

Number of Pages: 3

Suggested Title: Response Team Ministry for Sexual Misconduct

Discipline Paragraph or Resolution Number, if applicable: *Resolution #2043*

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implications: None

Amend Resolution #2043 Response Team Ministry for Sexual Misconduct

Response Team Ministry for Sexual Misconduct

*Introduction:* Misconduct of a sexual nature committed by laity and clergy is an ongoing problem throughout the Church. ~~Three percent of women attending church in any given month reported being sexually harassed or abused by a clergy person at some point in their adult lives according to a nationwide study (Diana Garland, “The Prevalence of Clergy Sexual Misconduct with Adults: A Research Study Executive Summary, 2009”; <http://www.baylor.edu/clergysexualmisconduct/index.php?id=67406>, accessed 16 July 2010).~~ Continued revelations about ~~mishandlings~~ violations of boundaries ~~of~~ by religious leaders across all faith communities offer a sobering reminder to United Methodists to face our own abuse crisis (M. Garlinda Burton, “United Methodists Need to Face Abuse Crisis: A UMNS Commentary,” <http://www.umc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=1wL4KnN1LH&b=5259669&ct+8437677&tr=y&aid=6486686>, accessed 14 June 2010). The United Methodist Church averages between 140 and 500 known cases of clergy sexual misconduct annually in the US alone (Sally Badgley Dolch, *Healing the Breach: Response Team Intervention in United Methodist Congregations*, Doctor of Ministry, Wesley Theological Seminary, 2010, pp. 131-32). Council of Bishops issued a joint statement with The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women naming sexual misconduct as a sin and committing to hold persons accountable and offering healing in response to complaints received (<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/united-methodist-leaders-respond-to-metoo-and-churchtoo>). The most recent Sexual Harassment survey in The United Methodist Church revealed significant increases in sexual harassment perpetrated by laypersons (Gail Murphy-Geiss, “Sexual Harassment in the United Methodist Church,” Chicago: General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, ~~2005~~2017). The responsibility for handling these complaints rests with our judicatory leaders who- ~~Bishops and district superintendents are responsible for ensuring~~ that the church responds to allegations of sexual misconduct by ~~either~~ a lay or clergy person within a ministerial relationship, attending to both accountability and procedural justice ~~or~~ pastoral concern. ~~In the church’s response to misconduct, there can be no true procedural~~

~~justice in the absence of pastoral concern just as there can be no true pastoral concern without procedural justice.~~

The dual needs of ~~procedural justice and pastoral concern~~ both are far better ~~met~~ addressed by a team effort than by one individual. A full account of justice-making requires the involvement of different persons in distinct roles throughout a process of disclosure, adjudication, and healing. A trained Response/Intervention/Care Team is comprised of persons approved by the bishop who are equipped to understand trauma and grief with expertise in specific areas of trauma and ready to be deployed by the bishop or bishop's designee to facilitate the process of healing mandated by the *Book of Discipline*.

*Definition:* Response Teams are called into a situation of trauma in order to promote the possibility of healing for the congregation, staff, and ~~the~~ individuals involved. Response Team ministry provides a way for judicatory leaders to enable effective assessment, intervention, training, and resourcing ~~of for~~ for congregations and staff experiencing events affecting congregational health ~~by enlisting a group of persons with training, expertise, and resources in specific areas of ministry.~~ Members may be paid or unpaid. ~~The Response Team is not called to any judicial or disciplinary processes for legal resolution of a situation.~~ The Response Team is called into action by the bishop or bishop's designee, ~~often a district superintendent~~, and is accountable to the bishop. The Response Team is not called to any judicial or disciplinary processes for legal resolution of a situation and is not a part of any investigation.

*Disciplinary Mandate to Provide for Healing:* The bishop and cabinet are mandated to “provide a process for healing within the congregation” or other ministry context as part of the supervisory response (§ 363.1f, *Book of Discipline 20122016*) and judicial process (§ 2701.4.c). The *Discipline* also allows for the use of a Response Team to provide pastoral care when handling and following-up on a complaint: the bishop may select “persons with qualifications and experience in assessment, intervention, or healing” to assist during the supervisory response (§ 363.1b, *Book of Discipline 20122016*). These persons may perform distinct roles, such as individual support for the accused, ~~and individual support for the congregation,~~ and families affected. These roles are in addition to any interim appointment made in accordance with the *Book of Discipline 20122016*, § 338.3. In all cases, the bishop initiates and guides the church's response to ministerial sexual abuse. ~~Effective use of a Response Team can lessen legal liability and promote justice.~~ When victims feel that the church is attending to their needs and seeking a thorough process for justice-making, they are more likely to continue engaging the church in problem- solving and

resolution rather than reactively pursuing civil procedures (e.g., suing the conference). Spreading the work of pastoral care and justice-making among several persons, each with a distinct role, also reduces real and perceived conflicts of interest. A trained and ready Response Team, assembled in a timely manner, can assist the bishop with the holistic task of justice-making. The United Methodist Church commends the use of Response Teams in cases of sexual misconduct ~~by ministerial leaders~~ and urges judicatory leaders to train and employ them. ~~Only 18 annual conferences in the US maintain an active, trained Response Team (“Active” is defined as having responded to more than one congregation within a three year period. Six additional conferences used a Response Team once between 2007 and 2009. Sally B. Dolch, *Healing the Breach*). Between 2007 and 2009, these teams responded to 156 incidents, averaging nearly three cases per conference per year. Extrapolating this data to all jurisdictions, we estimate that an additional 112 cases of ministerial sexual misconduct are handled by annual conferences in the US every year without the assistance of a Response Team. We urge bishops, district superintendents, chancellors, and other conference leaders in The UMC to seek out training in the use of a Response Team, to organize and provide for training Response Team personnel, and to employ these teams as partners in the healing ministry required when someone in leadership violates the sacred trust of ministry through sexual misconduct.~~

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women provides training for the development and use of Response Teams and offers a network for trained Response Team coordinators throughout our denomination. For more information on how judicatory leaders and Response Teams may collaborate in promoting congregational healing, see *When a Congregation Is Betrayed: Responding to Clergy Misconduct* by Beth Ann Gaede and Candace Reed Benyei (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2006, pp.102-16) and the ~~“GuidetoUsingaResponseTeam,”~~ <http://umsexualethics.org/ConferenceLeaders/ResponseTeams.aspx>. ~~Response Teams at~~ <http://umsexualethics.org/response-teams/>.

Date: 7/31/2019  
Signature of the Petitioner:



Identification of the Petitioner: General Secretary of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women  
Phone: (312) 346-4900  
City, State, Province, Country: Chicago, Illinois, United States  
E-mail Address: dhare@gcsr.org