



CHRIST'S CHURCH OF JOPLIN

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

REVISED: JUNE 2021

Our Commitment

The mission of Christ's Church is to help people love and obey Jesus. We want to pursue right relationship with God and right relationships with each other. Doing so will involve dealing with sin in accordance with Scripture, caring for those who suffer because of its effects, and looking to Jesus for healing and hope.

In keeping with this mission, Christ's Church is committed to responding to instances of sexual misconduct involving our pastors, employees, and volunteers (collectively, "church personnel"). The procedures and principles outlined below are intended to protect the vulnerable and to create an environment where instances of sexual misconduct can be investigated and resolved in a godly manner.

Our ultimate responsibility when claims of sexual misconduct are brought before leadership is to follow the guidance of Scripture and the Holy Spirit. The church's board of elders is responsible for seeing that this policy is followed and will review this policy periodically with pastors and pastoral teams and will make it available to the congregation.

Clarification on Sexual Misconduct

- "Child sexual abuse" means any sexual misconduct involving a child under the age of 18.
- "Sexual misconduct" refers to any sort of non-consensual sexual contact. It includes unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature, such as hugs, kisses, touching, assault, and intercourse. It can also occur within a marriage or family relationship.
- "Victim" is a person who is on the receiving end of any form of sexual misconduct.

Responding to Reports of Sexual Misconduct

1. **Initial Reporting:** When any member or attender becomes aware of sexual misconduct (or an allegation of the same) involving members of the Christ's Church community, they should first inform the person involved that his/her conduct is unwelcome, a violation of church policy, and must stop immediately. Anyone can also report allegations of sexual misconduct to the Lead Pastor or any member of the eldership team.
2. **Investigating:** The elders and pastoral staff will cause an investigation to be made into the claim of sexual misconduct. If the claim of sexual misconduct involves one or more of the elders or pastoral staff, such persons shall be excluded from the investigation, other than to respond to the allegation and provide their account of the incident. If the allegations involve a sufficient number of leaders so that an investigation could not reasonably be conducted, then the elders and pastoral staff shall appoint a special committee made up of select church members to investigate the matter. All allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously. The investigations shall be conducted in a biblical manner, and they may include (at a minimum) an evaluation of the following preliminary considerations:
 - a. Who has been harmed and what are their needs (and have steps been taken to assist in getting necessary medical assistance, if needed)?
 - b. Is a minor involved (and which adults should be notified)?

- c. What are the dynamics between the parties, specifically:
 - i. Are there imbalances between the parties such as age, gender, position of power, or considerations such as past relationship of trust, history of victimization, or other circumstances of vulnerability which may preclude real consent?
 - ii. Does any party need to obtain legal advice?
 - iii. Should law enforcement be informed (see Section 3, Reporting to Law Enforcement)?
 - d. Is it appropriate to initiate a process of accountability toward restoration in line with our policies on church discipline (please refer to “Christ’s Church Discipline Guidelines” for details)?
3. **Reporting to Law Enforcement:** If leadership’s investigation determines that child sexual abuse has occurred, we will report the child sexual abuse to local law enforcement authorities, in accordance with our legal obligations as mandated reporters. If leadership’s investigation determines that sexual misconduct has occurred with respect to a person over 18 years old, leadership shall evaluate whether the sexual behavior is a serious moral wrong but not legally actionable, or is legally actionable (in which case, leadership may urge them to reach out to authorities). If leadership determines that any case of sexual misconduct (including child sexual abuse) has occurred we will enact appropriate church discipline, which may include suspension or removal of such individual from their position with the church.

4. **Restorative Guidelines:**

- a. Response to Accusations of Harm: Church leadership will respond to any accusation of sexual misconduct with a spirit of caring, support, and restoration for the victim of sexual misconduct, the one accused of misconduct, and the community surrounding the victim, the accused, or both. A restorative response will vary from situation to situation; depending on the type of sexual misconduct; the degree of harm done; and the level of ongoing endangerment to the victim or to the community. In the case of sexual misconduct, mediation with face-to-face reconciliation is often not recommended or even possible. A high level of confidentiality must be upheld throughout any response to an accusation, so leaders need to discern if, or at what level, others in the congregation will be informed or involved.
- b. Responding to and Caring for the Victim: Church leadership, in responding to allegations, will:
 - i. Listen to the allegations.
 - ii. Assess immediate needs and offer help and support as needed:
 - 1. If there is imminent or ongoing danger, take immediate and concrete steps toward protection, whether through a safe place to stay, Community Groups, or the legal system.
 - 2. If someone is harmed physically, get medical help immediately. Offer to contact family, an advocate, or friends who may assist.
 - 3. If involving sexual misconduct, intervention may be needed to relieve a threatening situation (leadership is entitled to consult with sexual-misconduct professionals to determine the best intervention).

- iii. Confirm the exact nature of the accusation and assure safety before confronting the accused.
 - iv. Assess needs for support among family members within the church, close friends within the church, or members of an existing small group close to the victim. Respond as appropriate.
 - v. Make counseling resources available for the victim; specifically, Christ's Church has relationships with counselors that may be available for counseling victims and upon learning that any person in our congregation has been a victim of sexual misconduct, the church will provide contact information for these counselors.
- c. Confronting and Caring for the Accused: Church leadership, as part of its investigation and resolution, will:
- i. Share the accusation with the accused (as appropriate in the circumstances and subject to any applicable legal restrictions). Leadership will hear their story and assess their response to the accusation.
 - ii. Within a reasonable time of this meeting with the accused, the leadership team will make a determination whether to pursue further action.
 - iii. If the accused holds a position in the church, leadership shall determine whether a paid or voluntary leave-of-absence is required until the situation is resolved and/or the requirements for accountability and restitution are fulfilled.
 - iv. Hold the accused accountable for harm that has been inflicted. Determine a specific plan for accountability, and determine who will monitor the accountability process that follows, if other than the leadership team. An accountability process can be done within the church community, but is often more effective if managed through professional or legal intervention, depending on the type and severity of offense.
 - v. Tend to the needs of family members within the church or friends within the church who need support or assistance in the accountability process.
- d. Caring for the church community: Whether or not an accusation is shared with the congregation as a whole, leaders must assess the impact on the congregation. An initial assessment may include the following:
- i. Is there a safety concern?
 - ii. In consultation with the victim, determine what level of confidentiality will be maintained. Who do we need to tell?
 - iii. Does the victim or the accused already belong to a Community Group in the congregation who knows about the event or the accusation?
 - iv. Do leaders need to bring in professionals to help them care for the congregation in this time of crisis?
 - v. Does the congregation as a whole need a healing process?
5. **Scriptural Guidance**: In investigating, responding to, and resolving any allegations of sexual misconduct, church leadership shall operate in manner consistent with the instruction of the Bible and the Holy Spirit (including, but not limited to, the Scriptural Guidance provided below).

Congregational Advocates

The church will utilize congregational advocates for those who have been sexually abused. The church will make their names and contact information available on an on-going basis, as the people who occupy these positions may change over time. The church's current congregational advocates have been professionally trained in responding to victims of sexual misconduct. They are available for members to talk to and are willing to provide ongoing support, walking with victims through the reporting and healing process.

Personnel Working with Children

See Christ's Kids Policy & Procedures

Appendix 1: Commitments from Scripture

We are committed to pursuing justice and righteousness, because God is righteous and just. He commands us to love what he loves and hate what he hates.

“A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice...” (Isaiah 42:3)

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed.’” (Isaiah 56:1)

“...but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,’ declares the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:24)

“To fear the Lord is to hate evil.” (Proverbs 8:13)

“For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face.” (Psalm 11:17)

We are committed to helping victims of sexual misconduct find comfort and healing in Jesus, alongside those who love and obey Him.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together.” (1 Cor. 12:26)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. (2 Cor. 1:3)

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.” (Romans 12:10)

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” (1 Peter 3:8)