

**Wright Congregational United Church of Christ**  
Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct, and Youth Protection Policy

**STATEMENT OF POLICY**

**A. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment** (See definitions.)

Wright Congregational United Church of Christ is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with Wright Congregational United Church of Christ should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

**B. Ministerial Conduct** (see definitions.)

All persons engaged in the ministry of Wright Congregational United Church of Christ, (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers), are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of Wright Congregational United Church of Christ is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers, (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers), often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, and spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry. It is the policy of Wright Congregational United Church of Christ to encourage its leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources. It is also expected that those engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to that of the one accompanying this policy.

**C. Youth Protection Policy**

Wright Congregational United Church of Christ is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we expect that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members for at least six months or friends of Wright Congregational United Church of Christ for one year. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities. We also expect all employees or volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to that of the one accompanying this policy.

## Definitions

**Minister:** a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.

**Authorized Minister:** a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

**Ministerial relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

**Sexual exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

**Sexual harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome--and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or ships, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

**Wright Congregational United Church of Christ  
Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment by Employees and  
Volunteer Leaders.**

- A. The Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee is responsible for hearing complaints under the Policy.
- B. Several Options may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment.
- The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual(s) accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.
  - The complainant can report the indecent(s) to a pastor of the church, in an effort to resolve the matter
  - If an informal resolution of the complaint(s) does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed. The complainant(s) may request that the Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
    1. The Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation(s) or harassment(s), and from others who may have pertinent information, and present such information to the employee's or volunteer's supervisor and the supervisory body of the accused individual(s).
    2. The Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee shall make determinations and make recommendations and take appropriate actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:
      - a. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred and recommend that the Board take action accordingly.
        - Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior including possible public notification;
        - Recommending or requiring a program of growth that may include education and/or counseling'
        - Probation, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
        - Dismissal from employment or volunteer leadership position, and in extreme cases, affiliation with , or membership in, the church.
      - b. Finding that no sexual exploitation or harassment occurred.
    3. If the accused employee or volunteer is an authorized minister (*see definitions*), the Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee shall inform the appropriate body of the wider United Church of Christ, (i.e., Central Pacific Conference office), of the allegation. Wright Congregational United Church of Christ will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ or the Central Pacific Conference related to the person's ministerial authorization while retaining the right and responsibility to employ or designate leadership within Wright Congregational United Church of Christ as it determines best.
    4. If allegations of possible child abuse are included in the complaint(s), the Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee shall notify appropriate secular authorities and Wright Congregational United Church of Christ shall cooperate fully in any investigation. This policy shall continue to be followed to determine the continuance of the individual(s) in leadership positions in Wright Congregational United Church of Christ.
- C. A written summary of the Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee proceedings in such cases will be maintained.

D. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment or exploitation, consideration shall be given to the record of alleged incident(s) as a whole and the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

E. Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged

F. If the complainant(s) or accused person(s) is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the supervisory body, he or she has the right to appeal to the Board Chair who shall refer the matter to the governing board for resolution.