

## Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii

### SAFE CHURCH DEFINITIONS, POLICY, AND GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

#### Introduction

The Church does not treat sexual misconduct as an entirely private affair between consenting adults, since attitudes and relationships with other people are affected. Clergy and lay leaders must use great care to avoid taking advantage of trust or of abusing their authority, responsibility and caring in relationships whether with children or adults.

Victims of sexual misconduct, whether they participated willingly or were coerced, need support. The person who is victimized must have a chance to be heard and helped. These policies, recommendations and procedures are intended to guide individuals and congregations who may find themselves involved in sexual situations beyond their control.

#### Definitions

Sexual misconduct is defined by the Diocese of Hawaii as any

- a) sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent; or
- b) sexual harassment in a situation where there is an employment, mentor or colleague relationship between the person involved, including but not limited to: sexually-oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference unrelated to employment qualifications; sexualized physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; repeated requests for social engagements or
- c) sexual exploitation, including but not limited to, the development of or the attempt to develop a sexual relationship between clergy person, employee or volunteer and a person with whom he / she has a pastoral relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual.

#### Policy and Guidelines

**It is the policy of the Diocese of Hawaii that sexual abuse, harassment, or exploitation of any kind by anyone who undertakes ministry, whether staff person or volunteer of this diocese or any of its congregations or agencies, will not be tolerated.**

1. No employee or volunteer of this Diocese or any congregation within this Diocese shall use their church affiliation to treat another in a disrespectful or demeaning manner or to solicit special favors.
2. Any sexual behavior on the part of an adult towards a minor is inappropriate, illegal and a misuse of power. Anyone suspecting any such behavior needs to report it to the legal

authorities and to the priest-in-charge, a locally designated contact person and/or a member of a regional Pastoral Response Team. Such contact persons need to be respected and approachable, a male and female selected by the regional Pastoral Response Teams to serve in each region of the Diocese.

3. It is inappropriate for anyone serving in a ministerial capacity within this Diocese to have sexual contact with a person to whom they minister. This applies to bishops, archdeacons, priests, deacons, lay Eucharistic ministers, lay pastors, Stephen Ministers, home and hospital visitors, youth ministers, missionaries, Sunday school teachers and anyone else in equivalent ministry.
4. If a single person in a ministerial capacity becomes interested in dating or romance with a member of his/her congregation – though this is complicated and not advisable – that minister must treat the community and the other person respectfully, not engaging in sexualized behavior prior to formalizing a committed relationship.

In the past, romantic relationships between single persons in a ministerial capacity and other single persons with whom he/she has a ministerial relationship have not always been defined as sexual exploitation. Within the Church, there are priests, for example, who married members in a congregation in which they served.

Nevertheless, such relationships are always very complex and subject to later interpretation. While they may appear consensual, these relationships may not truly be mutual because of the inherent imbalance of power between the single person in a ministerial capacity and the member of the congregation. Similar relationships are recognized as inappropriate by members of other professions, such as doctors and therapists. A person in a ministerial capacity cannot be both minister and suitor at the same time. Thus, in a congregation served by a single person in a ministerial capacity, a member of that congregation dating a minister loses his or her minister. If the relationship between the congregational member and the single person in ministerial capacity comes to an end, the member of the congregation may feel ill-treated. Regardless of the outcome of the relationship, the congregation may be harmed by secrecy surrounding the relationship or by the sense of ownership and responsibility accompanying even a relationship that results in marriage.

Any single person in ministerial capacity contemplating a relationship with a person with whom he/she has a ministerial relationship is advised to seek discernment in the Christian community. This includes consultation with the Bishop or a person appointed by the Bishop and with representatives of the congregation (or other place of ministry) and/or village elders. In addition, care must be taken in such situations that pastoral care for the member of the congregation is available from another minister. If a complaint is made regarding such a relationship, this Diocese will investigate it according to the *Procedures for Processing Complaints of Ministerial Sexual Misconduct*.