

STONY BROOK COMMUNITY CHURCH (UNITED METHODIST)

POLICY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL AND GENDER HARASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT OF A SEXUAL NATURE

The Community Church 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. In accordance with *The 2000 Book of Discipline, Para.161 F*; 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 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, and staff member, co-worker or volunteers.

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 or intimidating or coercive behavior that threatens or results in a tangible employment action (*Book of Discipline* 161-1).

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* 16-1).

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 is usually understood as exploitations 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. Community Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong.

The Community 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 *Book of Discipline*. Further, Community 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 of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and the pastor in charge. If the conduct involves the pastor in charge or another clergy person, it must be reported to the pastor's supervisor, district superintendent or the bishop.

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

While the Stony Brook Community Church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, it will make very 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 address those questions or concerns to the SPR Committee.

Staff Parish Relations Committee

Malcolm Bowman, Chair