

**703-04 NORTHERN ILLINOIS ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED
METHODIST BASIC POLICY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL AND
GENDER HARASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT OF SEXUAL NATURE**

(Passed in Plenary on Saturday afternoon, June 8, 2002)

WHEREAS, it is both the ethical and legal responsibility of the Annual Conference to ensure that there are mechanisms for addressing grievances in matters of sexual misconduct by both laity and/or clergy,

WHEREAS, Misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church is incompatible with Biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing,

WHEREAS, the Church needs to be a place where one is respected and free from any misconduct of sexual nature, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the following statement be adopted as the Basic Policy of the Northern Illinois Conference on Misconduct of a Sexual Nature.

The Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist denomination affirms The 2000 Book of Resolutions, Sexual Abuse Within the Ministerial Relationship and Sexual Harassment Within the Church, which states that sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church are incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice, and healing. The 2000 Book of Discipline, Par. 2702.3, also recognizes that sexual misconduct and sexual harassment may constitute chargeable offenses by lay person as well. In accordance with The 2000 Book of Discipline, 161F, all human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29 states, all are one in Christ, we support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender.

Sexual misconduct, including sexual abuse and sexual harassment, occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership or authority, including pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, lay member or other position of leadership engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, pastor, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender (Book of Discipline 1611). It also includes intimidating or coercive behavior that threatens or results in a tangible employment action.

Gender harassment is behavior that is harassing in nature against a woman because she is a woman or against a man because he is a man.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role and exploitation of those who are vulnerable. This may also be the case with laity having leadership roles invested with authority or influence. Similarly, sexual and gender harassment are usually understood as exploitation of power relationships rather than as exclusively sexual or gender issues.

Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission.

_____ United Methodist Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong, and commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse or misconduct of a sexual nature within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the Book of Discipline. Further, the _____ United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of these sins and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Some instances of harassment can be resolved informally by conversation between the parties or facilitated mediation. In all other instances, the conduct must be reported immediately to at least one of these people: the chair or another member of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee, the pastor, another UMC pastor, a district superintendent, or the Bishop. If the conduct involves a clergy person, it must be reported to the clergy person's supervisor, district superintendent or the Bishop. Furthermore, the provisions of Paragraph 359, 413 and Paragraphs 2701-2706 of the Book of Discipline (2000) shall determine the procedure. In the event of any inconsistency between the provisions of the Book of Discipline and this Policy, the former shall govern.

The _____ United Methodist Church will not retaliate against any person who brings forward a complaint. All staff, leaders and volunteers are expected to immediately report any knowledge of harassment, abuse or misconduct to anyone of the persons listed above. Prompt and appropriate investigation and corrective action will be taken, including discipline. Persons who make false accusations will be subject to discipline.

While the United Methodist Church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, it will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing information about the complaint only on a "need to know" basis and as necessary to promote God's call for justice, reconciliation and healing.

Anyone who has any questions or concerns about this policy or the issues addressed is encouraged to air those questions or concerns to the PPRC or _____.

The Commission on Status and Role of Women