



General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

2024-08

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Introduction

Sexual misconduct is a current and real problem within The United Methodist Church. Today, we acknowledge there are people here who have been mistreated, abused, and assaulted by clergy and lay leaders in the Church.

We honor those who have shared their stories and those who have sat with their stories in silence. We commend the courage of all survivors of sexual misconduct to walk a path they did not choose.

Too often those who suffer from sexual misconduct are silenced, ignored, or not believed by the Church.

Sexual misconduct includes psychological, emotional, and spiritual abuse. This apology is a beginning point for confession and hope in prevention and response to sexual misconduct in The United Methodist Church.

Apology

The United Methodist Church apologizes for the times we allowed our desire to protect the Church to outweigh our desire to care for victims and survivors of sexual misconduct. We have allowed polity and protection of the institutional Church prevent us from holding persons accountable, thus perpetuating harm within our local churches and other ministry settings, and damaging the whole United Methodist connection.

We apologize for the times we have not listened to you, doubted your stories, ignored your wounds, and have not tended to your pain. We believe this has contributed to allowing an unsafe culture to exist.

An apology is worthless without a commitment to the challenging work which must follow. The United Methodist Church pledges to:

1. Apologize in every annual conference across the connection.
2. Educate Church leaders regarding sacred trust in ministerial relationships and power imbalance within those relationships.
3. Provide healing resources to all affected in accordance with ¶ 362. Complaint Procedures.
4. Develop a trauma-informed response to complaints of sexual misconduct.

This apology alone is insufficient for healing. The United Methodist Church accepts our responsibility and publicly states our commitment to carry out the steps named to do no more harm. May God's blessing and never-ending love guide our work and see it through.

UMSexualETHICS

Raising
awareness,
Preventing
sexual misconduct,
Promoting
healthy boundaries,
Bringing about
**justice and
healing**

The UMC believes sexual misconduct within ministerial relationships represents an exploitation of power and is a betrayal of sacred trust. The UMC defines sexual misconduct as a continuum of behaviors that includes sexual harassment which is the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender.

Book of Resolutions ¶2044



The General Commission on
the Status and Role of Women
The United Methodist Church

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www.umsexualethics.org
1-800-523-8390

Toll-free, confidential



You May Have Experienced Sexual Misconduct If:

- » An incident with a ministerial leader makes you feel uncomfortable or confused
- » You receive inappropriate personal gifts from a ministerial leader
- » Your counseling session with a ministerial leader focuses on their needs and issues, especially details of their intimate relationships
- » A ministerial leader invites you out for intimate, social occasions
- » A ministerial leader touches you in a confusing, uncomfortable, or upsetting way
- » A ministerial leader sends you emails, instant, and/or text messages with sexual overtures
- » A ministerial leader uses theological rationale for questionable conduct

If You Believe You Have Experienced Sexual Misconduct:

- » Pay attention to, and trust your feelings during and after the situation
- » Be direct and tell him/her to STOP the behavior
- » Be safe and leave the situation
- » Remember, you are not to blame
- » Document incidents by keeping and saving a record of dates, times, places, and witnesses of incidents
- » Save emails, letters, cards, voicemail messages, text messages, receipts, or notes
- » Share your feelings of hurt, betrayal, confusion, anxiety, or fear with someone you trust
- » Remember you are not the only person to whom this has happened

Reporting Sexual Misconduct of a Person in Ministerial Leadership:

- » The UMC encourages you to file a complaint if you believe a sexual boundary is violated
- » Submit the complaint in writing, signed and dated, to your Bishop or District Superintendent
- » You may also contact GCSRW's confidential, toll-free number 1-800-523-8390 for support
- » For more information, visit www.gcsr.org or www.umsexualethics.org