

POSE POLICY ON CHURCH PROTECTION

The EPC Office of the General Assembly provides Church Protection resources, including links to best practices and specific state statutes regarding child safety, which may be accessed on its website at <https://epc.org/churchprotection/>. POSE commends these materials to you, as your Local Church is responsible for compliance with applicable laws and because God has called us to create a safe haven for all persons in our care, to empower them through faith and trust, and to protect the powerless. Please note these resources are provided as guidelines, and your policies should be reviewed by an attorney in your jurisdiction who is knowledgeable in this area of the law. You should also consider whether your policies accommodate your insurance carrier's recommendations.

The following Church Protection Policy applies to POSE's Presbytery Council; Stated Clerk; Moderator; Treasurer; members; employees; staff; and guests and non-member attendees of Presbytery meetings, Presbytery Committee, Commission, and Council meetings, and other Presbytery functions and facilities (as used herein, "Presbyter"):

It is the policy of POSE to promote an atmosphere free of sexual harassment, in any form, for Presbyters and Local Churches. Nothing in this policy is intended or should be construed as supplanting any policy of the Local Church covering the same subject matter or as assuming any obligation of the Local Church regarding the subject matter of this policy. Sexual harassment is a sin against God, the person who has been victimized, and the community of faith. It may range from covert and subtle harassment to overt use of physical force or intimidation and includes physical contact, verbal behavior, use of social media, and other electronic and written communication.

Sexual harassment is unlawful under federal and some state laws. It is prohibited for any Presbyter to sexually harass another Presbyter or a third-party; provided, however, that nothing in this policy is intended or should be interpreted to prohibit interactions between Presbyters who are married to each other. Retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment and retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint are also prohibited.

Sexual harassment is generally defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, especially where:

- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of any individual's employment or as a basis for employment decisions; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Other sexually oriented conduct, whether intended or not, that is unwelcome and has the effect of creating a work environment that is hostile, offensive, intimidating, or humiliating to workers may also constitute sexual harassment. While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances

that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct that, if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending on the totality of the circumstances, including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Unwanted sexual advances, whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, gossip regarding one's sex life, comments about an individual's body, comments about an individual's sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, or cartoons;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing up against the body, sexual gestures, or suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences; and
- Discussion of one's sexual activities.

Sexual harassment can occur between individuals of the opposite sex or the same sex and will not be tolerated. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge from employment or dismissal from POSE.

No adverse action will be taken against a Presbyterian who, in good faith, reports violations of this policy or participates in the investigation of such violations.

Any Presbyterian or individual who feels that she or he is a victim of sexual harassment or retaliation prohibited by this policy, or is aware of a violation of this policy by another Presbyterian, should immediately report such violation to the Stated Clerk. If you prefer not to discuss the matter with the Stated Clerk, you may report it to the Chair of the Ministerial Care Committee or any other member of the Presbytery Council. Each report will be promptly and thoroughly investigated as confidentially as possible.

Approved at 122nd Presbytery Meeting of Presbytery of the Southeast, May 3, 2024