

## **APPENDIX C**

### **ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY OF THE PRESBYTERY OF HUNTINGDON SEPTEMBER 27, 2024**

"Catholicity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. In the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God overcomes our alienation and repairs our division. Because in Christ the Church is catholic, it strives everywhere to testify to Christ's embrace of men, women, and children of all times, places, races, nations, ages, conditions, and stations in life. The catholicity of the Church summons the Church to a deeper faith, a larger hope, and a more complete love as it bears witness to God's grace." [F-1.0302c]

Anything that deflects and deters us from that goal is sin. We therefore reject harassment in the church as intimidating, hostile and abusive. Anything designed to limit and diminish the participation and representation in the Church's worship, governance and emerging life of any person or group of persons thereby diminishes Christ's Church.

As Presbyterians we affirm that 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. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for harassment of any person or group. The Presbytery of Huntingdon shall guarantee and support full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. [F-1.0403 paraphrased.]

Each council is urged to write its own Anti-Harassment Policy. Any congregation whose session has not yet adopted an Anti-Harassment Policy will be covered by the presbytery's policy.

For the purposes of this policy, we use the definition of harassment adopted by the Pennsylvania legislature.<sup>1</sup> The Presbytery of Huntingdon interprets this definition to include harassment via social media or other virtual interactions for both children and adults.

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<sup>1</sup> To access the definition on the PA General Assembly website, use the following process. Google "harassment definition pa law." Scroll until PA General Assembly, Section 2709.0- Title 18 – "Crimes and Offenses" appears. Click on the link.

**PA legislature definition: Section 2709, Title 18: Harassment.  
2709. Harassment.**

**(a) Offense defined.**--A person commits the crime of harassment when, with intent to harass, annoy or alarm another, the person:

- (1) strikes, shoves, kicks or otherwise subjects the other person to physical contact, or attempts or threatens to do the same;
- (2) follows the other person in or about a public place or places;
- (3) engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly commits acts which serve no legitimate purpose;
- (4) communicates to or about such other person any lewd, lascivious, threatening or obscene words, language, drawings or caricatures;
- (5) communicates repeatedly in an anonymous manner;
- (6) communicates repeatedly at extremely inconvenient hours; or
- (7) communicates repeatedly in a manner other than specified in paragraphs (4), (5) and (6).

**(a.1) Cyber harassment**

(1) A person commits the crime of cyber harassment if, with intent to harass, annoy or alarm, the person engages in a continuing course of conduct of making any of the following by electronic means directly to another person or by publication through an electronic social media service:

- (i) seriously disparaging statement or opinion about the other person's physical characteristics, sexuality, sexual activity or mental or physical health or condition; or
- (ii) threat to inflict harm.

**Individuals Covered**

This policy applies to all churches within the bounds of the Presbytery of Huntingdon. Covered individuals include, but are not limited to, called and installed or contractual pastors, other church employees, members of individual churches, and any participant in any program over which the congregation has jurisdiction. Those who have been temporarily excluded or removed from ordered ministry and/or membership pursuant to D-9.0105 and D-9.0106 are not covered under this policy for the duration of their exclusion. Should a member of the Presbytery or local congregation experience harassment from a person over whom the Presbytery or congregation has no jurisdiction, prayers, support and appropriate resources in the local community will be provided to them by either the local congregation and pastor or the Committee on Ministry if the victim of harassment is a pastor.

**Complaint Process**

The Presbytery encourages the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that rapid and constructive action can be taken before relationships become irreparably strained. Early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment.

When possible, individuals who believe that they are being subjected to harassment are encouraged to promptly advise the offender that their behavior is unwelcome and request that it be discontinued. Often, this action alone will resolve the problem. The Presbytery recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through a complaint procedure.

Individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy statement or who believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with their pastor (if appropriate), with the General Presbyter, or with the Chair of the Committee on Ministry.

Any pastor who becomes aware of possible harassment shall immediately advise the General Presbyter or the Chair of the Committee on Ministry so that the situation can be investigated in a timely manner and resolved appropriately.

#### Non-Retaliation

Anyone should feel free to raise a claim of harassment or discrimination without the fear of retaliation or reprisal. Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a violation of this policy. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately. During the investigation process, every effort will be made to protect the one bringing the complaint from any further harassment.

#### Investigation

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated as soon as possible. The investigation will be conducted by a Sub-Committee on Special Situations, under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ministry and appointed by the COM Chair in consultation with the General Presbyter. Typically, allegations to be investigated would come to COM or General Presbyter no later than two years after the last occurrence of harassment. However, there may be special circumstances that allow for a longer timeline at the discretion of the investigating Sub-Committee. The investigation may include individual interviews with the

parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process for all parties involved to the extent possible, while allowing adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action.

## Resolution

Upon completion of the investigation, misconduct determined to constitute harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with in a manner that eliminates the condition effectively and includes appropriate corrective action, including referral to a formal Church Discipline process if the Sub-Committee determines that the conduct warrants such a referral. The investigatory process should take no longer than six months.

The resolution of the complaint shall be discussed with the one bringing the complaint to inform them of the results of the investigation; to answer any questions they might have about the investigatory process, and to assure that the harassing behavior has stopped.