

## ***Presbytery of Western Kentucky***

### ***Anti-Harassment Policy***

#### **I. Introduction**

The Presbytery of Western Kentucky (PWKY), in keeping with our calling and the values of the PC(USA), commits to a church life that is free from all forms of harassment. Harassment, in any setting, damages the spiritual, emotional, and communal life of the church. The Book of Order declares, *“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). Therefore, any form of harassment or abuse contradicts our theological convictions and undermines our witness as followers of Christ.

#### **II. Biblical and Theological Foundations**

As the Church of Jesus Christ, we affirm that every person is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and is beloved, worthy of dignity, respect, and care. In the spirit of Jesus’ commandment—“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34)—we are called to build communities that reflect compassion, justice, and mutual support. Harassment is incompatible with the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to the Church (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

#### **III. Purpose**

The Presbytery of Western Kentucky will not tolerate any form of harassment in the workplace, at Presbytery gatherings, or in any setting where ministry and mission are being carried out. This includes but is not limited to harassment based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability, marital status, or any other status protected by law.

#### **IV. Definitions**

**Harassment** refers to any repeated unwanted behavior—verbal, nonverbal, physical, or electronic—that demeans, intimidates, or offends. It includes but is not limited to:

- *Verbal Harassment*: Insults, slurs, threats, or demeaning language related to identity, status, or personal characteristics.
- *Nonverbal Harassment*: Gestures, distribution of offensive materials, or acts of exclusion that communicate hostility.
- *Sexual Harassment*: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature. This includes inappropriate comments, physical contact, and the display of sexually explicit material.
- *Electronic Harassment (Cyberbullying)*: Use of digital platforms (email, social media, text messaging, virtual meetings) to harass, intimidate, or demean.

- *Retaliation*: Any adverse response to a report of harassment, including threats, ostracism, or punitive actions.

## **V. Our Commitment**

### **A. Training and Education**

1. All teaching elders, ruling elders, commissioned ruling elders, presbytery staff, and committee leaders shall complete anti-harassment training every 36 months.
2. Congregations are strongly encouraged to participate in anti-harassment training and engage with educational materials provided by the presbytery and the PC(USA).

### **B. Leadership and Accountability**

1. The PWKY Oversight Commission shall monitor and enforce the implementation of this policy, provide educational opportunities, and ensure compliance.

## **VI. Reporting**

Anyone who believes they have experienced or witnessed harassment is encouraged to report the matter promptly. Reports may be made to:

- The Presbyter(s)
- The Stated Clerk
- The Moderator of the Committee on Ministry
- The Moderator of the Permanent Judicial Commission
- Any trusted presbytery officer or committee member

Reports will be taken seriously and handled with confidentiality, pastoral sensitivity, and procedural fairness.

Upon receiving a report, the Presbytery will:

1. Conduct a timely, thorough investigation.
2. Involve the appropriate committees and officers in accordance with the Book of Order and presbytery policies.
3. Take corrective or disciplinary action where necessary, up to and including termination or initiation of a disciplinary process under Church Discipline in the Book of Order.

The Presbytery will not tolerate retaliation against anyone making a good-faith report of harassment or participating in an investigation.

## **VII. Commitment to Reconciliation**

When harassment occurs, the Church is called not only to justice but also to repentance and reconciliation. Following the guidance of Matthew 18:15–20, restorative responses may be pursued alongside disciplinary procedures, seeking healing for individuals and the community.

### **VIII. Review and Distribution**

This policy shall be reviewed every three years and updated as necessary. It will be distributed to all employees, teaching elders, committee members, and made available on the Presbytery website and Manual of Operations. All individuals to whom this policy applies shall sign a written acknowledgement indicating their agreement, which shall remain in effect during their time of membership, employment, or volunteer service in the Presbytery.

### **IX. Acknowledgement**

All individuals to whom this policy applies shall sign a written acknowledgement indicating their agreement, which shall remain in effect during their time of membership, employment, or volunteer service in the Presbytery.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), have read this policy and agree to abide by its provisions as it applies to my particular ministry situation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date