IF A BEHAVIOR COVENANT IS REFUSED

- The individual chooses to disengage from church life — no contact, communication, presence on church property or participation in programming until the covenant is signed.
- All attendees document and sign as witnesses to the refusal.
- Send a certified letter outlining steps for future participation.
- Forward documentation via certified mail to the DS and possibly the Bishop's office.
- DS and pastor consult with the Chancellor.
- Meet confidentially with church leadership:
  - SPRC Chair & Committee
  - Trustees
  - Lay Leader
  - Staff
  - Custodian(s)
- Reinforce that The UMC takes boundaries seriously to ensure a safe, respectful environment.
- Prepare a response plan if the individual appears on church property or contacts church leaders.

IF FLIRTATION HAS OCCURRED (MUTUAL ATTRACTION)

Name & Confess: Acknowledge your role in the boundary confusion.

Repent: Take responsibility, apologize, and name the harm caused.

Reconcile: Set clear boundaries and stop misleading behaviors.

Pastors should seek accountability through regular meetings focused on healthy professional boundaries.

This brochure is to be displayed in all HTC churches in areas accessible to congregants and staff.

WHO TO CONTACT

If you would like to speak with someone about your options for taking action in response to sexual misconduct or harassment, please contact one of the following individuals:

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS

EAST AND MID-NORTH - Rev. Dr. John McLarty
903-439-1117 // johnmclarty@htcumc.org

METRO EAST - Rev. Dr. Lucretia Facen
214-941-7712 // lucretiafacen@htcumc.org

METRO NORTH - Rev. Philip Rhodes
817-877-5222 // philiprhodes@htcumc.org

METRO WEST - Rev. Danny Tenney
817-734-6779 // dannytenney@htcumc.org

MID-CENTRAL, NORTHWEST AND WEST -
Rev. Tom Long
940-256-0032 // tomlong@htcumc.org

MID-SOUTH AND SOUTH -
Rev. Dr. Mary Spradlin
PHONE // maryspradlin@htcumc.org

THE CRISIS RESPONSE AND CARE TEAM

Rev. Liz Greenwell
Crisis Response and Care Ministry Coordinator
214-695-8804 // lizgreenwell@htcumc.org

Margaret Nicholson
Lead Resource Person
214-450-7457 // mag7958@sbcglobal.net

*Further resources regarding sexual misconduct, visit **UMSexualethics.org**.*

Horizon TEXAS
CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SEXUAL HARASSMENT BY CONGREGANTS:

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

SEXUAL HARASSMENT BY CONGREGANTS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

"Sexual Misconduct within ministerial relationships is a betrayal of sacred trust, defined as a continuum of sexual or gender- directed behaviors by either a lay or clergy person within a ministerial relationship (paid or unpaid). It can include child abuse, adult sexual abuse, harassment, rape, sexual assault, sexualized verbal comments or visuals, unwelcome touching and advances, use of sexualized materials including pornography, stalking, sexual abuse of youth or those without capacity to consent, and/or any misuse of the pastoral or ministerial position using sexualized conduct to take advantage of the vulnerability of another. It includes criminal behaviors in some nations, states, and communities and is a chargeable offense in The United Methodist Church." (*The Book of Discipline* 2020/2024 ¶162, *Book of Resolutions* ¶3351)

Sexual Harassment is "any unwanted sexual comment, advance, or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender." (*The Book of Discipline* 2020/2024, ¶162)

SUGGESTED STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO A BOUNDARY VIOLATION

Maintaining appropriate boundaries is the responsibility of all ministerial leaders. If you experience a boundary violation or harassment by a layperson, follow these steps to respond professionally and protect the integrity of your role. The term "pastor" is used here; however, this procedure may be applied to any leadership position.

Recognize and Reframe the Relationship

If you perceive an advance has been made, immediately establish pastoral boundaries.

- Clearly identify your role:
  - "I am your pastor."
  - "As your pastor, I…"
  - "The United Methodist Church considers this behavior to be sexual harassment and takes it seriously."
- Emphasize and clarify the broader context:
  - "We are in relationship to a congregation, denomination, calling(s), roles, responsibilities…"
  - "I cannot be your pastor if this behavior continues."

Document and Report

- Record interactions in writing.
- Verbally report to the SPRC Chair.
- Notify the District Superintendent (DS) with details, including: what happened, where, who was involved, when (date/time), any witnesses and your response.

If a Crisis Arises

If setting boundaries triggers a crisis, contact the **Director of Care and Healing** to engage the support of the Crisis Response Team Coordinator.

IF INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR CONTINUES

- Continue to set and reinforce boundaries.
- State that you will not meet privately; another person must be present. Confidentiality will still be maintained.
- Reiterate your pastoral role to the congregant.
- **Document** the interaction in writing and report to SPRC and DS.

IF BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS PERSIST

Call a meeting to clarify the pastor's role and appropriate congregant behavior. In the Horizon Texas Conference, this may be facilitated by the Crisis Response and Care Team with the DS.

Invite:

- District Superintendent (DS) – Share meeting purpose, follow-up plan, and other details.
- Violator – Ask them to bring a trusted, reflective friend or family member (lawyers not advised).
- SPRC Chair – Maintain clear, factual documentation.

During the Meeting

- Seek resolution with clearly defined boundaries and reasons for maintaining them.
- Consider drafting a Behavioral Covenant:
- Include the pastor's needs.
- List behaviors the violator must stop.
- Write agreed "ways of being" for all to sign and commit to prayer.

After the Meeting

- Plan a follow-up to assess clarity and accountability.
- Send a letter to all involved and to the DS that:
  - States the meeting's purpose, attendees, resolution (if reached) and next steps.
  - Thanks participants and requests continued prayer.