

**IF YOU
ARE
A VICTIM OF
SEXUAL
HARRASSEMNT OR
MISCONDUCT
WITHIN THE
CHURCH.....**

From West Virginia/ Western Maryland
Synod, ELCA

WHO CAN HELP

**If you are a victim of sexual
misconduct or harassment within the
church, please contact Bishop Dunkin
at the synod office.**

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The Southeastern Synod, ELCA**

THE CHURCH'S CONCERN:

Every level of the Church and every
agency and parish affiliated with the
Church must be free of sexual
misconduct. Sexual misconduct of or
by any of the following is
unacceptable:

- * Pastors & Rostered Lay Leaders
in local parishes
- * Associates in Ministry, Diaconal
Ministers and Deaconesses
- * Clergy & Rostered Persons employed
by synodical and agency offices
- * Clergy and rostered faculty or staff at
ELCA-affiliated schools, colleges
and seminaries.

WHAT DOES SEXUAL MISCONDUCT WITH IN THE CHURCH INCLUDE?

- * Sexual advance, which may or may not include sexual intercourse.
- * Requests for sexual favors.
- * Implied or blatant threats.
- * Innuendo, humor and jokes about sex or gender specific traits.
- * Suggestive or insulting whistling, gestures or leering.
- * Offensive contact (patting, pinching, brushing against the body), blocking movements, attempted or actual fondling or kissing, or any other form of sexualized behavior, including intercourse.
- * Sexual conduct or communication that creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.
- * Requiring submission to sexual conduct or communication in order to obtain the services of the Church, or to be employed there.
- * Sexual conduct or communication that interferes with employment of the services received from the church or those affiliated with the church.
- * Situations in which a pastor uses his or her authority and relationship of trust with a parishioner to encourage inappropriate intimacy and/or sexual contact.

“MUTUAL CONSENT...”

.does not exonerate the perpetrator.

Sexual misconduct results when those in positions of authority use that authority

to create an intimidating or hostile environment by violating the boundaries of trust in that relationship.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you feel you have been subjected to sexual misconduct with in the church:

- Say **No** to the perpetrator. Be direct and firm. Tell the person(s) without apology that you want the behavior to stop.
- **Keep records** of what happened and when. Document dates, times, places, witnesses and the nature of the misconduct. Save letters, cards or notes.

Contact the Bishop

Who will listen carefully and will act expediently on your report?

PLEASE REMEMBER...

- * Don't blame yourself.
- Don't delay. Misconduct may continue if you delay.
- Don't keep it to yourself. Unless you let someone know that you are being exploited, the misconduct may continue, and others may be victimized. You help yourself and others by speaking out.
- Don't forget that sexual misconduct is a violation of Church policy and in many cases violates the law.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IS AGAINST THE POLICIES OF THE ELCA

The West Virginia/ Western Maryland Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America works in cooperation with member congregations to prevent, detect and remedy the effects of sexual misconduct within the church.

The WV-W MD Synod, ELCA is strongly committed to working with the Church agencies and local parishes to insure that the church at every level is free from any form of sexual harassment or misconduct. All forms of sexual misbehavior are unacceptable within the Church and are subject to appropriate mediation and/or disciplinary action. Such a policy complements the remedies provided in civil and criminal law for sexual misconduct and harassment.

The Church should be a safe place where people can worship, learn, work, love and receive care in a manner that is free from sexual misconduct.

This portion is what the committee feels the bishop should share with the pastors.

Mutual consent in any situation assumes a relationship of equals. The pastor- parishioner relationship by its very nature often is not of this type as the pastor has authority, influence and implied trust of parishioners. The pastor is responsible for setting appropriate limits and should not seek to use the pastoral office to fulfill needs for his or her own intimacy or sexual gratification. The pastoral relationship often involves ministering to persons who are grieving, vulnerable, searching and hurting. This scenario calls upon the pastor to maintain boundaries that do not take advantage of another's trust. While inappropriate relationships of this type may appear nurturing, they in fact are a violation of the pastor's ethical pastoral responsibilities. Sexual misconduct also results when those in any position of authority use that influence to create an intimidating or hostile environment which also violate the boundaries and abuses the trust of a relationship.