

**BEHAVIOR POLICY  
FOR VOLUNTEER WORKERS OF  
PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

The policy of Peace Church is to maintain an environment free from offensive or degrading remarks about any person's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, or status with regards to public assistance, or membership or activity in a local commission dealing with discrimination. Offensive behavior prohibited by this policy includes requests to engage in illegal, immoral or unethical conduct.

Peace Church takes any complaints very seriously and will investigate each complaint thoroughly in a confidential manner.

This policy applies to all church lay, volunteer service providers and workers. This includes, but is not limited to: Church Council members, lay ministers, lay teachers, youth workers, youth advisors, Faith Formation superintendents, Faith Formation teachers, and nursery attendants. It is understood in this Policy that the above named have, by nature of the position, some power over others.

The complaint procedure found in Section 4 below describes the process to follow if you think you have been subjected to discriminating behavior of any kind.

**2. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND HARASSMENT (see definitions below)**

Peace Church is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which all members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with the Church shall be aware that the Church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by Church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the Church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

**Definitions**

- a. Sexual Exploitation:  
Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which an individual engaged in the work of the Church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the individual.
- b. Sexual Harassment:  
Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to her or his wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting the individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations.
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions.
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another person's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse.
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another person's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome; and using sexual behavior to control, influence or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden to either imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable evaluations, or favorable assignments, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

### **3. RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT**

All church volunteer workers are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority.

It is Peace Church's policy to encourage its church volunteer workers to nurture safety within Church-centered relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

#### **4. YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

Peace Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, the Church expects that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members of Peace Church for at least six months or friends of the Church for at least one year. All volunteers shall have an approved Application & Disclosure Form and a Background Check Form on file in the church office prior to working with minors.

It is the policy of Peace Church to provide adequate supervision consisting of at least two adults, preferably one male and one female, for all overnight and off-site youth group activities. It is expected that all church volunteer workers who work with minors acknowledge receipt of this Policy by signing the form in Appendix A.

#### **5. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

This policy applies to each and every church member and church volunteer worker. No retaliation or intimidation directed towards anyone who makes a complaint will be tolerated. In addition, the Church will not knowingly allow church volunteer workers to be subject to harassment from church members, church employees, friends or outside parties.

Every church volunteer worker has a right to make a complaint of harassment and to have the complaint investigated. In order to secure this right, any complaint must be made in writing to at least two of the following: the Church Council President, the Church Council Vice President, or the Senior Minister. This written complaint must be made as soon as possible after any incident that is believed to be prohibited discriminatory, harassing, or offending behavior. The complaint shall include specific details of the incident or incidents, the names of the individuals involved, and the names of any witnesses.

#### **6. INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION PROCEDURE**

Any alleged violation of this policy will be investigated by a volunteer team of members of the Peace Church Personnel Committee. This Investigation Team shall be comprised of no less than three volunteer members, including at least one male and one female. The Investigation Team shall be joined by the Senior Minister unless the complaint involves her or him. In this case the Council President shall join the team. The Investigation Team will familiarize itself with the terms of this policy, the established procedures of Peace Church, and the policies and procedures of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ for dealing with complaints of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment against any clergy or church volunteer worker.

The following options may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:

- I. The complainant shall report the incident in writing as described earlier.

- II. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant may request the Investigation Team institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
  - A. The Investigation Team shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment, and from others who may have pertinent information, and present such information to the Church Council.
  - B. The Church Council shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These actions may include:
    - 1. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred and that the appropriate body of the Church is called upon to take action accordingly. Such action may include one or more of the following:
      - a. Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, including possible public notification.
      - b. Recommending or requiring a program of growth that may include education and/or counseling.
      - c. Probation, with the terms of the probation clearly defined.
      - d. Dismissal from volunteer position, and, in extreme cases, affiliation with, or membership in, Peace Church.
    - 2. Finding that no sexual exploitation or harassment occurred, and that vindication and restoration of all persons take place as soon as possible.
  - C. If the accused person is a clergy person, the Investigation Team shall inform the appropriate body of the wider United Church of Christ (i.e. the Minister for the Conference, the Committee on the Church and Ministry) of the allegation. The Church shall cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to the person's ministerial authorization while retaining the right and the responsibility to employ or designate leadership within the Church as it determines best. The Church affirms and implements the policy of the Minnesota Conference regarding clergy sexual misconduct.
  - D. If allegations of possible child abuse are included in the complaint(s), the Investigation Team shall notify the police and the Church shall cooperate fully in any investigation. This policy shall

continue to be followed to determine the continuance of the individual(s) in leadership positions in the Church.

A written summary of the Church Council's proceedings shall be maintained in all cases.

In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment or exploitation, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint shall not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

If the complainant(s) or accused person(s) is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the supervisory body, he or she has the right to appeal to the Church Council President, who shall refer the matter to the Church Council for resolution.

Peace Church shall follow all state laws regarding these matters.

## **7 . APPROVAL AND CHANGE HISTORY**

4/25/99 - First draft by Personnel Committee

5/2/99 - Second draft; given to Christian Education committee

1/10/01 - Final draft presented to Christian Education committee w/requested changes

4/18/01 - Board of Christian Education made one addition and approved the policy

6/13/01 - Reviewed and approved by the Church Council

8/15/19 – Updated the verbiage Sunday School to Faith Formation (dfa)

**APPENDIX A**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF BEHAVIOR POLICY**

I hereby acknowledge that I have received and read the Peace Church Behavior Policy. I agree to conform to the rules outlined in this Policy as well as future communications from the Minister or Church Council.

It is also understood that the Church may make changes at any time without prior notice, as it deems necessary.

Worker's Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Primary volunteer activity (Faith Formation, youth group, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Worker's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date Returned \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Please return this form to the Church office.