

# **EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**SUWANEE, GEORGIA**

## **POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT**

**February 23, 2013**



## **Statement of Policy**

It is the policy of Epiphany Lutheran Church that sexual harassment and misconduct will not be tolerated. Any complaint of sexual harassment or misconduct will be dealt with promptly and confidentially. Our Policy applies to pastors, paid servants, nonpaid servants, and anyone involved with Epiphany. Epiphany Lutheran Church further holds that sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct within the church are incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. The intent of this Policy statement is to make certain that responses to any allegation of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct be thoroughly investigated, just and compassionate for all involved, and that all parties be heard.

## **Definition of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct**

Sexual harassment and sexual misconduct refer to sexualized behavior which is not welcome to the recipient and that is personally offensive and/or perceived by the recipient to be offensive.

There are many forms of offensive behavior including, but not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures
- Sexual assaults or molestation
- Undesired and/or intimate physical contact
- Inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance
- Persistent sexually-oriented humor or language
- Continued or repeated jokes, language, epithets or remarks of a sexual nature
- Causing another person to engage in a sexual act by threatening that other person, placing that other person in fear or asserting undue influence over that other person
- Providing or displaying pornographic media to another person
- Any attempt to engage in or perform any of the above
- Any additional sexual activity that is covered either by Federal or State laws

## **Reporting**

Any person who believes that they have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment or misconduct, or have had a sexual harassment or misconduct issue reported to them should report it immediately to:

- The President of the Congregation or other members of the Lead Servant Team; or
- The Lead Pastor of this Congregation, or
- Reports involving a pastor or other leaders of the congregation at Epiphany shall also be promptly reported to the office of the Bishop of the Southeastern Synod.

If required by law, ordinance or similar regulations, a designated member of the Congregation shall immediately report this incident to the proper governmental authorities.

## **Investigation**

- Each incident that is reported will be investigated by the Lead Servant Team or other designated individuals with care and concern for all involved.
- Investigation will include interviews with all concerned.
- Investigation will include review of all relevant statements and documentation.
- The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances and under state and federal law. Should an

individual's words or conduct be determined to constitute misconduct or harassment, recommendations for action will be developed and appropriate action will be taken. The action taken will depend on the severity of the situation.

- The Lead Servant Team will be sensitive to the needs of all involved and shall provide any support necessary including counseling during the investigation and response.

**Response**

- The Lead Servant Team or other designated individuals will review all information obtained during the investigation, and when deemed necessary, will seek legal counsel, as warranted, to assist in the investigation and resolution.
- If the offense is deemed to be severe enough and presenting evidence conclusive enough, the accused will be suspended until the investigation is completed. This means that paid servants will be put on leave, with pay, and unpaid servants will be prohibited from contact with the people or activities from which the accusations originated until the matter is fully resolved.
- The Lead Servant Team, or their designated individuals, upon reaching a course of action, will meet separately with the person filing the complaint and then with the accused to communicate the results and resolution.
- The Lead Servant Team, or their designated individuals, may recommend a course of action that may include counseling, education, and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- If a complaint is not substantiated, all parties will be informed.
- **Epiphany Lutheran Church** will not engage in or tolerate retaliation against any pastor, paid servant or nonpaid servant for making a good faith claim of misconduct or harassment or providing information relating to such complaints during an investigation.

**Communication of Policy**

This Policy shall be given to and reviewed with the pastors, all paid servants, members of the leadership teams, deacons and other nonpaid servants that have frequent contact with other members of the congregation to ensure their understanding and support of this Policy. This review shall take place on an annual basis. Their signature below indicates that the individual has reviewed, understands and supports this policy statement. In addition, this Policy will be posted on Epiphany’s web site along with other key polices of the Church.

**By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the *Policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct*.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Reviewed