

November 2016
(revision)

**Atlantic United Methodist Church
Policy Statement of Misconduct of a Sexual Nature**

The Atlantic United Methodist Church affirms the 2012 Book of Resolutions, ¶2044: "Sexual Misconduct within Ministerial Relationships is a betrayal of sacred trust. It is a continuum of unwanted sexual or gender-directed behaviors by either a lay or clergy person within a ministerial relationship...It can include child abuse, adult sexual abuse, harassment, rape, or sexual assault, sexualized verbal comments or visuals. Unwelcome touching and advances, use of sexualized materials including pornography, stalking, sexual abuse of youth or those without capacity to consent, or misuse of the pastoral or ministerial position using sexualized conduct to take advantage of the vulnerability of another." In accordance with the 2012 Book of Discipline, ¶161.F, 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 with regard to ethnicity, situation or gender.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within 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 advance or demand, either verbal or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. 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, the 2012 Book of Discipline, ¶165.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, sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue.

Misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interferes with its moral mission. Atlantic United Methodist Church stands in opposition to the sin of misconduct of a sexual nature in the Church and society at large and commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any charge of sexual misconduct with the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the 2012 Book of Discipline, ¶361, ¶362, and ¶2702-¶2714. Further, the Atlantic United Methodist Church seeks to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of misconduct of a sexual nature and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

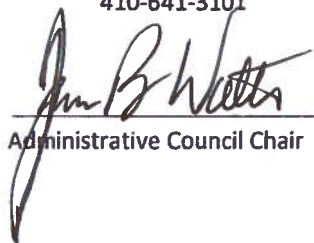
Some instances of sexual harassment can be resolved easily and informally between the parties. In all other instances, misconduct of a sexual nature should be reported to the chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the pastor in charge. If the conduct involves a clergy person, it should be reported to the district superintendent or the presiding bishop.

Telephone numbers:

Salisbury District Superintendent's Office	410-749-3331
Worcester County Social Services	410-677-6800
Ocean City Police Department	410-723-6610
Maryland State Police	410-641-3101



Pastor



Administrative Council Chair



Staff Parish Relations Com. Chair