



## CLERGY SEXUAL ETHICS: Maintaining INTEGRITY in Ministry

Clergy and persons in ministerial leadership have a sacred trust in relation to the people being served. Most clergy and ministerial leaders do not violate boundaries which result in a chargeable offense named in ¶2702 in the *2016 Book of Discipline*. In response to the offense of sexual misconduct, The United Methodist Church requires all clergy to attend professional ethics training, often referred to as “Healthy Boundaries” a minimum of once every four years. Our *Book of Discipline* recognizes the violation of sexual misconduct in ¶161 f,i,j,p,q. It is also discussed within the *2016 Book of Resolutions* in #2044, #2045, and #2046.

The following key points are recommended to be included in the required training:

- Grounded in scripture i.e. 1 Corinthians 4: 1-2
- Definition of sexual misconduct as found in #2044 of The Book of Resolutions
- Recognition of Social Principles contained in ¶161 f, i, j, p, q
- Discussion of annual conference policy on sexual ethics ([www.umsexualethics.org](http://www.umsexualethics.org))
- Issues of power and vulnerability ALWAYS present within clergy relationships (ground this in scripture such as 2 Samuel 11) Includes inherent power & fiduciary duty.
- Judicial Council Decision 1228 regarding dating, romantic, or sexual relationships between clergy and parishioners. Discuss dual relationships.
- Self-Assessment questions regarding conduct of clergy and the reality the burden of safety always falls to the clergy. Emphasis must be placed on self-awareness.
- Questions concerning acceptance of substantial gifts, sexual advances by supervisor or parishioner, balance for work and family, response to seeing colleague violate a boundary, and “how to transition well to your next appointment”.
- Social media, internet, technology considerations. Includes texting, exchanging pictures via FB, Instagram, etc. and the policy for using these sources.
- Development of individual plans of self-care in physical, emotional, spiritual, and social well-being. This plan should include knowledge of resources for individual therapy, coaching, and spiritual direction.
- Tools for identifying pressures in ministry and how to communicate well to DS and SPRC.
- Checklist for measuring balance between work and life outside work.
- Accountability person(s). Encourage covenant group for accountability in all areas.

Trainings should be sensitive to context of ministry including, rural, urban, full-time, part-time, and cultural differences among settings within the annual conference. Include SPRC representatives in trainings.