

# **ANTI-HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY**

## **ANTI-HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY PRESBYTERY OF WEST VIRGINIA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is the policy of the Presbytery of West Virginia (the “Presbytery”) that people will be treated with respect, free from hostility, harassment, bullying, and in a manner which recognizes everyone’s right to dignity.

This policy sets out the commitment of the Presbytery to create an environment free from hostility in which all individuals are valued for their contribution and can develop to their full potential.

The Presbytery expects everyone to relate to each other properly and appropriately and treat their members, congregants, and staff of the churches of the Presbytery, the members and staff of the Presbytery, and the people we serve with respect and in a manner which recognizes everyone’s right to dignity. Any behavior that undermines this is unacceptable.

The Presbytery does not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying under any circumstances. While implementing and upholding the policy is the duty of the Elders and Pastors, all members, congregants, and staff have a responsibility to ensure that harassment and bullying do not occur in the Presbytery.

### **SCOPE**

The Book of Order states, “All councils shall adopt and implement the following policies: a sexual misconduct policy, a harassment policy, a child and youth protection policy, and an antiracism policy. Each council’s policy shall include requirements for boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training for its members at least every thirty-six months.” (G. 3.0106)

It is intended that the application of this policy is not to conflict with national, state, or local legislation. This policy applies to all Presbytery-related functions and communications.

### **DISTRIBUTION**

This Policy shall apply to and be distributed to all of the following: Presbytery staff; inquirers and candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacrament who are enrolled in this Presbytery; Teaching Elders who are members of the Presbytery or who have permission to labor within its bounds; Certified and Certified Associate Christian educators; Commissioned Pastors; preachers who are approved by the Presbytery; all officers, employees and volunteers of the entities of the Presbytery of West Virginia. This policy shall also be available on the Presbytery’s website.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are members of the Presbytery or who have permission to labor within its bounds, Certified and Certified Associate Christian educators; Commissioned Pastors, candidates, inquirers and preachers who are approved by the Presbytery; all officers, employees and volunteers of the entities of the Presbytery of West Virginia are required to

acknowledge that they have received, read, understand, and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with this Policy.

## **HARASSMENT DEFINITION**

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to age, gender, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, family responsibilities, political beliefs, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Unwanted sexual advances are also harassment.

Harassment also occurs where an employee is treated less favorably because they have rejected or refused to submit to unwanted advances.

Harassment is normally characterized by more than one incident of unacceptable behavior, particularly if it reoccurs once it has been made clear by the victim that they consider it offensive. However, a single incident may constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious. Harassment on any grounds will not be tolerated.

## **EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT**

Examples of harassment include:

- Verbal — crude language, open hostility, offensive jokes, suggestive remarks, innuendoes, rude or vulgar comments, malicious gossip and offensive songs;
- Non-verbal — wolf-whistles, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive posters/calendars, pornographic material (both paper-based and generated on a computer, including offensive screen-savers), graffiti, offensive letters, offensive e-mails, text messages on mobile phones and messages on social media;
- Physical — unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another person's body, intimidating behavior, assault and physical coercion;
- Coercion — pressure or promises in return for sexual favors (e.g. to get a job or be promoted) and pressure to participate in political groups, etc.;
- Isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion from social activities;
- Intrusion — following, pestering, spying, etc.

## **BULLYING DEFINITION**

Bullying is a deliberate and consistent wearing down process comprising sustained psychological abuse that makes victims feel demeaned and/or threatened. Bullying is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior, or an abuse or misuse of power, which has the purpose, or effect, of intimidating, belittling and humiliating the recipient.

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### **EXAMPLES OF BULLYING**

Bullying can range from extreme forms such as violence and intimidation to less obvious forms such as psychological manipulation or isolating individuals, including the use of social media.

Examples include:

- Shouting or swearing at people in public and private;
- Persistent unjustified criticism, or criticism without offering constructive solution in case of criticism that may be justified;
- Ignoring or deliberately excluding people from professional activities for personal reasons;
- Persecution through threats and instilling fear;
- Spreading malicious rumors;
- Sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else on social media (SMS, text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content); and
- Sharing personal or private information about someone else over social media causing embarrassment or humiliation.

### **INVESTIGATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

Allegations of harassment and/or bullying shall be made to Stated Clerk, Head of Presbytery Staff, Chair of Administration Committee and will be investigated in accordance with the Process For Reporting An Incident Of Sexual Misconduct included in the Presbytery's Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Misconduct and/or Church Discipline in the Book of Order. When pertaining to Presbytery staff, this policy shall be administered by the Head of Staff and Administration Committee.

Examples of harassment and bullying are often highly context-specific and sensitive in nature. Individuals who believe they are being harassed or bullied may wish to, and are welcome to, discuss their situation before deciding what action to take. The Presbytery operates an open-door policy to discuss problems and members, congregants, and staff can discuss the matter with a pastor or ruling elder on an informal basis.

### **MONITORING**

Where harassment or bullying has been reported and investigated, regular checks will be made to ensure that the harassment or bullying has stopped.

### **MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS**

Where a complaint is blatantly untrue and has been brought out of malice, or for some other unacceptable motive, the complainant will be subject to the Presbytery's disciplinary procedures, as will any witnesses who have deliberately misled the Presbytery during its investigations.