

St Matthias United Methodist Church Anti-Harassment Policy

Statement of Policy:

Clergy, employees, volunteers and lay persons of St. Matthias United Methodist Church shall not engage in harassment of anyone of the congregation of St. Matthias United Methodist Church, the community using their building facilities or in situations where business or church sponsored events are conducted outside of the facilities. The harassment of any person is deemed a violation of the dignity of God's creation and is a violation of that person's dignity.

Theological Foundation:

All persons are created by and in the image of God. God desires His children to value worth and dignity in their relationships. Harassment of one by another violates the worth and dignity of all parties involved and is sinful behavior against God. Christian love requires us to protect and defend the harassed person and employ peaceful correction of the person engaging in the harassment as.

Definition of Harassment:

Harassment is verbal, visual, emotional or physical behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment that is (1) disrespectful (2) degrading (3) bullying (4) racially insensitive or (5) sexually inappropriate. Examples of harassment may include, but are not limited to, inappropriate comments, slurs, jokes, symbols, innuendos, pranks, glaring, gifts, physical touching or actions threatening physical touching, gossiping and retaliation in any situation.

Harassment may also take the form of yielding one's influence on others in a bullying way so as to influence decision making of the administration and ministry of the church.

Initiating Conflict Resolution:

In all instances, individuals are encouraged to resolve conflict between the parties involved as Jesus directs us in Matthew 18:15-16, "If your fellow believer sins against you go and tell him in private what he did wrong. If he listens to you, then you have helped that person to be your brother or sister again. But if he refuses to listen, go to him again and take one or two other people with you (as witnesses)." – New Century Version

Making a complaint:

If an amicable resolution is not possible then such behavior shall be reported to the senior pastor or other clergy of the church, the Chair of the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee, or the Lay Leader as Jesus instructs in Matthew 18:17, "If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen to the church, then treat him like a person who does not believe in God..." Complaints may not be brought forth based on hearsay and must be in writing.

Investigation

Upon receipt of a complaint, an investigation will be conducted promptly by a committee the above named church leaders in a loving way to work toward reconciliation. Appropriate action shall be taken in accordance with the procedures established in paragraphs 2702-2719 of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* including termination of membership or employment where deemed appropriate. Privacy and confidentiality will be respected with concern to all parties.

Congregational Responsibility

As members of the Body of Christ we are called to respect and defend the dignity of all. Therefore it shall be the responsibility of each member to defend our brothers and sisters and act when witnessing a harassing deed against another. This may be accomplished by speaking with the offender oneself or reporting the violation to the appropriate church leader as outlined above.

[Adopted by the St. Matthias Adm. Council, September 20, 2014]