

GREAT COMMISSION COMMUNITY CHURCH POLICY ON HARASSMENT, ABUSE, AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Great Commission Community Church (“GCCC” or “the Church”) opposes any form of sexual misconduct by pastoral staff, employees, lay leaders, and volunteers. This policy applies equally to pastoral staff, employees, lay leaders, and volunteers, members and non-member attendees.

The ethical conduct of all persons who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to this Church, because through these representatives an understanding of God and the gospel’s good news is conveyed. It is incumbent upon the Church, if allegations of harassment, abuse, assault, or other sexual misconduct arise, to respond to those involved with compassion and justice. To that end this policy has been adopted.

It is the policy of this Church that all Church members, Church officers, pastors, elders, employees and volunteers working in, with and for this Church, are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship at all times.

Scope

This policy is intended to supplement the Church Bylaws and policies of the C&MA denomination. To the extent that there is any conflict between this policy and the policies and/or bylaws of the C&MA denomination (including its disciplinary policies), those of the C&MA denomination shall prevail.

This policy does not and is not intended to conflict with any federal or local law, and to the extent it is viewed as in conflict with such laws, the laws shall prevail.

Defining Harassment

GCCC prohibits harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment, and will take appropriate and immediate action in response to complaints or knowledge of violations of this policy.

For the purposes of this policy, harassment is any verbal or physical conduct designed to threaten, intimidate, or coerce another person. GCCC, in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local anti-discrimination and harassment laws and regulations, enforces this policy with the following definitions and guidelines:

- **Sexual Harassment:** Any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that is persistent or offensive that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment or relationship. This may include unwelcome sexual advances,

requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Moreover, sexual harassment can be physical and psychological in nature. An aggregation of incidents can constitute sexual harassment even if one of the incidents considered on its own would not be harassing.

- **Other Verbal and Nonverbal Harassment:** This includes, but is not limited to, comments that are offensive or unwelcome regarding a person's nationality/origin, race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual identity or orientation, disability or appearance (including negative stereotyping), and other protected classes. It also includes, but is not limited to, distribution, display, or discussion of any written or graphic materials that denigrates, ridicules, insults, or shows hostility, aversion, or disrespect toward an individual or group because of nationality/origin, race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual identity or orientation, disability or appearance, and other protected classes.
- **Abusive Behavior:** This includes, but is not limited to, an unwanted physical act of a nonsexual nature toward another person(s) which causes harm. It also includes non-physical acts of a nonsexual nature toward another person(s) which causes harm.

Defining Sexual Abuse and Assault

Sexual abuse occurs whenever a person in a position of trust engages in a sexual act or sexual contact with another person to whom he or she owes a professional responsibility, with or without consent. Such abuse shall include, but not be limited to, sexual acts or sexual contact with a minor; sexual acts or sexual contact involving inducement, threat, coercion, force, violence, or intimidation of another person; sexual acts or sexual contact with another person who is incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct or physically incapable of declining participation in, or communicating unwillingness to engage in, that sexual act or sexual contact.

Sexual assault occurs when there are sexual acts or sexual contact involving force, threat, or intimidation or use of mental incapacity or physical helplessness.

Defining Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct is a general description of any actual, alleged, or threatened conduct, whether permitted or unpermitted, by any person, acting in any capacity and under any circumstances, that is or is alleged to be, arises out of, results from, relates to, involves, or is in any way connected with any conduct that is of a sexual nature and includes, but is not limited to: molestation, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual touching, sexual contact, sexual intercourse, harassment, sexual advances, victimization, exploitation, requests for sexual favors, sexual comments, such as sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks, jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience, coercion to engage in sexual activities, exhibitionism, voyeurism, verbal or nonverbal communication, retaliation for harassment complaints, or showing, distributing to others, or requesting any text, pictures, drawings, audio, video, or digital recording.

Pastoral staff, employees, lay leaders, and volunteers are expected to abide by the Christian and Missionary Alliance's policies and its Statement on Sexuality. (link: https://cdn.cmalliance.org/wordpress/cmalliance/Statement-on-Sexuality_Jan-2023.pdf)

Education

The Governance Board is responsible for the education of congregation members about harassment to include sexual misconduct and the existence of these policies.

- The Governance Board shall review these policies periodically and, if deemed appropriate, update them annually.
- The aim of this education is to ensure that these policies are understood and respected by church members and church attendees..
- The Governance Board shall ensure that congregation members are educated about the existence of these policies and its explanation of sexual misconduct.
- The Church's leadership and staff, including pastors, elders, and Board of Women members, will be educated through regular meetings in regard to this policy and acknowledge policy by signature.

Reporting

GCCC will follow these steps for reporting:

1. Anyone may report allegations of harassment, abuse, assault, or sexual misconduct to a member of the pastoral staff, Elder Board, or Board of Women.
2. Allegations of harassment, abuse, assault, or sexual misconduct against pastoral staff, employees, lay leaders, volunteers, members, or non-member attendees will be reported, by the person receiving the report in Step 1, to the senior pastor and/or the Governance Board.
3. Allegations of harassment, abuse, assault, or sexual misconduct against licensed workers of the denomination will be reported, by the senior pastor and/or the Governance Board, to the denomination's District Superintendent and in compliance with any existing denominational requirements.
4. Allegations of sexual abuse with minor children and vulnerable adults must be reported to the senior pastor and local legal authorities.

Guidelines for Complainants

Anyone involved in reporting or investigating any aspect of an incident of harassment, whether the victim or not, should be assured that they will be protected from any

retaliation in connection with such report or investigation. No hardship or penalty will be imposed on an individual for reporting, investigating, or taking part of in an investigation of harassment, including sexual harassment, complaint.

Victims of alleged harassment, including sexual misconduct, have the right to confront the accused. In other words, if an individual feels that he or she is being subjected to harassment, he or she may, but is not required to, immediately inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and needs to stop. Any failure to immediately respond to the harasser does not prevent the individual from making a complaint through the proper channels (members of the pastoral staff, Elder Board, or Board of Women).

Reports should include all instances of harassment, including: initial incidents, situations where the inappropriate conduct does not cease, and when the individual is unable to or uncomfortable with addressing the alleged harasser directly. It is helpful, but not required, to provide a written record of the date, time and nature of the incident(s) and the names of any witnesses, if applicable. Victims will be given one primary point of contact as a shepherd through the process.

It is important to report all concerns of harassment, abuse, assault, or sexual misconduct as soon as possible. Church leadership must be made aware of the situation so that it can conduct an immediate and impartial investigation and take appropriate action to remediate or prevent the prohibited conduct from continuing.

Guidelines for Church Leadership

Church leadership must deal expeditiously and fairly when they have any knowledge of harassment within the congregation. They must:

- Take all complaints or concerns of alleged or possible harassment seriously no matter how minor or who is involved.
- Take any appropriate action to prevent retaliation or prohibited conduct from recurring during and after any investigations or complaints.
- If it is reported that a criminal law was violated, the conduct shall be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

Church leadership, members and staff who knowingly allow or tolerate harassment or retaliation, including the failure to report and conduct a formal investigation, are in violation of this policy and subject to discipline.

Investigating

GCCC will follow these steps for investigating complaints.

1. Anyone covered by this policy is required to participate in good faith with any investigation.

2. The Church's leadership will respond to any complaint with an initial inquiry and then determine whether to conduct a formal investigation.
3. Allegations of sexual misconduct against pastoral staff, employees, lay leaders, volunteers, members, and non-member attendees will be investigated, handled with discretion and confidentiality and adjudicated by a committee appointed by the Governance Board in order to rectify, heal and promote dignity. The committee, made up of women and men, shall consist of a pastor, a Board member, another elder or member of the Board of Women, and one member at large. The committee shall report its findings and recommendation to the Board.
4. Victims of alleged sexual misconduct have the right to confront the accused.
5. Victims may have the support of a trained advocate through the process.
6. The accused has the right to know the nature and substance of the allegations.
7. The alleged victim and the accused will be apprised of the investigation, its outcome, and next steps to be taken by the Governance Board.
8. False allegations and/or information, from any person, including the victim, accused, or any witness, will be subject to potential disciplinary action by the Church, up to and including legal actions.

Discipline

GCCC will follow these steps regarding discipline.

1. Pastoral and non-pastoral staff found guilty of sexual misconduct, harassment, or abuse will be dealt with in accordance with denominational guidelines, potentially to include termination and removal from the Church.
2. Lay leaders and volunteers found guilty of sexual misconduct, harassment, or abuse will be removed from their duties in the congregation and may be immediately prohibited from Church activities. They may also undergo other Church disciplinary procedures, up to and including legal actions.
3. False allegations and/or information, from any person, including the Victim, Accused, or any witness, will be subject to potential disciplinary action by the Church.
4. If it is reported that a criminal law was violated, the conduct shall be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.
5. The congregation will extend Christian love and support to the victims and their families.

6. The congregation will extend Christian love and support to those accused and/or found guilty of sexual misconduct, harassment, or abuse.

The Governance Board may:

- Request the offending party to remove themselves from Church activity/functions or the Church itself.
- Request a meeting with both parties (jointly or independently, depending on the consent of the parties) with the goal of communicating clearly for understanding.
- In the case of lay leaders, suspend all service roles.

Confidentiality

All complaints and investigations are treated confidentially to the extent possible and information is disclosed strictly on a-need-to-know basis. Pastoral staff, Elder Board, Board of Women, or a person of responsibility in the congregation or denomination hearing confessions about sexual misconduct involving legal adults will maintain confidentiality to the best of their ability; however, sexual misconduct will be reported to proper Church and local authorities where it is believed that a potential violation of Church policy and/or public laws has occurred.

Disciplinary proceedings will be conducted with confidentiality in all aspects of the investigation; however, it may be necessary to disclose the facts and circumstances of the charge, including the identities of the accused person(s) and those submitting the charge, in connection with investigating and remedying the charge and considering and carrying out possible restoration.

In addition, the findings and conclusions of the investigation may be announced to appropriate parties who were an integral part of the proceedings, including affected members of the church congregation.

In the case of a finding of abuse against a child or vulnerable adult, disclosure shall be made to local authorities as required by law. If anyone is contacted by the press, law enforcement authorities, attorney or other individual associated with civil/criminal proceedings, or other persons not involved with the disciplinary proceedings but seeking information, the committee responsible for the case will be contacted immediately. No information may be disclosed without the permission of the appropriate authority unless such disclosure is required by law.

If the accused is a pastor under authority of the C&MA denomination, the church will follow the C&MA guidelines on Uniform Policy on Discipline, Restoration, and Appeal.

Plans to Communicate this Policy to the Church

After the Governance Board approves the policy, GCCC leadership can communicate the existence of the policy and the policy itself through several avenues. These are suggestions for the Governance Board, who, according to our policy, are responsible for educating the Church about our policy.

- 1) The church's website can include brief descriptions of our leadership groups on the "Team" page under our "About" tab. This will help congregants know the roles of the leadership groups and identify elders and Board of Women members as people authorized by the church to receive reports of abuse, assault, harassment, and misconduct.

Steve Kim has written the following descriptions to add to our website:

The Elders at Great Commission Community Church have been nominated and elected by other GCCC members. Their primary role is to shepherd the congregation through prayer, hospitality, member care, teaching and exercising discipline when needed.

The Governance Board at Great Commission Community Church consists of elected members who will ensure support and accountability to the lead pastor and to the pastoral staff. They oversee the implementation of GCCC's mission and vision, as well as provide appropriate financial oversight and accountability.

The Board of Women at Great Commission Community Church are elected members of GCCC. They seek to love and support the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional needs of women at GCCC through teaching, prayer, counseling, and holistic care.

- 2) Because small groups are such a significant venue of life in community for GCCC, we can share information about our policy to our small group leaders as part of annual training. SG leaders should minimally provide small group members with a link to policy and information regarding who to contact regarding harassment/sexual misconduct or abuse.
- 3) At our next members' meeting, we can let our members know that the Governance Board has approved the policy, and we can give them copies of the policy. Also, we will go over the policy in membership classes.
- 4) We can add the policy (or a link to it) to our website, perhaps on the "Congregation Care" page under the "Community" tab.