

RESOURCE PERSONS

The Resource Person Program, coordinated by the Crisis Response and Care Team, provides support to those who may have experienced clergy sexual misconduct. Resource Persons are specially trained laypeople who walk alongside individuals through the complaint process, advocating for a fair process on behalf of the care recipient.

What a Resource Person does:

- Listens with care and offers support
- Explains church processes and procedures
- Provides resources and referrals
- Assists in writing a complaint (if requested)
- Accompanies the aggrieved in meetings (as allowed by the Book of Discipline)
- Alerts the Bishop to hostile or improper treatment in the process

What a Resource Person is not:

A judge, therapist, lawyer, decision-maker, rescuer or mediator.

Accessing a Resource Person

You do not need to file a complaint, seek permission, or share your identity before speaking with a Resource Person. Using a Resource Person is always your choice.

CONTACT US

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For more information regarding clergy sexual misconduct and the complaint process, visit UMSexualEthics.org.



**CLERGY SEXUAL
MISCONDUCT:**
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Horizon Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church is committed to the well-being of all people and to fostering healthy relationships between pastors and those they serve.

In this brochure, the terms “clergy persons” and “pastors” include all clergy and laity serving as ministers, counselors, or in other positions of authority within the Conference. The behaviors described here are inappropriate for anyone serving in these roles.

Victims of clergy sexual misconduct need clear information to recognize misconduct and to take steps toward healing.

The Conference’s goals are to:

- Respond quickly and fairly to support healing
- Protect the vulnerable by preventing further abuse
- Provide aggrieved persons with information about church policies and procedures
- Seek justice by acknowledging harm and holding offenders accountable through appropriate discipline
- Encourage both aggrieved persons and offenders to seek counseling or treatment as part of the healing process
- Restore the well-being of congregations and others affected
- Treat all involved with the fairness, respect, and compassion our faith requires

DEFINING CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT: WHAT IS IT AND WHY IT’S WRONG

Clergy Sexual Misconduct is any sexual contact or sexualized behavior between a pastor and someone with whom they have a professional relationship. It can be:

- Physical (touch, kissing, caressing)
- Verbal (sexual comments, jokes, intimate questions)
- Visual (gestures, images, sexualizing looks)

Clergy hold positions of trust and authority. This creates an imbalance of power that makes meaningful consent impossible in ministerial relationships. Regardless of who initiates, it is always the pastor’s responsibility to maintain boundaries. Crossing them is a violation of professional ethics.

EXAMPLES OF MISCONDUCT

Sexual misconduct may include, whether welcomed or not:

- Inappropriate touch, fondling, or prolonged embraces
- Kisses on the lips, stroking, tickling or pressing against your body
- Sexualized comments or jokes
- Questions about your relationships or intimate life
- Disclosure of the pastor’s own intimate experiences
- Excessive personal attention or gifts that create discomfort

If behavior leaves you feeling uneasy, confused or unsafe, it may be a warning sign of misconduct.

IS A RELATIONSHIP WITH MY PASTOR EVER APPROPRIATE?

It is not unusual for a member of a congregation to feel attracted to his or her pastor. There is nothing wrong with you because you have these feelings. If you express your feelings, it is your pastor’s professional responsibility to explain why a relationship is inappropriate and maintain appropriate boundaries.

A healthy relationship cannot exist while a pastoral role continues. Only after a pastor fully steps away from the ministerial relationship could a consensual relationship be ethically possible—and even then, risks of manipulation remain high.

IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED MISCONDUCT

You may feel fear, confusion or even blame yourself for not objecting sooner. Remember: if a pastor has used their power to take advantage of your vulnerability, it is misconduct. You are not at fault. Sharing your experience with a trusted person can be an important first step toward healing.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

The Horizon Texas Conference follows the process outlined in ¶12702 of *The 2020/24 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. To begin a formal grievance, contact the Bishop or any District Superintendent (see Contact Us section).