**Church Sexual Misconduct Policy-SAMPLE**

**PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches biblical ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another or personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. It is a grave ethical transgression for any Christian to betray trust by sexually abusing or exploiting another person, whether child or adult. Sexual exploitation or abuse is a terrible injury to the one abused and a violation of faithfulness to Christ.

Therefore, it is the policy of this church that sexual misconduct is prohibited and will not be condoned or tolerated. It is the policy of the church that ministers, church members, church officers, employees, and volunteers involved in church matters exercise responsible sexual behavior and maintain the integrity of employment and member relationships at all times. Further, it is the policy of this church that charges of sexual misconduct will be treated with the seriousness they deserve and dealt with swiftly and fairly for the benefit of all parties concerned. Where sexual misconduct or allegations of such misconduct occur, the following policy will guide.

**DEFINITIONS**

Sexual misconduct includes any form of sexually inappropriate behavior or contact, whether criminal or not, by employees or representatives of the church, whether ministers or laity, whether paid or unpaid, and without regard to particular titles or positions. Without limitation, sexual misconduct encompasses:

**Sexual Harassment:** Any verbal statement of physical sexual advance that is known, or ought reasonable to be known, to be un-welcomed and offensive to another person and which has the effect of interfering with a person’s job performance by creating an intimidating, threatening, hostile work or service environment. Sexual harassment includes such things as unwelcomed sexual jokes, request for sexual favors, un-welcome touching, or display of sexual images that insult, degrade, or exploit men or women, boys or girls.

**Sexual Malfeasance:** Arises from broken trust resulting in sexual physical conduct within ministerial or professional relationship.

**Child Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual contact or inappropriate verbal or physical sexual interaction between an adult and a child under 18 years of age or who is legally incompetent.

**Adult Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.

**REPORTING**

1. The first step in stopping sexual harassment is to directly inform the person involved that his/her conduct is unwelcome, a violation or church policy, and that it must stop immediately.
2. Anyone may report allegations of sexual misconduct to the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor, HR Director, Personnel Committee, or a person with leadership responsibility in the congregation.
3. Allegations of sexual abuse with minor children and vulnerable adults must be reported to the Senior Pastor and local legal authorities.
4. Allegations of sexual misconduct must be made in writing as to date, time and circumstances.
5. Our priority will be to seek to provide support for the Accuser/Victim as he/she decides how to resolve the situation, as well as to exhibit appropriate professional and pastoral concern for the protection of the rights of the alleged Accused.

**INVESTIGATING**

1. Allegations of sexual misconduct against ministerial/pastoral staff, employees, and volunteers of congregation will be investigated promptly, handled with discretion and confidentiality, and adjudicated by the Personnel Committee or an ad hoc committee appointed by the Senior Pastor.
2. The committee shall report its findings and recommendation to appropriate church leadership, and if necessary, the congregation.
3. Victims of alleged sexual misconduct have the right to confront the accused.
4. Victims may have the support of a trained advocate through the process.
5. The accused has the right to know the nature and substance of the allegations and secure legal counsel.
6. All allegations will be taken seriously. Some levels of evidence are easily accepted as compelling; other levels are much more difficult to so label, and will involve judgment calls. Care will be taken to distinguish honestly the level of certainty in all reports.
7. Since some misconduct immediately becomes a matter of criminal law, confidentiality cannot be absolutely guaranteed, because records of investigations can be subpoenaed by court systems. Nevertheless, every attempt will be made to protect people who would be injured, harmed, or seriously jeopardized by publication of some kinds of information.
8. The alleged victim and the accused will be apprised of the investigation and its outcome.
9. The Senior Pastor will shall serve as the official spokesperson to the congregation and in the event a statement needs to be made to the media.