

## Good Practice Guidelines for Churches: Sexual Harassment

<b>Contact Name and Details</b>	Mrs Jill Baker Past Vice-President of the Conference
<b>Resolution</b>	16/1. The Council directs Mrs Jill Baker to oversee the continuing work on Gender Justice and to bring draft guidelines to the March Council.

### 1. Background

- 1.1 In recent years, triggered in part by the #MeToo movement, concerns have been raised in a number of different Methodist contexts about the incidence of sexual harassment within the church and about a culture which has not challenged this.
- 1.2 As President and Vice-President at the time when #MeToo became a more widespread movement, The Revd Loraine Mellor and Mrs Jill Baker held conversations with a number of individuals and groups across the Methodist Church.
- 1.3 Since then Jill Baker has continued to hold together conversations and suggestions about how as a church we can address this; consulting primarily with the following:
- Mr Richard Armiger, Director, Learning Network
  - Mr Tim Carter, Director of Safeguarding
  - Ms Sarah Chadwick, Safeguarding Committee
  - Deacon Donna Ely, Connexional Complaints Worker
  - Ms Rachel McCallam, Regional Co-ordinator, Learning Network
  - The Revd Rachel Parkinson, Chair Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District
  - Mr Bevan Powell, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, along with the EDI Committee
  - The Revd Dr Nicola Price-Tebbutt, Secretary Faith and Order Committee
  - The Revd Michaela Youngson, Chair, London district and Past President of the Conference

### 2. Summary of findings

Conversations have been wide-ranging; the following points give only a very brief outline:

- 2.1 There are many associated terms in use with relation to this issue, often with differing definitions or understandings (eg sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual abuse)
- 2.2 The issue has overlap with work already done or in progress by the EDI Committee, the Safeguarding Committee; the Faith and Order Committee; Complaints and Discipline; the Ministerial Code of Conduct.
- 2.3 The response to and care of victims of sexual harassment needs to be addressed.
- 2.4 The culture of the Methodist Church needs to be one which treats all people with dignity and respect; sexual harassment is never acceptable.

### 3. Current situation

- 3.1 Recognising that work is ongoing in a number of committees (as mentioned in 2.2 above), a need was recognised for Good Practice Guidelines on sexual harassment, to address 2.4 above and to begin to define pointers for a response to 2.3.

3.2 Place for Hope (an ecumenical body working with churches to promote reconciliation and peace-making in their widest contexts, the body responsible for 'Positive Working Together') was approached by the Learning Network and agreed to draw up such guidelines.

3.3 Material from the current draft of the guidelines is attached at Appendix 1.

The Methodist Council is now invited to endorse the production of such resources. Members of the Council with a particular interest or expertise in these areas are invited to make any submissions to the Chair of the Council to be fed into the ongoing process.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTION**

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**1. Foreword**

Words of context, inspiration and clarity.

**2. Introduction**

- 2.1. The current context of our faith communities.
- 2.2. Why this guide is essential; drawing on appropriate current resources to offer a rationale for a policy on sexual harassment.
- 2.3. The faith basis for these guidelines.
- 2.4. The Methodist Church working with Place for Hope – an evolving relationship in the context of reconciliation
- 2.5. ‘Positive Working Together’ and the wider desire for a culture shift in our churches

**3. Purpose of resource**

- 3.1. For the whole Church: to facilitate a culture change within our churches.
- 3.2. To offer guidance and empowerment to victims of sexual harassment.
- 3.3. To offer clear ‘good practice’ guidelines, including possible training resource.

**4. Definitions and Legal Requirements**

To be included as necessary.

**5. Good Practice Guidelines**

- 5.1. The power of everyday language
- 5.2. The importance of boundaries
- 5.3. Courage and Integrity: identifying and naming sexual harassment
- 5.4. Self-Care – how well do we know ourselves, our own boundaries, our own needs?
- 5.5. What might be the place for reconciliation and forgiveness?
- 5.6. Working within existing procedures
  - Complaints and Discipline
  - Safeguarding
  - Code of Conduct
  - Bullying and Harassment
  - District Reconciliation Groups (DRGs)
  - Additional procedures to be put in place?
- 5.7. Flow chart of how to respond should you a) suspect of b) be the victim of sexual harassment
- 5.8. Clear information about who to contact and how

**6. Culture Change**

Further work on how culture change might be effected.

**7. Resources**

Pointing to existing resources already drawn from in these guidelines, or available for follow-up.

**8. Training**

Section pointing to either existing, or suggested training

**9. Technical Data:** Date of document; Charity number/contact details for Place for Hope; Contact details; Copyright; Acknowledgements.