

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Harrisonburg, VA
Policy Regarding Sexual Misconduct and Protection of
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)

A. Prohibition of Sexual Misconduct/Harassment

Trinity Presbyterian Church is committed to creating a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with Trinity Presbyterian Church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

B. Conduct of Church Leaders and Staff

Sexual harassment, exploitation, intimidation, or discrimination of parishioners or other individuals by anyone engaged in the ministry of Trinity Presbyterian Church (including ruling elders, employees, volunteers, and teaching elders) is unethical and unprofessional behavior and shall not be tolerated within this congregation.

The church encourages those engaged in the church’s ministry to maintain their own psychological, emotional, and spiritual health, have adequate preparation and education for helping others, and understand the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

The church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which all people can learn about and experience God’s love. In order to ensure this, we expect that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors shall have been members or friends of the church for

at least six months. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all children and youth activities with an emphasis in maintaining at least two adults in the presence of minors. While this may not always be possible, the church members expect that all church leaders, employees and those volunteers who work with minors and/or vulnerable adults shall endeavor to provide safe places for these individuals, including striving to avoid instances where an individual minor is alone with an individual adult or older youth.

All church leaders and employees, and those volunteers who work with minors or vulnerable adults are expected to complete and submit a copy of the self-certification statement attached to this policy. All paid church employees who work with any children under the age of 18 years must submit to a background check. Background checks for paid employees will be completed before hiring to the position. Background checks will be renewed every 5 years. Background checks will be completed through Shenandoah Presbytery and paid for by the church. Failure to submit to the background check will lead to failure of hiring, with respect to paid employees. Additionally, any volunteers who will be traveling overnight as chaperones on any trips involving children under the age of 18 must submit to a background check prior to the trip.

All church leaders, employees, those volunteers who work with minors or vulnerable adults, parents of minors, and legal guardians of vulnerable adults shall receive a copy of this policy.

C. Reporting Allegations

The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA), at G-4.0302, requires the following of teaching elders and ruling elders:

Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of privileged communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communications under

law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

The Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order provide detailed procedures to be followed in the case of allegations of sexual misconduct. In the case of a teaching elder, such allegations shall be reported to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery through the Clerk of Session. In all other cases involving ruling elders, members, or employees, the Moderator and the Clerk of Session should contact the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery for advice and guidance.

All church members who have knowledge or suspicion of child or vulnerable adult abuse should be aware that state law requires the immediate reporting of such abuse to the civil authorities.

SELF-CERTIFICATION FOR
CHURCH LEADERS / EMPLOYEES / VOLUNTEERS

Please complete the following certification:

I certify that (a) no civil, criminal, ecclesiastical complaint has ever been sustained or is pending* against me for sexual misconduct; (b) I have never resigned or been terminated from a position for reasons related to sexual misconduct. I have been given a copy of Trinity Presbyterian Church's Policy Regarding Sexual Misconduct and Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults. If at any time my status changes in regards to the above self-certification, I shall notify the Clerk of Session.*

Signature

Date

*NOTE: If you are unable to make the above certification, you may instead give in the space provided a description of the complaint, termination or the outcome of the situation and any explanatory comments you care to add.