



Ethics and Integrity in Ministry Policy

The Reformed Episcopal Church Diocese of Mid-America *Special Committee on Diocesan Policies* is charged with providing resources and direction for managing insurance issues within the Diocese and any of its parishes, missions, and ministries. Our current step in this process is to offer the following documents; to wit:

1. Policy for Ethics and Integrity in the Ministry.
2. Policy for Protection of Children and Youth.
3. Parish Templates and Resources to aid implementation of Policy

The two policies above in conjunction with the previously promulgated Customary for the Diocese of Mid-America should be considered to be the current Policies and guidelines for these important issues.

Each Parish is required in these Policies to adopt and implement Parish Policies consistent with the Diocesan Policies by the end of 2019. In addition, these Policies require recurring training for persons involved in the Parish. These Policies need to be researched by each Parish to ensure that the Parish also complies with the applicable state laws.

The Committee will continue to compile and distribute additional resources that can be used by our parishes. As stated above, we will be working during 2019 to develop “minimum insurance coverages” that each parish must have. We will also be working on financial guidelines and policies that will accompany the previously produced Diocesan Customary. If you have concerns, questions, or if you need resources about this policy or the work of the Committee, please feel free to contact the Committee chair.

On behalf of the Committee Chairman and members,
Bishop Ray Sutton

***Reformed Episcopal Church
Diocese of Mid America***

***Policy
On Ethics and Integrity in Ministry***



I. Principles of Ethics and Integrity in Ministry: Code of Ethics

Relationships among people are a foundation of Christian ministry and are central to Christian life. Defining healthy and safe relationships is not meant, in any way, to undermine the strength and importance of personal contact or the ministerial role. Rather, it is to assist all who fulfill the many roles that create the living Church to demonstrate their love and compassion for children and adults in the most sincere and genuine relationships.

It is with the intention that relationships in ministry be experienced at all times as charitable and without intention to do harm or allow harm to occur, that the following Code of Ethics has been adopted by the Diocese of Mid-America. All Church personnel are asked to carefully consider each standard in the Code and within the Policies on Ethics and Integrity in Ministry before agreeing to adhere to the standards and continue in service to the Diocese.

- A. Church personnel shall exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity.
- B. Church personnel shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with the discipline, norms and teachings of the Church.
- C. Church personnel shall provide a professional work environment that is free from harassment.
- D. Church personnel shall not take advantage of counseling, supervisory and/or authoritative relationship for their own benefit.
- E. Church personnel shall not abuse or neglect a minor or an adult.
- F. Church personnel shall share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their rector/vicar, their lead school administrator, the diocesan chancellor or the Bishop Ordinary of the Diocese (or his appointed representative for such purposes)
- G. Church personnel shall adhere to the requirements of the law of the State in which they minister regarding the reporting of any suspected abuse of a minor. Such information should be made available to all persons involved in the Parish operations and programs.
- H. Church personnel shall accept their personal responsibility in the protection of minors and adults from all forms of abuse.

II. General Definitions

A. Church Personnel

For the purposes of this policy, the following are included in the definition of Church personnel:

1. Bishops, Priests, and Deacons (Clergy), and Deaconesses
 - a. Clergy and Deaconesses canonically resident in the Diocese of Mid-America
 - b. Clergy and Deaconesses who are members of religious institutes or in other forms of consecrated life, and who are assigned to pastoral work in the Diocese or who are otherwise engaged in the care of souls, the public exercise of divine worship, and other works of the apostolate.
 - c. Clergy and Deaconesses of other jurisdictions who are assigned to pastoral work in this Diocese, whether seeking canonical residency within the Diocese or not.
 - d. Clergy and Deaconesses who are otherwise legitimately residing within the territory of the Diocese, including retired clerics and those engaged in part-time or supply ministry.
 - e. In addition to the provisions of these Policies, the above-mentioned Clergy and Deaconesses are also bound by the Customary and Canons of the Diocese of Mid-America.
2. Seminarians and Religious Orders
 - a. All seminarians legitimately enrolled in the seminary program of the Diocese and those who are in process including aspirants, postulants and candidates to the priesthood.
 - b. Those who are enrolled in the permanent diaconate formation program.
 - c. Any members of religious orders working within the Diocese.
3. The Laity
 - a. All paid personnel or contractors whether employed in areas of ministry or other kinds of services by the Diocese, its parishes, missions, schools or other agencies.
 - b. All volunteers. This includes any person who enters into or offers himself/herself for a Diocesan parish related service of his/her own free will.

4. Service Contractors

Any organization or individual under contract to the Diocese, its parishes, missions, schools or agencies who work around children or youth.

B. Types of Misconduct

For the purpose of this policy, misconduct includes the four types of behavior listed below:

1. Immoral conduct: Conduct that is contrary to the discipline and teachings of the Reformed Episcopal Church and which may result in scandal to the faithful or harm to the ministry of the Reformed Episcopal Church.
2. Harassment: The illegitimate and offensive use of power where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile or intimidating work environment.
3. Exploitation: Taking advantage of a pastoral counseling relationship for the benefit of the pastoral counselor.
4. Abuse of minors: Physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children under the age of 18, or adults who are uniquely vulnerable to abuse of physical or mental disabilities, in full accordance with state or other applicable laws.

The definition of abuse of minors is further defined in the policy for Protection of Children and Youth issued by the Diocese.

Every parish has the responsibility to research and comply with their own state and/or other applicable laws.

C. Mode of abuse

For the purpose of this policy, misconduct is not limited to in-person occurrences but also includes such behavior expressed through internet websites, social media venues, emails, text messages, and other modes or forms of non-face-to-face communication.

III. Prevention of Immoral Conduct: Guidelines for Ethical Behavior

A. Definitions

Immoral conduct is conduct contrary to the discipline and teachings of the Reformed Episcopal Church and which may result in scandal to the faithful or harm to the ministry of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

B. Standards of the Diocese as to Prevention of Immoral Conduct

1. Church personnel enjoy a public trust and confidence. It is essential that Church personnel view their own actions and intentions objectively to assure that no observer would have grounds to believe that irregularity in conduct exists. All Church personnel have a responsibility to strive to uphold the standards of the Church in their day-to-day work and personal lives.
2. Further, it is fundamental to the mission of the Diocese, that Church personnel exhibit the highest ethical standards and personal integrity. The purpose of this policy is to insure that all Church personnel follow the ethical standards of the Church. Therefore, Church personnel are prohibited from engaging in the following conduct:
 - a. Immoral conduct.
 - b. Actions that are disruptive to the ministry and public worship.
 - c. Possession or distribution of pornographic material.
 - d. Adultery, flagrant promiscuity or illicit co-habitation.
 - e. Abuse of alcohol, drugs or gambling
 - f. Stealing or any other form of theft, including misappropriation of Church funds.
 - g. Sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse.
 - h. Physical assault and fighting.
 - i. Verbal abuse; See IV – A – 2. below
3. Church personnel should not harm the reputation of others by:
 - a. Disclosing without legitimate cause the faults or failings of others to persons who have no cause to know them.
 - b. Making false allegations against another.

IV. Prevention of Harassment: Guidelines for Professionalism

A. Definitions

1. Harassment is an illegitimate and offensive use of power where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile or intimidating work environment.
2. Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, psychological, written, or verbal behavior that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Physical or mental abuse
 - Racial insults
 - Derogatory ethnic slurs
 - Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
 - Sexual comments or sexual jokes
 - Requests for sexual favors as a condition of employment, or to affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation
 - Display of offensive materials
 - Intimidation.

3. Harassment may be severe and/or pervasive.
 - a. Severe conduct is sufficient to alter a workplace environment even though it may occur only once.
 - b. Pervasive conduct is a persistent pattern of harassment.

B. Standards of the Diocese as to Prevention of Harassment

1. Church personnel shall not engage in harassment and shall not tolerate harassment by other Church personnel.
2. Church personnel shall provide a professional work environment that is free from harassment.

V. Prevention of Exploitation: Guidelines for Pastoral Counseling

A. Definitions

1. Pastoral counseling occurs when Church personnel offer spiritual direction or advice concerning moral or spiritual matters. The Church personnel may or may not be a certified spiritual director or trained, licensed or degreed in professional counseling. It is mandatory if there is a need for long-term or frequent counseling, Church Personnel, not certified or licensed, will refer to a professional.
2. Exploitation occurs when Church personnel take advantage of the pastoral counseling relationship for the benefit of the pastoral counselor.
3. Sexual exploitation is sexual contact between Church personnel and the recipient of their pastoral counseling services, regardless of who initiates the contact.
4. A conflict of interest occurs when Church personnel take advantage of pastoral counseling relationships in order to further their own interest.

B. Standards of the Diocese in Prevention of Exploitation

1. Church personnel shall recognize their limitations in pastoral counseling situations. Those providing pastoral care should either have ongoing professional supervision or refer an individual to professional counseling after six sessions have been held. Fees or donations for pastoral care are prohibited; any person charging fees for counseling outside the scope of church employment must possess appropriate professional credentials and proof of separate professional liability insurance, including coverage for sexual misconduct, in force at all times. Persons practicing formal spiritual direction shall submit that ministry to peer or supervisory review with a spiritual advisor approved by the Bishop.
2. Church personnel shall not engage in exploitation, sexual exploitation, and/or sexual intimacies with persons whom they counsel. Church personnel are also prohibited from engaging in situations or conduct that can give the appearance of exploitation, sexual exploitation or sexual intimacies.

3. Church personnel shall set and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries in all pastoral counseling relationships. Particular care should be taken when counseling relatives or friends.
4. If physical contact is warranted for professional, clinical reasons, it should always be respectful and consistent with the intent to provide a safe and comfortable pastoral counseling environment.
5. Pastoral counseling should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times and should not be held at places or times that would cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled. Care should be taken to learn and abide by recommended best practices to avoid such confusion. This setting normally requires either a “line of sight” rule or two persons to be involved in the counseling.

C. Standards of the Diocese as to Confidentiality

1. The confessional seal is inviolable by divine mandate; therefore, it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray the confidence of a penitent in any way and for any reason, within the limitations set in the following points of this section and in accordance with applicable law.
2. Information disclosed to Church personnel during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible, with due regard for the norm of civil and/or canon law.
3. Church personnel should discuss the nature of confidentiality, including its limitations, with each person who seeks pastoral counseling or requests a formal confession.
4. If there is clear and imminent danger, the Church personnel are to disclose the information necessary to protect the parties involved and to prevent harm.
5. If disclosure must be made, if feasible, the Church personnel should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure.
6. With the exception of knowledge gained in a formal confession, knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, delivering homilies, or other public presentations only when effective measures have been taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual’s identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures. In the rare event that such disclosures are used, good pastoral judgment is of the utmost importance when making decisions about the use of information in public ministry.
7. If Church personnel discover, while counseling a minor, that there is a serious threat to the welfare of the minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian (and if necessary, to any other appropriate ecclesiastical or civil authority) is essential to the child’s health and well-being, the Church personnel must disclose the information necessary to protect the health and well-being of the minor.

D. Standards of the Diocese as to Conflicts of Interest

1. Church personnel shall establish clear, appropriate boundaries with anyone with whom they have a business, professional or social relationship. The purpose of this rule is to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest or a less than professional relationship or conduct. Any question should be resolved in favor of avoidance of such conduct.
2. If a conflict of interest exists or arises, Church personnel should inform all parties. Resolution of the issues must protect the person being counseled. If there is any question of whether a conflict of interest exists, the question should be referred to the Bishop Ordinary and the Chancellor for review and advice.