Presbytery of Baltimore Anti-Harassment Policy

As the Church of Jesus Christ, love is the rule of our relationships.

a. Jesus said, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets," (Matt. 7:12), and "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35).
b. The Book of Order states, "The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down." (F-1.0301, "The Calling of the Church: the Church is the Body of Christ")
c. Because we believe this, and because we seek to live it out in all aspects of our personal and corporate life, we believe that harassment in all its forms is incompatible with who we are as followers of Jesus.

I. Purpose

The Presbytery of Baltimore is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for all employees, ministers, volunteers, members, and visitors. Harassment in any form is contrary to Scripture and the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and can violate both ethical standards and legal protections.

II. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals affiliated with the Presbytery, including employees, teaching and ruling elders, deacons, volunteers, and congregants, in presbytery and church offices, , at church-sponsored events, and in any setting where individuals are representing or acting on behalf of the Presbytery.

III. Definition of Harassment

Harassment, simply put, is "*repeated unwanted behavior*."

a. *Behavior*: harassment consists of words or actions that demean, threaten, coerce, intimidate, offend, or humiliate another person.[1] This behavior could occur in private or public, or in electronic communication such as email; offensive or demeaning social media posts; or stalking.
b. *Unwanted*: teasing or humorous language that the person who is being teased finds offensive or demeaning. Intention is irrelevant; it is how the behavior is received that is determinative of harassment ..
c. *Repeated*: Anyone who is subjected to unwanted behavior should communicate clearly to the person engaged in the behavior that is unwelcome and hurtful.

[1] This language is adapted from the National Archives document, "Factsheet about Workplace Harassment," https://www.archives.gov/files/eeo/policy/facts-about-workplace-harassment.pdf

Ideally, this leads to apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation. But when the behavior is repeated, it becomes harassment.

d. It includes *unlawful harassment,* which is the same type of conduct, but is also a form of discrimination that violates one or more of the protected categories under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal authorities.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- Unwanted physical contact or advances
- Derogatory comments, slurs, epithets or language intended to coerce or intimidate
- Inappropriate jokes or gestures
- Display of offensive images or materials
- Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature

IV. Reporting and Complaint Procedure

Anyone who experiences or witnesses harassment is encouraged to report the behavior immediately. Complaints can be made in writing or verbally to:

- The General Presbyter
- The Stated Clerk
- The Presbytery's Personnel Committee

All complaints will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, impartially, and confidentially to the extent possible. Retaliation against any individual who reports harassment or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

V. Investigation and Resolution

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Presbytery will:

1. Conduct a timely and thorough investigation, through the personnel committee or a team of three appointed by the General Presbyter and the Stated Clerk
2. Maintain confidentiality to the extent practical and appropriate.
3. Take appropriate corrective action if harassment is found to have occurred, which may include measures up to and including termination of employment or removal from leadership roles, but always guided by the values and goals of Church Discipline outlined in the Book of Order D-1.03
4. Provide support and resources to affected individuals as needed.
5. Any allegation presented to the stated clerk in accord with Chapter Seven of Church Discipline (Book of Order) will be governed by its process and procedures.

VI. Prevention and Training

The Presbytery is committed to preventing harassment by:

- Providing regular training for staff, clergy, and leadership in the context of required boundary trainings.
- Encouraging awareness and education regarding ethical behavior and conflict resolution.
- Promoting an environment of mutual respect and accountability.

VII. Compliance with Maryland and Federal Law

Nothing in this policy should be interpreted as a substitute for compliance with relevant state and federal regulations.

VIII. Conclusion

Harassment in any form is not tolerated in the Presbytery of Baltimore. By adhering to this policy, we seek to create a safe, welcoming, and Christ-centered community for all. If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk or Chair of the Steering Cabinet.

Approved by the Presbytery of Baltimore Sept. 13, 2025

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