

# Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures

## Weekday School

### South Point United Methodist Church

#### **South Point United Methodist Church Policy Statement On Sexual and Gender Harassment and Misconduct of a Sexual Nature**

South Point United Methodist Church (SPUMC) 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*, (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, situations, or gender.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person with 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.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual comment, advance or demand, either verbal or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. 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. (2000 Book of Discipline, (161.I.)

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.

Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse, and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission. South Point United Methodist Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive, and wrong. South Point United Methodist Church commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual or gender harassment, sexual abuse or sexual misconduct within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the current Book of Discipline. Further, South Point United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons which is free of these sins and encourages respect, equality, and kinship in Christ.

Anyone who has any questions or concerns about this policy or the issues addressed is encouraged to air those questions or concerns to the Chairperson of the Weekday School Board or the Pastor.

- All paid staff and volunteers (as listed) will be interviewed. Written permission will be obtained for a background check prior to that person assuming the position. Background check reports will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.
- No adult convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) will be allowed to work with children in any church or Weekday School activity. No one shall be hired or shall serve who has been previously convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to, any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act or guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior (molestation of a pre-adolescent child,) incest, rape, assaults involving adults with special needs or children, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the abuse of an adult with special needs or a child.
- No one shall be allowed to work with children in any church or Weekday School activity who has had a verdict or judgment rendered against him or her in any civil action arising out of any personal act or conduct related to sexual abuse of an adult with special needs or a child. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict or judgment was rendered.
- No one shall be allowed to work with children in any church or Weekday School activity who has acknowledged or admitted that he or she has participated as a perpetrator in any previous act of sexual abuse involving an adult with special needs or a child. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict or judgment was rendered.
- Two Adult Rule requires that no fewer than two adults be present at all times with any program or activity involving children. At no time will an adult be one on one with a child in an isolated or closed situation.
- All offices and classroom doors will have an uncovered window or halved so that the top portion of the door can remain open. Any counseling that occurs behind a closed door should allow for the viewing of the counselor through the office door window.
- All Weekday School staff will have an annual orientation for these policies and procedures.

## **Responding to Allegations of Misconduct**

It is the right of every SPUMC member, guest, employee, and volunteer to have an environment at the church free from sexual harassment and to stop unwelcome sexual conduct at the earliest opportunity.

In cases involving alleged sexual misconduct of a minor child (defined as persons less than 18 years of age,) the person receiving the report shall promptly report the incident to the authorities of child welfare and protective services. The person receiving the report shall also notify Chairperson of the Weekday School Board, the Chairperson of the Church Council, and the Pastor unless the incident involves any of these individuals. An "Incident Report" should be completed and filed. The Church Council will have no investigative or disciplinary role since authority in cases involving minor children is governed by local, state, and federal laws. The Church Council shall continue to be consulted and involved regarding the effect any actions may have on the life of SPUMC or the life of the family involved.

In cases involving sexual misconduct of a pastor appointed to SPUMC, the Church Council shall promptly report the allegations to the District Superintendent of South Point United Methodist Church. An "Incident Report" should be completed and filed. Once the report is made, the Church Council shall have no further investigative or disciplinary role since

authority in cases involving appointed clergy is vest in officials of The United Methodist Church. The Church Council shall continue to be consulted and involved regarding the effect any resulting actions may have on the life of SPUMC.

This policy prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct. Anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions will be terminated immediately.

## Definitions

For this policy, the following definitions will apply:

**Abuse:** harm or threatened harm to the health or welfare of an adult with special needs, child, or youth by any person responsible for the health and welfare of an adult with special needs, child, or youth that occurs through non accidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or mistreatment; sexual harassment, sexual contact, sexual molestation, disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit material.

**Adult:** any person at least 18 years of age.

**Appropriate:** conduct that one would reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible by the child's parent or guardian.

**Child or Children:** refers to a person less than 18 years of age.

**Church:** the local congregation.

**District Superintendent:** the acting superintendent of the respective district of South Point United Methodist Church.

**Leader:** anyone directly responsible for supervising and overseeing the specific church or weekday school related function, event, or activity.

**Parent or Guardian:** any parent, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent, or appointed guardian who has the general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child or an adult with special needs.

**Sexual Abuse:** means engaging in any sexual contact, sexual penetration, sexual exploitation, or sexual harassment of an adult with special needs or a child; disseminating, exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit material to an adult with special needs or a child, regardless of whether such conduct is with or without the knowledge or consent of the adult with special needs or the child. This abuse may be violent or nonviolent. It includes any conduct that involves adults with special needs or children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, social, emotionally, or developmentally ready.

**Sexual Contact:** means the intentional touching of the intimate parts of the clothing covering the immediate area of the intimate parts of a child or an adult with special needs.

**Sexual exploitation:** allowing, permitting, or encouraging an adult with special needs or a child to engage in prostitution or in the photographing, filming, or creating electronic or

computer-generated images or other forms of depicting an adult with special needs or a child engaged in actual or suggestive sexual contact.

**Sexual harassment:** any unwanted sexual advances or demands, either verbal or physical, which is perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive.

**Volunteer:** any person not receiving a salary, wages, or compensation for providing any services, care, guidance, assistance, or supervision for any adult with special needs or a child within a church related function, event, or activity.