

**First United Methodist Church**  
**Orange**  
**SEXUAL ETHICS POLICY**

First United Methodist Church of Orange affirms *The 2008 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. In accordance with *The 2008 Book of Discipline*, 161F and G, 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 abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role and exploitation of those who are vulnerable. Similarly, gender or sexual harassment are usually understood as exploitations of power relationships rather than as exclusively sexual or gender issues.

***Any sexual behavior with a minor is not only immoral and inappropriate it is also illegal. Any allegation of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment with a minor requires mandatory reporting to Child Protective Services or law enforcement. The church will cooperate fully with any investigation by Child Protective Services or law enforcement.***

Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission. First United Methodist Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong. First United Methodist Church 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 latest *Book of Discipline*. Further, First 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 the chair or another member or the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (S/PPRC) and the Pastor. If the conduct involves the Pastor or appointed staff, it must be reported to the pastor or appointed staff's supervisor, the District Superintendent, or the Bishop.

**A. PURPOSE**

First United Methodist Church and its affiliates (hereafter referred to as the “Church”) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all individuals who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Church. (The term “Church” encompasses First United Methodist Church and all its subsidiaries and activities, including \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> The following procedures reflect our congregation’s commitment to preserving this Church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

**B. DEFINITIONS:**

The definition of sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer. (*2008 Book of Resolutions*, p.135)

The definition of 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.

The definition of sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, verbal, visual or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment also includes inappropriate sexually based behavior that renders the workplace atmosphere intimidating, hostile or offensive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than an exclusively sexual issue. 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 (Paragraph 161 I, *The 2008 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*).

The definition of a complaint or allegation of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or sexual abuse is any communication, either written or verbal.

**C. REPORTING**

***Larger church sample***

When anyone believes that he or she has been the victim of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or sexual abuse involving a member or employee of First United Methodist Church, he or she should report the allegation to the respective Director and/or Pastor and/or Executive Pastor immediately. In addition, any person who has reason to believe that sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or sexual abuse by a member or employee of First United Methodist Church has occurred or is occurring should promptly report the facts supporting their belief to the appropriate Director and/or Pastor and/or Executive Pastor.

<sup>1</sup> *Insert the name(s) of any 501.c.3 corporations or entities that operate within a specific church. For example, Bear Creek UMC School would be listed because it operates in the church even though it has its own 501.c.3 status, independent operating budget and independent operating board).*

#### **D. RESPONSE**

A Pastor receiving notification, either written or spoken, shall immediately report the complaint to her/his District Superintendent.

The person accused of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or sexual abuse shall be informed that there is an allegation, advised of the process of this policy, and instructed to maintain confidentiality and not to retaliate.

All Clergy and Staff who are aware of the problem will:

- Keep the matter confidential and only discuss it with those who have a “need to know”
- Treat each allegation seriously with respect for the privacy of all involved persons
- Cooperate fully with all investigating personnel.

#### **E. INVESTIGATION AND ACTION**

The S/PRC and Senior Pastor will make certain that all information relating to the allegation is documented in writing, including dates and times.

The S/PPRC in cooperation with Pastor will promptly investigate the allegation(s) and take appropriate remedial action.

The First 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.

#### **NON-RETALIATION**

This procedure prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct or assists in investigating charges.

Anyone found to engage in any retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination as a volunteer or employee of First United Methodist Church.

Approved by the SPRC June 29, 2011

Adopted by Church Council July 19, 2011.