Anti-Harassment Policy of the Presbytery of Philadelphia of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Adopted by the Presbytery on April 30, 2024

It is the Presbytery of Philadelphia's belief that God has created all people in God's own image and thus has made us equal in Christ (Genesis 1:26). The Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is given shape and life and is meant to reflect our relationship to one another and to God. We firmly believe that God intends all human life to have worth and dignity in all relationships. Through these relationships we are bound to serve and to respect the dignity of every human being.[i] This respect and dignity afforded to all of God's creation is through the creation and maintenance of a safe environment within our community, free of harassment.

The Presbytery of Philadelphia, in conjunction with our existing policies and procedures[ii] and in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local anti-discrimination and harassment laws and regulations, enforces this Policy in accordance with the following definitions and guidelines.

- **Verbal Harassment: V**erbal harassment is that harassment established by a pattern of conduct of unwelcome or unwanted verbal comments. Those comments can include, insults, jokes, slurs, and threats. This could also include and is not limited to stereotyping based on a person's nationality, origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, body, medical conditions, disability, and appearance.

- **Nonverbal Harassment:** Nonverbal Harassment includes, without limitations, distribution, display or discussion of any written or graphic material that ridicules, denigrates, insults, or belittles. This may also include and is not limited to a show of hostility, aversion or disrespect toward an individual or group because of nationality, origin, race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, body, medical conditions, disability, and appearance. [iii]

- **Both Verbal and Nonverbal Harassment** include, without limitation, persistent unwanted contact (verbal or nonverbal), bullying, intimidation, and interference in the ministry of the church or organization.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual Harassment is the behavior characterized by the making of unwelcome and/or inappropriate sexual remarks, physical advances, request for sexual favors, and/or other verbal and/or physical conduct of a sexual nature.[iv] Sexual harassment may take many different forms including but not limited to verbal, nonverbal, and physical sexual harassment.[v] More information about this can be found in the Presbytery's Policy on Ethics of Sexual Boundaries.[vi]

- **Electronic Harassment:** Online electronic forms used by bullies to harass targeted victims include but are not limited to e-mail, blogs, social networking websites, online games, forums, instant messaging, zoom and other virtual conferencing modalities, text messaging, and mobile phone pictures and videos. Bullying perpetrated through these online media have come to be known as "cyber bullying."[vii]

- **Retaliation:** Retaliation is any hardship, loss, benefit or penalty imposed on any person in response to filing or responding to a bona fide complaint or discrimination or harassment.[viii]

In our efforts to create a church where all persons are treated with respect, and dignity the Presbytery of Philadelphia commits to:

- Provide anti-harassment training for our leaders and congregations to encourage education, understanding, and growth;
- Acknowledge and thoroughly investigate all allegations of harassment providing support through the Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Response Team (SMART) and our leadership to all involved.
- Strive to create a Presbytery where harassment of all kinds is not tolerated or accepted, where all people of God are welcome and safe.

Resources

The Book of Order 2023-2025: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Part II
https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/boo_2023-2023_publishedversion_cover_and_boo_complete.pdf

The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission – Harassment
https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/harassment#:~:text=The%20laws%20enforced%20by%20EEOC,older)%2C%20or%20genetic%20information.

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[i] The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church USA, 2023-2024. F-1.0301

[ii] https://presbyphl.org/stated-clerk/policies-of-the-presbytery/

[iii] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Harassment. Accessed January 31, 2024. https://www.eeoc.gov/youth/harassment

[iv] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Sexual Harassment. Accessed January 31, 2024. https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment

[v] Please see the Presbytery's Policy on the Ethics of Sexual Boundaries https://media.mywtenfold1.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/09/21154527/Presbytery-of-Philadelphia-Policy-on-Ethics-of-Sexual-Boundaries-17JULY2021.pdf

[vi] https://media.mywtenfold1.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2021/09/21154527/Presbytery-of-Philadelphia-Policy-on-Ethics-of-Sexual-Boundaries-17JULY2021.pdf

[vii] US Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Electronic Harassment – Concept Map and Definition. Accessed January 31, 2024. https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/electronic-harassment-concept-map-and-definition#:~:text=Online%20electronic%20forms%20used%20by,known%20as%20%22cyber%20bullying.%22

[viii] US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Enforcement Guidance on Retaliation and Related Issues. Accessed January 31, 2024. https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/enforcement-guidance-retaliation-and-related-issues