

**METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE PALM BEACHES**  
**Policy on Sexual Safety**

As a community of Christian faith, MCC of the Palm Beaches is committed to creating and maintaining an atmosphere of safety in which members, friends, and visitors can worship, learn, and interact free from sexual harassment, abuse, or misconduct. Any person in the congregation who has a concern or knowledge of sexual abuse or sexual harassment involving a congregant or staff member of the congregation is urged to contact the pastor or a member of the board of directors. Concerns about professional sexual misconduct by any clergy person should be brought to the attention of the vice- moderator of the board or any other board member.

**Sexual Harassment**

Definition: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment. Sexual harassment also occurs when any of the following are true.

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or relationship with the church.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or ministry/program decisions affecting such individuals.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or ability to participate in church activities or has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or worshiping environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome behavior that has sexual overtones including:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, emails, or invitations;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, or inappropriate hugging or holding;
- Visual contact, such as leering, staring at another person's body'
- Verbal contact, such as requests for sexual favors, inappropriate comments of a sexually suggestive nature, or telling jokes with sexual content.
- Sexual harassment also includes continued romantic pursuit or expression of sexual interest or desire after these efforts have been rejected or after being informed that they are unwelcome.

MCC of the Palm Beaches (MCCPB) has a policy of direct dealing. If you experience sexual harassment at MCCPB, the best first step is to deal directly with the person and let them know that their behavior is not welcome. If you are unable, uncomfortable, or feel unsafe, or if the conduct continues after you deal directly with the person, seek out a board member or the pastor to report it. The pastor and/or board member will address the behavior and report the resolution to the person making the complaint.

Board members are identified in the Sunday worship bulletin and on the MCCPB website.

### **Sexual Misconduct**

All authorized ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and authorized volunteers are ministers to the congregation. It is the policy of MCCPB to encourage and support our ministers in nurturing safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries, and referring those in need to helpful and supportive resources. It is critical that our ministers understand that they are recipients of a sacred trust, the abuse of which is likely to cause severe injury to those involved and to the church.

MCCPB defines a minister as a person authorized by the church to carry out its ministries, whether ordained or a layperson, employed by the church or a volunteer.

A "ministerial relationship" is defined as a relationship between a clergy person, employee or volunteer and a person receiving direct supervision, individual spiritual and/or pastoral counseling and providing confidential and/or privileged information to the clergy person, employee or volunteer. These relationships carry an inherent imbalance of power.

Whether clergy or lay, using one's position of ministerial power to enter into a sexual relationship is sexual misconduct.

If you experience sexual misconduct at MCC of the Palm Beaches, seek out the pastor or a board member to report it. If the misconduct is committed by the pastor or any clergy person, seek out a board member to report it. The board member or pastor will take the appropriate next steps, which will depend on whether the person is an ordained clergy person. The pastor and/or board member will address the behavior and report the resolution to the person making the complaint. Board members are identified in the Sunday worship bulletin and on the MCCPB website.

While discouraged, at times, a clergy person, employee, or volunteer may develop an appropriate, mutual, and consensual sexual relationship within the context of MCCPB ministry, if there has been no direct supervision or individual spiritual counseling. Such relationships are to be entered into with extreme caution and a spirit of discernment.

### **Sexual Offenders**

MCC of the Palm Beaches affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a Christian community open to those who are in need of worshiping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. We are aware that sexual offense charges have often been unjustly used against the LGBTQ+ community.

In order to keep our community as safe as possible, any person arrested for a sexual offense of any kind will be placed on a limited access agreement without prejudice. The board will be

convened within 10 days of such person being made known to the pastor or board to develop the agreement (which may be subsequently revised upon receipt of more information). The limited access agreement will remain in effect until all charges are dropped or confirmed (see below). Persons will not continue to attend or participate in any programs or services of the congregation until a limited access agreement is signed by both parties (church and accused).

Any person convicted of a sexual offense or with a history of known sexual offenses will be placed on a limited access agreement without prejudice. The board will be convened within 10 days of such a person being made known to the pastor or board to develop the limited access agreement. This will be done in consultation with the person's parole officer and/or treatment provider so it may be determined that they can safely participate in the adult life of the congregation and remain in compliance with the conditions of parole, if appropriate.

Any person arrested, convicted, or with a history of known sex offense who will not sign the limited access agreement or who violates a signed agreement will be denied access to any sanctioned church event or worship service

**If you are arrested or have been convicted of a sexual offense, please know that these policies are for your safety as well as others'. Please speak with the pastor about your situation so that appropriate steps can be taken. Your confidentiality will be protected.**

Enacted Feb. 19, 2020 by unanimous vote of the Board of Directors.