

East Helena United Methodist Church Basic Policy Statement on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment.

East Helena United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and nurturing environment in keeping with God's sacred trust. Sexual misconduct on the part of any clergyperson, employee, member, attendee, or volunteer violates the mission of the church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Sexual harassment is expressly prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Sexual misconduct includes sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation. The guidelines for the prohibition of sexual abuse or molestation of a minor (under 18 years of age) are set forth more specifically in the Safe Sanctuary Policy (see separate policy document).

East Helena United Methodist Church believes that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), that all Christians are equal in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28), and that we are called to love our neighbors as well as enemies (Matthew 5:42). We are committed to the prevention of sexual misconduct in any form and to address allegations justly. "Contrary to the nurturing community, sexual harassment creates improper, coercive, and abusive conditions wherever it occurs in society. Sexual harassment undermines the social goal of equal opportunity and the climate of mutual respect" between-children of God. (Book of Discipline 2012, ¶161.I). Furthermore, "Violent, disrespectful, or abusive sexual expressions do not confirm sexuality as God's good gift." (Book of Discipline 2012, ¶161.H).

East Helena United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons that encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ. We will neither condone nor tolerate instances of sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse.

Definitions

"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 (paid or unpaid). 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." (Book of Resolutions 2016, p. 776)."

Sexual harassment [is] any unwanted sexual comment, 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.” (Book of Discipline 2012, ¶161.I). “[I]t is unwanted sexual or gender-directed behavior within a pastoral, employment, ministerial (including volunteers), mentor, or colleague relationship that is so severe or pervasive that it alters the conditions of employment or volunteer work or unreasonably interferes with the employee or volunteer’s performance by creating a hostile environment that can include unwanted sexual jokes, repeated advances, touching, displays, or comments that insult, degrade, or sexually exploit women, men, elders, children, or youth.” (Book of Resolutions 2016, p. 776) East Helena UMC extends this definition to cover people within church property or attending church-related events.

Sexual abuse [in ministry] is a form of sexual misconduct and occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (lay or clergy, 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, coworker, or volunteer.” (Book of Resolutions 2016, p. 777) 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.

Reporting abuse of children and youth

Outside of narrow exceptions outlined in Montana Annotated Code 41-3-201 anyone who has cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental welfare has been or is being adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person has a legal responsibility to report it to the appropriate state or law enforcement agency. In addition, any allegation of child abuse in church settings shall be reported to the Bishop. Anyone who becomes aware of sexual abuse or molestation involving a minor shall also follow the reporting procedures outlined in the Safe Sanctuaries policy of East Helena United Methodist Church.

Reporting sexual misconduct between adults

Nothing in this policy requires the person alleging sexual misconduct, harassment, or abuse to report the matter to the individual who is the subject of the allegation. Any person who believes that he or she is being subjected to any type of sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse in the church should bring the matter to the pastor or the SPRC chair. If the conduct involves a clergy person or chair of SPRC, reports should be sent to the Bishop or District Superintendent.

Investigations

East Helena United Methodist Church is committed to a prompt and thorough investigation of allegations, in compliance with The Book of Discipline. It is intended that the privacy of the persons involved be protected, except to the extent necessary to conduct a proper investigation and to provide appropriate disclosure to affected parties. We will cooperate fully in any criminal investigation.

When a complaint is brought to the attention of the pastor or SPRC chair the complainant will be informed of their options, including both the internal church process and the process for bringing

charges in the Book of Discipline. Nothing in the internal church process removes their right to file charges as per the Book of Discipline.

Upon a complaint the pastor will immediately notify the Mountain Sky Annual Conference chancellor. The investigatory committee will consist of the pastor, the SPRC chair, and the trustees chair. The committee will first meet with the complainant. The complainant will be allowed to have one representative of their choice, who may be a clergy or layperson, to accompany them in the meeting. They will hear their version of events and also discuss with them what kind of action they would like to come out of the process. Then the committee will meet, separately, with the person who is the subject of the complaint. They will also be allowed to have one representative of their choice, who may be a clergy or layperson, to accompany them in the meeting.

The committee on investigation will then make a decision on what action, if any, is needed in responding to the complaint. If the committee decides that the complaint requires action they will, in consultation with the complainant, come up with an action plan which may include counseling, staying away from the complainant, or other measures up to and including requiring them not to attend in person church events. The committee will bring the action plan to the person who is the subject of the complaint; who will be required to sign the action plan to resolve the conflict.

Non-retaliation

East Helena United Methodist Church will not retaliate against anyone who reports sexual misconduct, harassment or abuse in good faith.

Addition Information

In conjunction with this policy statement, East Helena United Methodist Church has the following policies and procedures on related issues:

Safe Sanctuaries

Each of these policies is available on the church website: <http://www.easthelenaumc.org/>

This is a policy statement of East Helena United Methodist Church, 50 Prickly Pear Ln, East Helena, MT 59635, approved and updated on July 26, 2022.

Safe Sanctuary Policies

- **Six Month Rule:** Volunteers shall be members of EHUMC for six months before working with children, youth, or adults in leadership roles.
- **One Year Rule:** Volunteers who are not members of EHUMC shall have participated in the church for one year before working with children, youth, or adults in leadership roles.
- **Five Year Rule:** Adult leaders of children and youth shall be at least five years older than the children or youth for whom they are responsible. At the discretion of the pastor and the event's leadership team, teen assistant leaders may be an exception when working under the direct supervision of an adult.
- **Two Adult Rule:** No child shall ever be alone with one adult without specific consent of the child's parent.
- Each volunteer with children or vulnerable adults shall take a Sexual Misconduct Workshop that reviews these policies each year.
- A log will be kept to show the dates individuals completed the Sexual Misconduct Workshop.