

Charleston Atlantic Presbytery Policy Against Harassment

“The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction.” *Book of Order*, sec. F-1.0403. As we implement this foundational standard of Presbyterian polity, Charleston Atlantic Presbytery establishes this policy prohibiting harassment of any of God’s people.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all employees of Charleston Atlantic Presbytery (“Presbytery”), all ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are members of or who are serving congregations within this Presbytery, Certified Christian Educators, and inquirers and candidates under the care of this Presbytery. It also sets a standard of behavior expected of all volunteers and participants in all programs sponsored or hosted by the Presbytery.

Definitions

Prohibited harassment includes but is not limited to unwelcome behavior directed against any individual based on race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction when: (a) enduring such offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment or is used as a factor in decisions affecting hiring, evaluation, retention; or (b) such behavior becomes severe or pervasive enough to cause a reasonable person to consider the environment an intimidating, hostile or abusive one.

Specific examples of prohibited behavior include derogatory comments, jokes, slurs, unwanted physical conduct of any kind, impeding or blocking movement, or physical interference with normal work movement, the display, mailing or e-mailing of derogatory posters, cartoons, or drawings when these actions are related to one’s membership in any protected class.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome or unwanted advances, requests for sexual favors, or any verbal, visual, or physical conduct either of a sexual nature or which is based on the employer’s gender. Specific examples include the use of epithets, derogatory or obscene comments, slurs or sexual invitations, sexual jokes, propositions, suggestive, insulting, obscene comments or gestures, flirtations, advances, leering, whistling, touching, pinching, assault, and coerced sexual acts.

Reporting a Complaint

Any employees or participants in any program sponsored by the Presbytery who believe they have been subjected to unlawful harassment or individuals who believe they have observed the harassment of others should report the incident to any supervisor or to the leaders of the program in which they are participating. If individuals are not comfortable reporting any harassment to the supervisor, the report may be made to any other person in authority including the General Presbyter / Pastor to Pastor or the Stated Clerk. Allegations of misconduct against a

Minister of the Word and Sacrament or Commissioned Pastor serving in a validated ministry of the presbytery must be made in writing to the Stated Clerk.

An accurate record of objectionable behavior or misconduct is needed to resolve a formal complaint of harassment. Verbal reports of harassment must be reduced to writing by either the complainant or the individual(s) designated to receive complaints.

Any allegation of harassment brought to the attention of the Presbytery will be promptly investigated. The Presbytery will investigate the matter as discretely as it can, but it cannot guarantee complete confidentiality. Any investigation pursuant to the *Book of Order* shall be governed by the rules of Church Discipline.

Resolving the Complaint

The Presbytery will complete the investigation of any harassment complaint and will communicate its findings and intended actions to the complainant and the alleged harasser as expeditiously as possible consistent with the provisions of Church Discipline.

Sanctions

Any Employee or volunteer who violates this harassment policy will be subject to corrective action up to and including termination of employment or participation in presbytery sponsored programs.

Any Minister of the Word and Sacrament or Commissioned Pastor who violates this harassment policy will be subject to corrective action which may include the full scope of Church Discipline as set forth in the *Book of Order*.

Protection Against Retaliation

The Presbytery will not retaliate in any way against any individual who makes a complaint of harassment or against any participant in the investigation, nor will it permit any employee to do so. Any retaliation is serious and should be reported immediately. Any person found to have retaliated against another individual for reporting harassment or participating in any investigation will be subject to the same disciplinary action provided for harassment offenders.

The Presbytery will not retaliate in any way against any individual who makes a complaint of harassment or against any participant in the investigation, nor will it permit any employee to do so. Any retaliation is serious and should be reported immediately. Any person found to have retaliated against another individual for reporting harassment or participating in any investigation will be subject to the same disciplinary action provided for harassment offenders.

Approved by Charleston Atlantic Presbytery May 14, 2024.