

FIRESTONE PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ANTI RACISM POLICY

INTRODUCTION

“In each time and place there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations.”

(“The Confession of 1967,” Part II, “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” Section, A, “The Mission of the Church,” Paragraph 4, “Reconciliation in Society.” In Book of Confessions)

The Firestone Park Presbyterian Church follows Jesus in the mission of God’s reign where love and justice are the norm. The Lord Jesus Christ requires our action. We oppose racism in all its forms as inherently antithetical to Jesus Christ and to the image of God found in all humanity.

As the pinnacle of God’s good creation, human beings were formed as the very image of God. All of humanity bears that image regardless of race, gender, or other distinctions. As God’s image, we were given the responsibility to love God exhibited specifically in our care for each other and for the earth. Cultures, institutions, and societal structures were and are expected to love and serve God and neighbor intending to develop the world for God’s glory and honor. While we fully affirm our unity in God’s family, we also value differences resulting from culture, race, and nationality. Jesus Christ is the God of all races, all nations, all peoples; no single group, faction, or country defines Jesus Christ. God’s people come from every tribe, race, and nation.

Yet, we know our story reflects our fallen nature and our rebellion against God. This fracture negatively marks all the relationships we have and all the structures and institutions we build. Our relationships with each other are broken, characterized by our own misuse of power in practices and policies. Our institutions have been developed and maintained to serve primarily our own preferred groups. The sin that separates us from God separates us one from another. Within our own history, such brokenness has often been organized around and based on race. Even in our own day, we carry the effects of such differentiation based upon race in connections to status and power.

Thanks be to God that despite our sin the Lord loves us. By God’s grace, in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit calls us to love and serve both God and neighbor. By the Word and the Spirit, the power of sin and death with all its expressions in brokenness and injustice is and will be conquered. The good news of Jesus Christ is that God’s grace-filled promise draws us into covenantal fellowship with God and God’s multi-ethnic family where barriers are broken down. Through this promise, Christ calls and entrusts us with the ministry of reconciliation to God and to one another. As communities of faith, hope, love, and witness, the Holy Spirit calls us to demonstrate that God’s reign has come and is coming. These expressions of transformation include our relationships with each other, nurture of faithful discipleship, and advocacy for the public good.

“God’s redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of [humanity]’s life: social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate...It is the will of God that [the Lord’s] purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil shall be banished from [God’s] creation.

With an urgency born of this hope, the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In the steadfast hope, the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.”

(“The Confession of 1967,” Part III, “The Fulfillment of Reconciliation”, 9.54, 9.55 in The Book of Confessions (adapted to be inclusive))

Therefore, by God’s grace, in following Jesus, we offer ourselves in humble service both in policy and in practice to learn from others, to aspire to speak in the name of the Lord Jesus and to act faithfully so that the good news in all its fullness may be made known.

PURPOSE

Although no policy is perfect or complete for every scenario, we seek to declare and make clear our expectations of one another in addressing past and ongoing grievances based upon racism. In so doing, we seek to ensure that our ministries create opportunities for belonging within God's people and are free from discrimination and support an environment where God's people of different race, tribe and culture may be both beneficiaries and suppliers of God's grace to one another.

Through the following, we bind ourselves to faithful behavior and practices that will bring honor and glory to God and will support and encourage the entire body of Christ.

POLICIES

- The session of Firestone Park Presbyterian Church is committed to providing, supporting, and maintaining an environment that:
 - Creates belonging and is inclusive of members from different races, which include not only their background but also family, culture, and history.
 - Recognizes and embraces the value and benefits of cultural differences within the body of Christ.
 - Promotes respect and fair and equitable treatment for presbyters within all ministries associated with the Firestone Park Presbyterian Church.
 - Proactively attempts to address any policies, practices, cultures, and ideas that might perpetuate racial inequity.
 - Ensures that members are free from discrimination, vilification, or stereotyping.
- The session of Firestone Park Presbyterian Church will promote equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, cultural awareness and cross-cultural competency in its leadership structures, policies, and practices.
 - In the discernment and nomination of future leaders within our structures, particular attention will be paid to seeking out representation of possible candidates for ruling and teaching elders from non-majority groups wherever possible.
 - Meetings, worship services and gatherings of the presbytery will be conducted in ways that are culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive of diverse cultures and experiences.
- The session of Firestone Park Presbyterian Church will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination, vilification or harassment based upon race under any circumstances. Even if unintentional, such behaviors will be addressed through appropriate means.
 - One-time Interactions between members that include unwelcome remarks or jokes about race or demeaning statements should be addressed and resolved by those persons involved. If the person affected desire s/he may request a support person to be present for that meeting.
 - Patterns of behavior that persist over time or serious one-time incidents may need to be addressed through existing structures and procedures including, but not limited to the following.
 - A written protest to the committee or the session responsible for the alleged discrimination or bias based upon race in policies or practices.

- An allegation of an offense by a particular individual may be submitted as a written statement with supporting information to the Clerk of Session. All written complaints of allegations will follow the policy and procedures of the Rules of Discipline (Book of Order). The disciplinary process of the church does not exist as a substitute for the secular civil or criminal judicial system or preclude their initiation. A complainant is always free to contact secular authorities and the police if desired.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- All members have a responsibility to up-hold and act based upon discipleship that recognizes the mosaic of Christ's church. This includes taking personal responsibility for personal and professional conduct as well as identifying and bringing attention to appropriate people possible instances of cultural insensitivity or racism.
- The Session and Committee chairpersons will receive any grievances and take appropriate action to ensure that the ministry environment and practices of the congregation are free from racial discrimination, vilification, or harassment.
- The Clerk of Session will receive any written complaints where an allegation of disciplinary misconduct has or is occurring and ensures the appropriate disciplinary process is followed.

Firestone Park Presbyterian Church

Child Protection in the Church

Policy and Procedures

The following policy and procedures will be implemented by Eastminster Presbytery (hereafter “Presbytery”) and are to serve as a model for Sessions within the Presbytery as they develop their own policies.

General Purpose Statement

Eastminster Presbytery seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Eastminster Presbytery from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term “volunteer” means anyone involved in a day care or school, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous Eastminster Presbytery affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the Eastminster Presbytery.

b) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

c) **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Eastminster Presbytery.

d) **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and volunteers as defined above.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the presbytery to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the General Presbyter or Stated Clerk on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will

preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the Eastminster Presbytery office.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following: BoO G-4302

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

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. Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. In the case of a member of presbytery, the Stated Clerk shall be notified in writing.
3. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children, pending an investigation, and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
4. Civil authorities will be notified, and the Eastminster Presbytery will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. Eastminster Presbytery will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
5. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
6. The General Presbyter will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
7. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
8. Any person for whom charged of alleged abuse or misconduct are substantiated will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Eastminster Presbytery. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off: □

Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;

- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Eastminster Presbytery not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Eastminster Presbytery not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the

child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Training

Eastminster Presbytery will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

Distribution of this policy

- A. This policy will be distributed as follows:
 1. To Inquirers and Candidates for the Ministry of the Word and sacrament enrolled in Eastminster Presbytery, and to Certified Christian Educators, by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry;
 2. To Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and to Commissioned Lay Pastors by the Committee on Ministry;
 3. To all employees of the Presbytery; and
 4. To all persons supervising volunteers by the committee overseeing the activity of those volunteers.
- B. This policy will be distributed to all clerks of session as a suggested model for congregational Sexual Misconduct Policies.

FIRESTONE PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The following policy and procedures will be implemented by Eastminster Presbytery (hereafter "Presbytery") and are to serve as a model for Sessions within the Presbytery as they develop their own policies.

If the alleged misconduct involves a child, the pertinent Eastminster Presbytery policy shall apply in addition to any other under civil authority.

I. Policy

A. Biblical/Theological Principles and Their Applications

"As God who called you is holy, tend the flock of God that is your charge, Be holy yourselves in all your conduct, not under compulsion but willingly, Not for sordid gain but eagerly.

Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock.

You know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness." I

Peter 1:15; 5:2-3

The conduct of all members of the Presbytery, employees and volunteers, is of vital importance. They all minister in the name of Jesus Christ. Church members entrust their leaders, both clergy and laity, with real and symbolic power in these offices which represent God in whose name they speak, preach, pray, and bless. In principles set forth in Scripture, religious leadership is a covenantal relationship that presumes the trustworthy exercise of this power on behalf of those in their care.

Therefore, sexual misconduct is a tragic betrayal of trust and an unwarranted misuse of power on the part of people in leadership in the church. It is wrong and never permissible. And since religious leaders are always in positions of power, because they are in these symbolic roles which convey an aura of sanctity and authority, the mutual consent necessary for an appropriate sexual relationship is impossible. Moreover, religious leaders are always responsible for keeping boundaries and protecting the safety of those in their trust. We recognize that alleged victims of misconduct, including children, may repress their knowledge until later years, and for this purpose place no statute of limitations on their complaints (Rules of Discipline, Section D10.000).

B. A Definition of Sexual Misconduct

Sexual Misconduct is Sexual Harassment, Sexual Abuse, and Sexual Malfeasance committed by a Presbytery staff person, Teaching Elder (Minister of the Word and Sacrament), or other church leaders in their official capacity.

1. "Sexual Harassment" includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature 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 the organization or program;
 - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or participation decisions affecting such individual; or
 - 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.
2. "Sexual Abuse" includes:
 - a. Acts regarded as unlawful such as child sexual abuse, rape, sexual battery, and the like;
 - b. Sexual conduct with any person under the age of eighteen, or with any person without the mental capacity to consent; or
 - c. Sexual conduct accompanied by intimidation, force, threat, or coercion.
3. "Sexual Malfeasance" includes sexual conduct resulting from the misuse of office or position, including conduct arising from a ministerial or professional relationship, such as conduct

between clergy and congregation member, counselor and client, or youth leader and participant.

II. Procedures

A. Reporting Incidents of Sexual Misconduct

1. General Principles

- a. *Church Officers need to know procedures.* Reports of sexual misconduct may occur in a variety of ways. Because a governing body or unit cannot control to whom the accuser 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 shall be channeled to the proper person.
- b. *Absolute confidentiality is essential.* Reports of sexual misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the individuals involved and of the Church. Reports should be dealt with as a matter of *absolutely highest confidentiality* both before and after they have been submitted to appropriate authorities as outlined below.
- c. *Hearsay and rumor.* Hearsay and rumor are detrimental to the accuser, the accused, and the alleged victim, and thus to the potential for a fair and just resolution.

2. Receiving a Report

A person who receives initial information from an accuser about alleged sexual misconduct becomes morally obligated to immediately inform an appropriate officer in that church body or the next higher body. He or she should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the accuser or the accused about the alleged offense. Charges shall be prepared in writing to the Stated Clerk (D-10.404). If the charges involve the Stated Clerk, charges should be directed to the General Presbyter or the Moderator of Commission on Ministry. When the General Presbyter or the Moderator of the Commission on Ministry Moderator is notified of an alleged misconduct, they shall immediately notify the Stated Clerk.

B. Responding to Reports of Sexual Misconduct: The Response Team

All reports of alleged sexual misconduct should be dealt with by a specially selected and trained "Response Team."

1. Composition

A "pool" from which response teams will be selected will consist of persons who are members of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA), including people with special skills, e.g., psychological counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc.

2. Authority and Accountability

The Commission on Ministry (COM) appoints, with ratification by the Presbytery, the response team pool of persons and its Coordinator. The Response Team will be accountable to COM, but not report to it. The COM will sustain the pool and establish and monitor the training process.

3. Terms of Service

The response team members should commit to serve for a period of at least three years to ensure continuity and a professional level of experience and skill.

4. Training

The response team pool members will be trained to respond to allegations of sexual misconduct and to identify issues involved in sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and

child sexual abuse. Team members should be familiar with the legal, administrative and disciplinary procedures of the PCUSA and the Presbytery. After initial training, the team should meet regularly to familiarize itself with this policy, the procedures of the Presbytery, and to contribute to the design of its training. It is the responsibility of the Response Team Coordinator to schedule and provide for this training.

5. Primary Functions

- a. Demonstrate the care of the Presbytery to the church body involved.
- b. The Response Team will not:
 - Determine guilt or innocence of the accused;
 - Advocate for any party involved; or
 - Replace the functions of the COM, prescribed professional counseling, or Investigating Committee.

C. The Response Team Inquiry

When an allegation has been received, the Response Team Coordinator will ordinarily select a minimum of three members for the inquiry, and, since time is of the essence, they should begin their work immediately. The Response Team shall extend pastoral compassion by impartially listening to the alleged victim(s) and helping them come to terms with the issues.

1. Report to the Presbytery. Within thirty days from the date it first receives a report of sexual misconduct the Response Team shall submit a pastoral report to the General Presbyter. The report shall contain compassionate recommendations for the alleged victim and/or congregation.
2. The Response Team may recommend action to be taken to begin the healing process within the congregation, the governing body, or the unit concerning:
 - a. The pastoral needs of the congregation; and
 - b. The need for reconciliation with the congregation or employing entity of any of the parties involved.
3. Media Contact. Any inquiries from the media regarding an incident of sexual misconduct must be directed to a designated official of the Presbytery. Questions from the media shall not be addressed by any member of the response team.
4. Continued Availability of the Response Team. After the Response Team has submitted its report to the General Presbyter, the Response Team may remain available to all parties for continued pastoral care, to assure adherence to this policy, and to follow up on suggestions given to the governing body or entity.

III. Distribution of this Policy

B. This policy will be distributed as follows:

5. To Inquirers and Candidates for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elder) enrolled in Eastminster Presbytery, and to Certified Christian Educators, by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry;
6. To Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elder) and to Commissioned Lay Pastors by the Committee on Ministry;
7. To all employees of the Presbytery by the Personnel Committee; and
8. To all persons supervising volunteers by the commission overseeing the activity of those volunteers.

- C. This policy will be given to all persons reporting alleged sexual misconduct, to all alleged victims, and to all persons against whom allegations are made.
- D. This policy will be distributed to all clerks of session as a suggested model for congregational Sexual Misconduct Policies.

Firestone Park Presbyterian Church
Harassment Policy
Approved by Session on February 11, 2026

It is Firestone Park Presbyterian Church's belief that God has created all people in God's own image and thus has made us equal in Christ (Genesis 1:26). The Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is given shape and life and is meant to reflect our relationship to one another and to God. We firmly believe that God intends all human life to have worth and dignity in all relationships. Through these relationships we are bound to serve and to respect the dignity of every human being (F-1.0301). This respect and dignity afforded to all of God's creation is through the creation and maintenance of a safe environment within our community, free of harassment.

This policy applies to staff, volunteers, and members of congregation. The session, in conjunction with our existing policies and procedures and in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local anti-discrimination and harassment laws and regulations, enforces this Policy in accordance with the following definitions and guidelines.

Verbal Harassment: Verbal Harassment is that harassment established by a pattern of conduct of unwelcome or unwanted spoken or written comments. Those comments can include insults, jokes, slurs, false and misleading information, and threats. This could also include and is not limited to stereotyping based on a person's nationality, origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, body, medical conditions, disability, and appearance.

Nonverbal Harassment: Nonverbal Harassment includes, without limitations, distribution, display or discussion of any graphic material that ridicules, denigrates, insults, or belittles. This may also include and is not limited to a show of hostility, aversion or disrespect toward an individual or group because of nationality, origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, body, medical conditions, disability, and appearance.¹

Both Verbal and Nonverbal Harassment include, without limitation, persistent unwanted contact (verbal or nonverbal), bullying, intimidation, and interference in the ministry of the church or organization.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual Harassment is the behavior characterized by the making of unwelcome and/or inappropriate sexual remarks, physical advances, request for sexual favors, and/or other verbal and/or physical conduct of a sexual nature.² Sexual harassment may take many different forms including but not limited to verbal, nonverbal, and physical sexual harassment. More information about this can be found in Eastminster Presbytery's Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures and Personnel Policy Manual.

Electronic Harassment: Electronic Harassment is the use electronic communication to harass a person or groups, including but are not limited to email, blogs, social networking websites, online games, forums, instant messaging, Zoom and other virtual conferencing modalities, text messaging, and mobile phone pictures and videos. Harassment perpetrated through these online media have come to be known as "cyber bullying."³

¹ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Harassment. Accessed January 31, 2024.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/harassment>

² U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Sexual Harassment. Accessed January 31, 2024.

<https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>

³ US Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Electronic Harassment – Concept Map and Definition.

Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/electronic-harassment-concept-map-and-definition>

Retaliation: Retaliation is any hardship, loss of benefit, or penalty imposed on any person in response to filing or responding to a bona fide complaint or discrimination or harassment.⁴

In our efforts to create a church where all persons are treated with respect, and dignity the Firestone Park Presbyterian Church commits to:

- ✦ Provide anti-harassment training for our leaders and employees to encourage education, understanding, and growth.
- ✦ Acknowledge and thoroughly investigate all allegations of harassment providing support using Book of Order defined processes.
- ✦ Strive to create a congregation where harassment of all kinds is not tolerated or accepted, where all people of God are welcome and safe.

Acknowledgement

Firestone Park Presbyterian Church is indebted to Philadelphia Presbytery who overtured the 225th General Assembly to amend G-3.0106 to require all councils to adopt a harassment policy. This policy is heavily drawn from the policy the Philadelphia Presbytery approved on April 30, 2024.

⁴ US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Enforcement Guidance on Retaliation and Related Issues. Accessed January 31, 2024. <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-retaliation-and-related-issues>

Appendix A

Sample Actions that Describe Harassment

Sample actions of conduct that are prohibited may include, but are not limited to:

- Spreading malicious rumors, gossip, or innuendo.
- Excluding or isolating someone socially.
- Intimidating a person.
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work.
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse.
- Removing areas of responsibilities without cause.
- Constantly changing work guidelines.
- Establishing impossible deadlines that will set-up the individual to fail.
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information.
- Making jokes that are obviously offensive by spoken word or e-mail regardless of intent.
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking.
- Assigning unreasonable duties or workload which are unfavorable to one person (in a way that creates unnecessary pressure).
- Underwork – creating a feeling of uselessness.
- Yelling or using profanity.
- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly.
- Belittling a person's opinions.
- Unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment.
- Unwarranted blocking applications for training, leave, or promotion.
- Tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment.
- Using racist slang, phrases, or nicknames.
- Making remarks about an individual's skin color or other ethnic traits.
- Displaying racist drawings, or posters that might be offensive to a particular group.
- Making offensive gestures.
- Making offensive reference to an individual's mental or physical disability.
- Sharing inappropriate images, videos, e-mails, letters, or notes in an offensive nature.
- Talking offensively about negative racial, ethnic, or religious stereotypes.
- Making derogatory age-related comments.
- Wearing clothing that could be offensive to a particular ethnic group.
- Harassing communications can be verbal, written, electronic (e.g., email or text messages), or social media (e.g., X, Facebook, Instagram).

Appendix B

Steps to Prevent Harassment

1. Create a Safe Environment

Be vocal. Let your staff and congregation know you take harassment seriously. Those who work at and attend the church should feel safe if they need to come forward with an accusation of harassment.

Define policies. If there aren't policies in place concerning harassment in your church, create them now. The church must be prepared if an allegation surfaces. Provide awareness training. Consider using an appropriate video to enhance discussion.

2. Keep a Safe Environment

Practice Accountability. One way to keep your staff accountable is to stay aware of any change in behavior or individuals. Declining performance, increased absences, inability to concentrate and/or changes in work habits could indicate an employee being harassed.

Check your insurance. Make sure your church insurance covers employment related claims, such as a harassment claim.

Address allegation. When a non-anonymous allegation surfaces, follow the guidelines in the Church Discipline section of the Book of Order.

3. Annual Requirement

Review during officer training. Each officer of the presbytery needs to understand how to create a harassment-free environment. An annual review will help us to keep our eyes on the image of God in each other. Also review the guidelines in the Church Discipline section to know how to file an allegation when necessary.

Be certain to encourage policies in each congregation. Presbytery representatives should encourage the congregation of their membership to adopt and annually review a similar policy.

FIRESTONE PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The following policy and procedures will be implemented by Eastminster Presbytery (hereafter “Presbytery”) and are to serve as a model for Sessions within the Presbytery as they develop their own policies.

If the alleged misconduct involves a child, the pertinent Eastminster Presbytery policy shall apply in addition to any other under civil authority.

I. Policy

A. Biblical/Theological Principles and Their Applications

"As God who called you is holy, tend the flock of God that is your charge, Be holy yourselves in all your conduct, not under compulsion but willingly, Not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. You know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness." I Peter 1:15; 5:2-3

The conduct of all members of the Presbytery, employees and volunteers, is of vital importance. They all minister in the name of Jesus Christ. Church members entrust their leaders, both clergy and laity, with real and symbolic power in these offices which represent God in whose name they speak, preach, pray, and bless. In principles set forth in Scripture, religious leadership is a covenantal relationship that presumes the trustworthy exercise of this power on behalf of those in their care.

Therefore, sexual misconduct is a tragic betrayal of trust and an unwarranted misuse of power on the part of people in leadership in the church. It is wrong and never permissible. And since religious leaders are always in positions of power, because they are in these symbolic roles which convey an aura of sanctity and authority, the mutual consent necessary for an appropriate sexual relationship is impossible. Moreover, religious leaders are always responsible for keeping boundaries and protecting the safety of those in their trust. We recognize that alleged victims of misconduct, including children, may repress their knowledge until later years, and for this purpose place no statute of limitations on their complaints (Rules of Discipline, Section D10.000).

B. A Definition of Sexual Misconduct

Sexual Misconduct is Sexual Harassment, Sexual Abuse, and Sexual Malfeasance committed by a Presbytery staff person, Teaching Elder (Minister of the Word and Sacrament), or other church leaders in their official capacity.

1. “Sexual Harassment” includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature 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 the organization or program;
 - b. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or participation decisions affecting such individual; or
 - 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.
2. “Sexual Abuse” includes:

- a. Acts regarded as unlawful such as child sexual abuse, rape, sexual battery, and the like;
 - b. Sexual conduct with any person under the age of eighteen, or with any person without the mental capacity to consent; or
 - c. Sexual conduct accompanied by intimidation, force, threat, or coercion.
3. "Sexual Malfeasance" includes sexual conduct resulting from the misuse of office or position, including conduct arising from a ministerial or professional relationship, such as conduct between clergy and congregation member, counselor and client, or youth leader and participant.

II. Procedures

A. Reporting Incidents of Sexual Misconduct

1. General Principles

- a. *Church Officers need to know procedures.* Reports of sexual misconduct may occur in a variety of ways. Because a governing body or unit cannot control to whom the accuser 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 shall be channeled to the proper person.
- b. *Absolute confidentiality is essential.* Reports of sexual misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the individuals involved and of the Church. Reports should be dealt with as a matter of *absolutely highest confidentiality* both before and after they have been submitted to appropriate authorities as outlined below.
- c. *Hearsay and rumor.* Hearsay and rumor are detrimental to the accuser, the accused, and the alleged victim, and thus to the potential for a fair and just resolution.

2. Receiving a Report

A person who receives initial information from an accuser about alleged sexual misconduct becomes morally obligated to immediately inform an appropriate officer in that church body or the next higher body. He or she should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the accuser or the accused about the alleged offense. Charges shall be prepared in writing to the Stated Clerk (D-10.404). If the charges involve the Stated Clerk, charges should be directed to the General Presbyter or the Moderator of Commission on Ministry. When the General Presbyter or the Moderator of the Commission on Ministry Moderator is notified of an alleged misconduct, they shall immediately notify the Stated Clerk.

B. Responding to Reports of Sexual Misconduct: The Response Team

All reports of alleged sexual misconduct should be dealt with by a specially selected and trained "Response Team."

1. Composition

A "pool" from which response teams will be selected will consist of persons who are members of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA), including people with special skills, e.g., psychological counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc.

2. Authority and Accountability

The Commission on Ministry (COM) appoints, with ratification by the Presbytery, the response team pool of persons and its Coordinator. The Response Team will be accountable

to COM, but not report to it. The COM will sustain the pool and establish and monitor the training process.

3. Terms of Service

The response team members should commit to serve for a period of at least three years to ensure continuity and a professional level of experience and skill.

4. Training

The response team pool members will be trained to respond to allegations of sexual misconduct and to identify issues involved in sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and child sexual abuse. Team members should be familiar with the legal, administrative and disciplinary procedures of the PCUSA and the Presbytery. After initial training, the team should meet regularly to familiarize itself with this policy, the procedures of the Presbytery, and to contribute to the design of its training. It is the responsibility of the Response Team Coordinator to schedule and provide for this training.

5. Primary Functions

a. Demonstrate the care of the Presbytery to the church body involved.

b. The Response Team will not:

- Determine guilt or innocence of the accused;
- Advocate for any party involved; or
- Replace the functions of the COM, prescribed professional counseling, or Investigating Committee.

C. The Response Team Inquiry

When an allegation has been received, the Response Team Coordinator will ordinarily select a minimum of three members for the inquiry, and, since time is of the essence, they should begin their work immediately. The Response Team shall extend pastoral compassion by impartially listening to the alleged victim(s) and helping them come to terms with the issues.

1. Report to the Presbytery. Within thirty days from the date it first receives a report of sexual misconduct the Response Team shall submit a pastoral report to the General Presbyter. The report shall contain compassionate recommendations for the alleged victim and/or congregation.
2. The Response Team may recommend action to be taken to begin the healing process within the congregation, the governing body, or the unit concerning:
 - a. The pastoral needs of the congregation; and
 - b. The need for reconciliation with the congregation or employing entity of any of the parties involved.
3. Media Contact. Any inquiries from the media regarding an incident of sexual misconduct must be directed to a designated official of the Presbytery. Questions from the media shall not be addressed by any member of the response team.
4. Continued Availability of the Response Team. After the Response Team has submitted its report to the General Presbyter, the Response Team may remain available to all parties for continued pastoral care, to assure adherence to this policy, and to follow up on suggestions given to the governing body or entity.

III. Distribution of this Policy

B. This policy will be distributed as follows:

5. To Inquirers and Candidates for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elder) enrolled in Eastminster Presbytery, and to Certified Christian Educators, by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry;
6. To Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (Teaching Elder) and to Commissioned Lay Pastors by the Committee on Ministry;
7. To all employees of the Presbytery by the Personnel Committee; and
8. To all persons supervising volunteers by the commission overseeing the activity of those volunteers.

C. This policy will be given to all persons reporting alleged sexual misconduct, to all alleged victims, and to all persons against whom allegations are made.

D. This policy will be distributed to all clerks of session as a suggested model for congregational Sexual Misconduct Policies.