

Presbytery of Redstone Policy for Ethical Conduct by Persons in Positions of Religious Leadership

I. Introduction

Most people assume that Christians in positions of religious leadership will conduct themselves in an ethical manner. Indeed, for the most part, religious leaders do conduct themselves in ways that honor their Lord, Jesus Christ, and respect God's children whom they serve. That this is true is a sign of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the community of the church.

Still, as much as we rely on the prompting of the Holy Spirit to guide our ways and to prevent us from error, it is appropriate for the governing bodies of Christians to describe in some detail the nature of the ethical conduct they expect, the efforts they will take to maintain these standards, and the procedures they will use when these standards are violated. This Policy will serve as such a description for the Presbytery of Redstone.

II. Scope

This Policy will apply to all clergy members, certified lay preachers, commissioned lay pastors, lay employees, and officers of the Presbytery of Redstone, referred to hereafter as "persons in positions of religious leadership". Presbytery committee members, volunteers and individual church employees and members are encouraged to participate in training offered by the Presbytery. Employees and volunteers at the Pine Springs Camp will receive orientation to these standards and training as a part of their work.

III. Standards and Definitions

As a governing body of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Presbytery of Redstone stands under the standards and definitions of ethical conduct published by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

IV. Response

A. General Expectations

While we are gratified that most persons in positions of religious leadership do conduct themselves in ethical ways most of the time, we acknowledge that from time to time it is necessary and appropriate for the Presbytery to respond to incidences of ethical misconduct. At such times, all parties are encouraged to remember:

Church discipline is the church's exercise of authority given by Christ, both in the direction of guidance, control, and nurture of its members and in the direction of constructive criticism of offenders. Thus, the purpose of discipline is to honor God by making clear the significance of membership in the body of Christ; to preserve the purity of the church by nourishing the individual within the life of the believing community; to correct or restrain wrongdoing in order to bring members to repentance and restoration; to restore the unity of the church by removing the causes of discord and division; and to secure the just, speedy and economical determination of proceedings. In all respects, members are to be accorded procedural safeguards and due process . . .

Book of Order [D-1.0101]

Whenever possible, the Presbytery of Redstone will follow the General Assembly procedures for dealing with incidences of sexual misconduct. Other incidences of ethical misconduct will be responded to as provided for by the Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order.

The Presbytery reminds all persons responding to allegations of ethical misconduct to:

1. Seek to maintain the God-given dignity of all parties involved during and after the process of resolving the allegations.
2. Take all reports of ethical misconduct seriously, regardless of, but with concern for, the reputation of those involved.
3. Maintain the highest levels of confidentiality while recognizing the legitimate need-to-know of certain parties.
4. Move expediently, yet respect the need for careful and thorough inquiry.
5. Follow the principles for discipline and justice within the courts of the church.
6. Have regard for and seek to cooperate with secular authorities.
7. Be sensitive to the disruptive effect such allegations have on the congregation or employing entity, friends and families of those involved, and individuals with a personal history of victimization.

NOTE: When extraordinary extenuating circumstances make following these procedures impossible, the spirit of D-1.0101 and the above seven principles shall be maintained by those responding to the incident.

B. Ethics Team

The Presbytery of Redstone shall form an Ethics team. The purpose of this team is:

1. To keep ethical standards of conduct before the Presbytery.
2. To provide for training in ethical standards.
3. To serve as the primary resource to the Presbytery for dealing with issues of sexual misconduct.

The Ethics Team shall be composed of six (6) members in three (3) classes. Members shall serve a three (3) year term and may serve for no more than two (2) consecutive terms. Members shall be nominated by the Committee on Nominations of the Presbytery of Redstone and elected by the Presbytery.

The responsibilities of the Ethics Team shall be:

1. To provide for mandatory in-service training on ethical conduct and sexual misconduct prevention for persons in positions of religious leadership. (Such training will be open to members and staff of all churches and entities of the Presbytery.)

2. To maintain a trained pool of persons to serve as advocates to respond to instances of alleged sexual misconduct.

C. Staff responsibilities during responses to allegations of ethical misconduct.

The Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, and other Presbytery staff shall not engage in professional counseling with persons accused of ethical misconduct. The Associate for Pastoral Care may respond with appropriate pastoral care and nurture. (NOTE: This guideline shall in no way hinder presbytery staff from their Book of Order responsibilities.)

Inquiries from the media regarding allegations or incidents of ethical misconduct shall be directed to the Executive Presbyter. In the case of allegations involving the Executive Presbyter, the moderator of the Committee on Ministry shall serve as media contact.

V. Preventive Measures

Education and awareness are the two best measures of preventing ethical misconduct. Toward this end, the Presbytery of Redstone shall:

A. Through the Ethics Team

1. Provide for mandatory in-service training on ethical conduct and on sexual misconduct prevention for persons in positions of religious leadership. (Such training will be open to members and staff of all churches and entities of the Presbytery.)
2. Serve as a resource to the Presbytery and congregations relating to matters of ethical conduct and what can be done to reduce misconduct.
3. Maintain a list of counselors, attorneys, conflict managers, insurance advisors, child advocates, and personnel management professionals to serve as advocates.

B. Through the Council

1. Consider the financial implications of allegations of ethical misconduct in budgetary recommendations.
2. Follow employment procedures for Presbytery of Redstone staff as outlined in the General Assembly Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures, Appendix B.
3. Review the Presbytery's insurance policy for sexual misconduct coverage.

C. Through the Four District Committees

1. Encourage Christian Educators, youth workers and congregational leaders to attend training on ethical conduct and on sexual misconduct prevention.
2. Encourage congregations to develop ethics and misconduct policies of their own.

D. Through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry

1. Include inquiry as to past convictions of sexual misconduct as part of the candidacy process.
2. Require all Inquirers and Candidates to take training in ethical conduct and misconduct prevention offered by their seminaries or a Committee on Preparation approved alternative.

E. Through the Committee on Ministry

1. Require all persons in positions of religious leadership of the Presbytery of Redstone to sign an acknowledgment of receipt of Presbytery of Redstone Policy for Ethical Conduct by Persons in Positions of Religious Leadership.
2. Require all persons in positions of religious leadership of the Presbytery of Redstone to attend education offerings on ethical conduct and misconduct prevention.
3. Maintain on file through the office of the Stated Clerk Part IV - "Sexual Misconduct Information" of the Personal Information Form (PIF) for all clergy members wishing to labor within the bounds of the Presbytery.

***PRESBYTERY OF REDSTONE POLICY FOR
ETHICAL CONDUCT BY PERSONS
IN POSITIONS OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP***

Acknowledgment of Receipt and
Agreement to Abide by the Terms of
This Policy

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that I have received and read the policy entitled "*Presbytery of Redstone Policy for Ethical Conduct by Persons in Positions of Religious Leadership*." I understand this is one of the policies which articulates and measures my professional conduct as I serve within the Presbytery of Redstone.

I hereby accept this policy as definitive for certain areas of my professional conduct as I work within this presbytery, while acknowledging that it is not all-inclusive. I also understand that this document is subservient to the *Book of Order*, policies and/or decisions of the Presbyterian Church, USA.

Thus, I, _____, hereby commit myself to honor and abide by the stipulations of this policy. I understand that my failure to do so may result in removal for cause from any position I may hold in this presbytery.

Date: _____

Signed: _____