership and ordered ministry and shall terminate the exercise of that ministry. . . The Presbytery . . . shall . . . delete his or her name from the appropriate roll, and take such other administrative actions as may be required by this Constitution, including public communication of such a renunciation."

Initial _____

8. Currently Approved Training:² Praesidium Academy Online Courses:

<https://www.praesidiumacademy.com/learn/dashboard>

Required of ALL Teaching Elders and CREs to engage in any kind of ministry:

1. Promoting a Safe Environment: Employee Sexual Harassment Training
2. Duty to Report: Mandated Reporter.
3. Preventing Abuse and Exploitation in Pastoral Ministry.

Additionally required of those working with or exposed to children, youth, or vulnerable adults (ordain/nonordained)

1. Abuse Risk Management
2. Keeping Your Church Safe
3. Preventing Sexual Activity between Adolescents
4. Preventing Sexual Activity between Young Children
5. Social Media Safety

Additionally Required of Pastors Head of Staff (recommended for all Ministry Leaders)

1. Promoting a Safe Environment: Supervisor Sexual Harassment Training.

9. Honorably Retired Exception. The good standing of honorably retired ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are incapacitated and/or who are no longer engaged the work of any kind of ministry normally conducted by ministers of the Word and Sacrament according to the Constitution is not affected by this policy, however no minister of the Word and Sacrament, regardless of status, may engage in the work of ministry without complying with this policy.

² Revised by COM 12/2/2021.

Receipt and Acknowledgement

I have received the following policies and am fully responsible for reading and understanding the content therein, and agree to abide by these policies as a condition of my employment, membership or volunteer service in the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (the Presbytery). I understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding these policies, I will consult with the Commission on Ministry, the Executive Presbyter, or the Stated Clerk. I have entered into employment with a congregation, a ministry of the presbytery or the presbytery itself, and/or have been received as or serve as a continuing member of the presbytery voluntarily and acknowledge that employment, service or membership may be for a specified term or may be for no specified length of time.

Since the information and policies described here are necessarily subject to change, I acknowledge that revisions may occur, that the Presbytery may change, modify, suspend, interpret or cancel, in whole or part, any of these policies or practices, according to its proper governance. Such revised information may supersede, modify or eliminate existing policies. The Presbytery shall have sole authority to add, delete or adopt revisions to these policies. Any written or oral statement by an officer or employee of the Presbytery contrary to these is invalid and should not be relied upon by any employee or member.

I further understand that the procedures and requirements delineated in *Sexual Misconduct Policy and its Procedures (12/12/2019)* and the *PCUSA Book of Order Rules of Discipline* will be followed in any accusation of sexual misconduct on the part of any elder, employee, or officer of the Presbytery.

- *Presbytery of the Northwest Coast, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Sexual Misconduct Policy and its Procedures (12/12/2019);*
- *the Presbytery of the Northwest Coast, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy (12/12/2019);*
- *the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Standards of Ethical Conduct (1998)*
- *and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Sexual Misconduct Policy and its Procedures (10/2013)*

Name:

Date:

Signed: