

POLICY ON SEXUAL ETHICS
St. Andrew's United Methodist Church
1901 Archdale Drive
Charlotte, North Carolina 28210

Effective Date: **May 19, 2016**

Purpose and Foundation of Policy

St. Andrew's United Methodist Church affirms the 2000 Book of Resolutions, "*Sexual Ethics within Ministerial Relationships in the United Methodist Church*" which states that sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church as incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. 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.

Definitions

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, guest, 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.

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, sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship. The accepted clergy ethic is that dating is prohibited. For non-clergy staff dating should be discussed in light of any power relationship.

Misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interferes with its moral mission. St. Andrew's UMC stands in opposition to the sin of misconduct of a sexual nature in the Church and society at large and commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any charge of sexual harassment within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the Book of Discipline. Further, St. Andrew's UMC bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of misconduct of a sexual nature and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Reporting and responding

Some instances of sexual harassment can be resolved easily and informally between the parties.

In all other instances, the conduct should be reported to the chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee or the pastor in charge.

If the conduct involves a clergy person, any incident should be reported to the district superintendent or the presiding bishop. The reporting process requires verbal reporting, and a filed written complaint by the accuser.

Additional resources regarding reporting, rights, and process may be found at:

www.umsexualethics.org