

1994

RESOLUTION: TRAINING FOR THOSE IN AUTHORIZED MINISTRIES IN THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

WHEREAS, Ministry implies a sacred trust between clergy and their parishioners that is grounded in scripture and is typified by Paul's writing to the Thessalonians: "You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers ...(1 Thessalonians 2:10)"; and

WHEREAS, Clergy sexual misconduct can be defined as any intimate sexual conduct or actions between a parishioner or client of the congregation and the pastor including consensual intimate relations; and

WHEREAS, Clergy sexual misconduct or harassment has severe and often irreparable consequences for all involved, including the victim, the pastor and the congregation; and

WHEREAS, Many of the churches in the Conference have suffered from incidents of sexual misconduct and boundary crossing by clergy and are in need of a clear and practical process by which to heal from that pain; and

WHEREAS, In recent years sexual misconduct and harassment by clergy of members of their congregations has been alleged and acknowledged at an unprecedented level in the United Church of Christ and other churches in Connecticut and nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Clergy sexual misconduct violates the sacred trust between clergy and their parishioners and is completely unacceptable from personal, theological, moral, legal, and professional perspectives; and

WHEREAS, The leadership and care of a congregation is inconsistent with the abuse by clergy of their pastoral power in sexual misconduct with parishioners; this principle being seen clearly by the Ordained Minister's Code which specifically provides that clergy "will not use [their] position, power, or authority to exploit any person"; and

WHEREAS, Seminaries have not consistently prepared clergy regarding the ethical, legal, moral and emotional significance of engaging in sexual misconduct or in sexual boundary crossing with parishioners; and

WHEREAS, Collectively we have sinned and fallen short in ensuring that clergy understand both their own sexuality and the nature of their power in relationships with their parishioners;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates to the 127th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, recommend that the Conference Committee on Ministry, in partnership with the Associations of the Conference, establish a mandatory process to ensure that all ordained,

commissioned, and licensed ministers having standing with an Association be trained on the serious ramifications of sexual misconduct and harassment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we recommend that the Associations of the Connecticut Conference require, as one of the criteria for granting accreditation and standing to clergy, that all candidates for the ordained, commissioned and licensed ministries in the Connecticut Conference receive training on what is clergy sexual misconduct and harassment as well as the serious personal, professional, theological, legal, Conference, Association and congregational ramifications of such behavior; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Connecticut Conference Committee on Ministry sponsor and provide training in conjunction with the Associations on the issues involved in clergy sexual misconduct and harassment; this training should be designed to heighten awareness, to prevent such conduct and to facilitate individual, interpersonal, Conference, Association and congregational healing; and Conference and congregational ordained and lay people should be invited to participate in this training; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Connecticut Conference leadership meet with United Church of Christ related seminary leaders to plan ways to incorporate these issues into their required curricula and the results of these discussions to be shared with the Conference as a whole; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we the delegates call for a Day of Prayer for Reconciliation to focus on the need for healing of all those who have been hurt in whatever manner by clergy sexual misconduct at Conference, Association, and congregational levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it is our will that this resolution be modified according to proper form to be submitted to the Twentieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ for consideration.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Connecticut Conference Committee on Ministry adopt, publish, and make available to the lay leadership of all local churches a system of protocol for handling all cases of alleged clergy sexual misconduct.