

- Talk about it with people you trust, so that the name of the harasser and his or her behavior becomes known to others besides yourself, so that others are not subjected to the similar treatment.
- Within the context of a NCC or CWS meeting, speak with a designated staff person or elected officer for support and file a written report, for the purpose of holding our covenanting partners accountable to one another for creating a safe environment for all participants.
- Get support for yourself. Speak to empathetic others who are able to provide ongoing support.

Responsible Action & Conclusion

Incidents of sexual harassment and assault that occur within church and ecumenical meetings call us to seek responsible action.

The guidelines in this brochure provide a positive foundation on which we might build. It is a call to those in leadership to use their power to responsibly uphold the values of justice in community which is critical in the ecumenical environment.

We encourage individuals to assert their dignity and contribute to the renewal of community. Each person has the call and opportunity in our collective worship, work, meetings and lives, to help create a reconciled, respectful community that is conducive to the full participation of all.

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and Church World Service are called to develop a truly inclusive community that is free of violence and injustice. Sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women or men is grievous and will not be tolerated or condoned; offenders will be held accountable, and subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

National Council of Churches, USA

475 Riverside Drive, Room 800
New York, NY 10115

Designated staff can be reached at:

Phone: 212-870-3407

Website: www.nccusa.org



Church World Service

475 Riverside Drive, suite 700
New York, NY 10115

Designated staff can be reached at:

Phone: 212-870-2669

Website: www.churchworldservice.org



For additional resources contact:

World Council of Churches

Decade Against Violence website:

<http://overcomingviolence.org/en.html>

Faith Trust Institute which works to end sexual and domestic violence by providing communities with the tools and knowledge they need to address the religious and cultural issues related to abuse.

Phone: 206-634-1902

Website: www.faithtrustinstitute.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline

Phone: 1-800-656-HOPE

RAINN — Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network

Website: www.rainn.org

The General Assembly of the National Council of Churches, USA and Church World Service

A PASTORAL AND EDUCATIONAL RESPONSE TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

WHEN CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY IS BROKEN





CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND SOLIDARITY

In ecumenical gatherings, an environment of welcome and hospitality encourages the full participation of all. At times, the environment we hope will be present becomes broken. The NCC and CWS strive to bring together a community of solidarity, free of all forms of violence. When sexual harassment breaks the trust in this community, we are called to support those who struggle for safety, dignity and their rights, as well as call to account those who cause harm.

Diversity Within Our Body

Our diversity adds to the strength of our community; it is something that is cherished and celebrated. As we encounter one another's differences, we cannot assume that our way of being and behaving is comfortable for every person. Sometimes our differences make it challenging to understand and communicate with one another, as well as respecting individual physical and sexual boundaries.

Christian communion that is marked by solidarity encourages the need to reflect about our attitudes and actions.

Sexual harassment and assault

Within society, sexual harassment ranges from whistles in the street and obscene phone calls to sexual assault. Sexual assault includes rape, nonconsensual sexual intercourse and sexual contact without consent.

Grievously, incidents of sexual harassment also happen within the church. Gatherings of church bodies also need to be mindful of the presence of this kind of behavior. Within the sacred context of worship and *koinoinia*, sensitivity to and respect for each person is important.

Behavior that has a sexual connotation, when unsolicited and unwanted, and / or repetitive, can be sexual harassment. Examples include: suggestive looks or comments, teasing or telling of jokes with sexual content, correspondence or calls of a sexual nature, inappropriate touching or closeness, pressure for unwanted personal or social engagement or activities with sexual overtones, or offers to use influence in return for sexual favors.

In the end, harassment is not necessarily what is intended, but how that behavior and attitude impacts another's well being defines harassment. The following principles are helpful to keep in mind to reduce incidents of harassment:

Take care with others' boundaries:

- Remember that physical and sexual boundaries differ culturally and geographically. What is appropriate for you may not be for someone else.
- Respect personal boundaries. If you are not sure, ask first, e.g. *"Would it be okay if I gave you a hug?"*

- Respect the sacred space of worship — be careful to honor each person's boundaries and experience.

Take care of one's own boundaries:

- Be clear with yourself and others about your personal boundaries — what sort of closeness with others feels comfortable or appropriate?
- Refuse any inappropriate gestures or contact.
- Communicate your preferences in regard to your own physical boundaries.

If you feel your boundaries have been violated:

- Trust your intuition and experience if someone's behavior makes you uncomfortable. Incidents of harassment are sometimes rationalized or denied by the one experiencing it. If something seems wrong, it often is. Trust your own warning signs.
- Make it clear that the experienced behavior is unwelcome. Be firm in your rebuff: say 'no' with a look, words or gestures.
- If harassment persists and you are in a public place, make your protest loud enough to be heard, so others notice the objectionable behavior.