

A POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

ON SEXUAL ETHICS FOR

CLERGY/EMPLOYEES/LAY PERSONS

DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

APRIL 1999

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THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN VIRGINIA

A STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ETHICS FOR CLERGY

I. Preface

Clergy in the Episcopal Church are ordained for a particular leadership within this communion of the People of God. We lead by preaching and by presiding at the Eucharist, by administration of the Sacraments, by teaching and counseling, by visiting, by parish administration and by engaging with others in programs and activities designed to strengthen the community of faith.

The offices of deacon, priest and bishop carry high trust and responsibility. In the ordination service, all clergy are charged to:

- * make Christ and his redemptive love known, by word and example, to those among whom they live and work and worship;
- * proclaim God's forgiveness and blessing;
- * interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world;
- * love and serve the people among whom they work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor;
- * be faithful pastors to all whom they are called to serve, laboring together with them and with their fellow ministers to build up the family of God;
- * nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come;
- * be a wholesome example to their people, patterning their lives (and that of their families, or households, or communities) in accordance with the teaching of Christ;
- * proclaim and interpret boldly the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience of their people.¹

As nourishers, as servants of Christ's love, as counselors and spiritual directors, we have access to people's lives at times of greatest vulnerability. We have this access when those we serve suffer from grief, conflict, guilt, low self-esteem, parental or spousal neglect or other abuse. We minister to those who suffer from confusion and fragmentation and from spiritual poverty. **By virtue of the clergy's distinct role as helper, lay people are inherently vulnerable to abuse of power by clergy.**

Because of this imbalance of power between clergy and parishioners in pastoral and employment relationships, clergy *must* establish and maintain clear boundaries. Clergy should also take care not to become inappropriately involved in relationships in which the power differential seems to be reversed, for example, by the wealth or status of another.² Wealth or status may mask vulnerability, but an imbalance of power still exists.

¹*The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 537-551

²Adapted from *Sexual Exploitation*, The Diocese of Washington, 1992.

Functioning effectively in those relationships of vulnerability and trust requires us to be actively present and maintain appropriate distance, a difficult feat at best. Equally difficult is recognizing and maintaining the boundaries between one's own being and the pastoral office itself. Nowhere does this become more critical than in the sphere of interpersonal relationships.

To alert the Church to the dangers involved in working with those who are dependent and/or vulnerable, this document:

- * gives guidelines for appropriate boundaries between ourselves and those who come to us seeking advice, counsel or spiritual direction,
- * gives guidelines for appropriate boundaries between ourselves and those with whom we work or relate,
- * gives warning signs that will help us identify confusion of roles,
- * provides definitions of sexual misconduct,
- * offers a diocesan procedure for addressing allegations of sexual misconduct.

II. Principles and Guidelines

A. Principles

1. **The Church is a place for truth.**

In the past, the Church has limited the number of people who were told the facts about improprieties. Experience has born out that it is healthier for the Church and individuals to make the facts available to everyone once a determination has been made.

2. **Justice will be served.**

The Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia sets the standards for professional interpersonal conduct and provides an ongoing process for raising and testing questions about inappropriate or abusive conduct. Help will be provided to obtain a just resolution of any allegations of clergy sexual misconduct.

3. **The diocese will take allegations of sexual misconduct seriously.**

Any complaint against clergy concerning sexual misconduct must be brought to the attention of the Diocesan Bishop.³The bishop will follow the guidelines set forth in this document. Clergy who learn of allegations of sexual misconduct as defined in this document against clergy, lay staff or volunteers, must inform the bishop. In the case of allegations against a Bishop, then Title IV of the Canons of the Episcopal Church apply. Those aware of a possible criminal offense are required to notify governmental authorities.

4. **Prior to a determination, judgement will be suspended.**

Allegations of sexual misconduct are devastating. Clergy are especially vulnerable to injury of reputation by rumor and innuendo. Both the alleged offender and the person offended are entitled to a fair, prompt and confidential hearing. Findings about alleged sexual misconduct will only be shared after a determination is made.

³See Appendix II on page 16 for definition of reasonable grounds.

5. Fostering healthy relationships is fundamental.

The objective of leadership in a Christian congregation is to nurture persons toward healthy relationships open to the presence of God among us. We need to encourage maturity and wholeness in the community of our Lord Jesus Christ: To draw in the outcast, to heal our divisions and to become a redemptive community.

6. Protection of children is fundamental.

Every report of child abuse will be taken seriously. If any child discloses that he or she has been abused, the adult should always consider this as "reasonable grounds" to suspect abuse and should immediately make a report to Child Protective Services. If an adult suspects that a child has been abused, the adult must make a report to Child Protective Services (1-800-552-7096).⁴ Any necessary investigation must be conducted by professional child abuse counselors.

7. Clergy are always responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Whatever the circumstances, responsibility for appropriate boundaries remains with the clergy. This includes supervising, counseling, mentoring, pastoral/spiritual overseeing or exercising any similar role or power with respect to another person. These functions are absolutely incompatible with romantic or physical involvements. Any overtures that imply the desire for a romantic or sexual relationship are an abuse of role and power. Romantic and sexual overtures made by the one seeking help are to be met with firmness, clarity, detachment, referral when appropriate, or the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, if necessary.

8. Self-monitoring is essential.

Clergy responsibility includes the duty:

- a. to recognize those points in which personal feelings, vulnerabilities or temptations intrude into a professional relationship,
- b. to seek counseling for oneself among one's peers or from a competent counselor,
- c. to withdraw from an inappropriate relationship in a timely fashion,
- d. to refer the person to another counselor, and
- e. to acknowledge and report one's own misconduct to the bishop.

9. In all instances, the diocese will practice compassion.

In instances where sexual misconduct has been alleged, the following is required:

- a. Compassionate support will be provided for alleged offended persons, alleged offenders, all family members and involved congregations;
- b. Advocates, as defined in this document, will be provided for both the alleged offended persons, and the alleged offender.

If allegations of sexual misconduct are substantiated, the following requirements apply:

- a. Restitution for damages inflicted on offended persons will be sought from the offender;
- b. Removal of the cleric from the pastoral situation, followed by evaluation, counseling treatment and, if appropriate, reinstatement.

⁴See Appendix II, page 16.

10. Allegations will be dealt with in a timely fashion.

Clergy will report alleged sexual misconduct to the Bishop immediately. The Bishop immediately will set the diocesan guidelines into motion.

B. Guidelines for Appropriate Behavior

Clergy are responsible for knowing and complying with the following standards:

1. Recognize the power differential.

Clergy are to be cognizant of the power differential that exists between them and their parishioners and are not to exploit the trust and dependency of these persons.

2. Be aware of the common danger signs.

Clergy are to be aware of the common danger signs of sexual boundary breakdown: Excessive self-disclosure by the ordained person; excessive availability, including giving or receiving inappropriate gifts; excessive touch, however innocent; undue anticipation of future visits, including rearrangement of one's schedule; fretting about clothing or appearance; meeting at an unusual place or time; persistent fantasy or dreaming about the person; and keeping of secrets beyond professional confidentiality. When a cleric becomes aware of any of these or other danger signals, he or she is encouraged to make a self-examination by asking questions such as:

- a. What attracts? What can I learn about myself through the experience of being drawn to this other person?
- b. What is lacking? What is lacking in myself, my marriage, or my relationships that this person promises to satisfy?
- c. What is seductive? What is it about my life and ministry that I am vulnerable to breaking my commitments?

3. Be cautious.

Clergy must remain aware that there are sexually aggressive, even predatory, persons who seek them out. In such cases clergy may well be advised to seek counsel; care is advised in any case.

4. Be self monitoring.

All clergy are responsible for seeking the counsel and pastoral guidance of a person of spiritual wisdom. When they find themselves at risk of inappropriate sexual behavior, clergy should immediately discuss this matter with their spiritual counselor.

5. Respond appropriately.

Upon hearing of allegations of sexually-exploitative behavior of colleagues, clergy will:

- a. Support the person reporting information in reality testing the information,
- b. affirm the seriousness of the allegation,
- c. describe Diocesan policy relating to sexual harassment and abuse,
- d. emphasize the importance of establishing the truth of the allegation.

6. Report Immediately

Bring the matter to the attention of the Bishop. Never ignore or fail to respond to the possibility of misconduct. Through misplaced loyalty, clergy may believe that they must protect or defend their colleagues; to do so is to participate in a conspiracy of silence. Furthermore, they may prevent the abused and offenders from getting needed help.

7. Ignorance is no excuse.

Clergy are responsible for knowing and abiding by these guidelines of the Diocese of Southern Virginia.

III. Definitions of Sexual Misconduct

Clergy sexual misconduct includes sexual abuse, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation.

A. Sexual Abuse

For the purposes of this policy, sexual abuse is sexual involvement or contact by a cleric with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent. Sexual abuse is a criminal offense in all jurisdictions in this diocese and must be reported to law enforcement officials. It is a Diocesan policy to make such reports immediately and to cooperate fully with law enforcement officials in investigating any allegations of sexual abuse.

B. Sexual Harassment

As used in this policy, sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

1. sexually-oriented humor or language,
2. questions or comments about sexual behavior unrelated to employment qualifications or sexual orientation,
3. unwelcome or undesired physical contact,
4. inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance,
5. repeated requests for social engagements.

This applies in a situation where there is an employment, colleague, mentor or pastoral relationship between the persons involved. This explicitly includes sexual harassment of aspirants, postulants and seminarians sponsored by, or working in, this diocese.

C. Sexual Exploitation

For the purposes of this policy, sexual exploitation is a betrayal of trust in a pastoral relationship by the development, or the attempted development, of a sexual or romantic relationship between a cleric and a person with whom the cleric has a pastoral relationship. Sexual exploitation includes, among other things, activity such as:

1. intercourse,
2. kissing,
3. touching of breasts or genitals,
4. dating during the course of a counseling relationship,
5. verbal suggestions by a cleric of sexual involvement
6. sexually demeaning comments by a cleric.

The apparent consent of a possible victim to the sexual or romantic relationship does not determine whether there has been sexual exploitation. The imbalance of power between the cleric and person in a pastoral relationship undermines the validity of such consent.

D. Other Sexual Misconduct

For charges of alleged inappropriate sexual behavior outside pastoral relationship, the Bishop may wish to use the Response Team as a source of advice and possible intervention.

E. A Note About Clergy Dating

In the past, romantic relationships between single clerics and other single persons with whom the cleric has a pastoral relationship have not always been defined as sexual exploitation. There are a number of priests, for example, who are married to persons who were parishioners in a parish in which they have served. Nevertheless, such relationships are always complex and subject to later interpretation. While they may appear consensual, these relationships may not be truly mutual because of the imbalance of power between the cleric and the parishioner. Similar relationships are recognized as inappropriate by members of other professions, such as doctors and therapists. A cleric cannot maintain a pastoral role and a courtship at the same time. Thus, in a single clergy parish, a parishioner dating the cleric loses his or her priest. If the relationship between the parishioner and the cleric ends, the parishioner may feel ill-treated. In addition, the parish may be harmed by secrecy surrounding the relationship or by a myriad of other issues accompanying even a relationship that results in marriage.

Some clergy may decide never to date parishioners. Any cleric contemplating a relationship with a person with whom the cleric has a pastoral relationship is advised to seek discernment in the Christian community. This includes consultation with the Bishop or a person appointed by the Bishop and with representatives of the parish or other place of ministry. If dating is to continue, the pastoral relationship must be dissolved. In addition, care must be taken in such a situation that pastoral care for the parishioner is available from another priest. If a complaint is made regarding such a relationship, this diocese will investigate it according to these procedures.

IV. Prevention

A. Clergy Wellness

In facing the demands of the ordained ministry, especially in ministering to people in times of stress, we are encouraged to review the ways in which we manage our own level of stress. Managing stress includes providing adequate leisure time, following a healthy diet, doing regular exercises, enjoying hobbies and other "play" activities, attending to one's primary family or household, and spending regular time in prayer, meditation, personal counseling, devotional reading and/or in conversation with a spiritual director.

In addition, we are strongly encouraged to participate in a peer support or "colleague" group. The truth is that each of us needs a setting within which we with other clergy can expect to continue exploring the issues of our faith and vocation, reflecting openly on the events of our life and work. We need to *keep in touch* with our risks and needs, our failures and triumphs, our griefs and our celebrations. Regular group meetings with other clergy, perhaps as often as once a week, should be part of our discipline. Within these groups we can pray, study and reflect together on our lives as God's servant ministers. We can also model the kind of community that one hopes to find in parishes of the Diocese.

B. Self-Reporting

We believe that the responsibility for dealing with transgressions remains first with the offending person. We have attempted to avoid a process undertaken in an adversarial mode to encourage self-reporting. Conflicts in "what happened" are inevitable; therefore we have proposed some objective fact-finding procedures. We believe that the weight of a Diocesan process should be mediative and resolution-seeking. Most importantly, the process, should be redemptive for both the offender and those offended.

C. Education

All clergy in the diocese will receive training about clergy sexual ethics. Clergy currently employed in the diocese will attend a training seminar designed to familiarize them with diocesan policies on sexual misconduct. At the conclusion of the training they will receive a certificate of seminar completion. Clergy will be required to update their certificate every three years. New clergy entering the diocese will receive this manual as part of their orientation to diocesan policies and will attend the next available training session.

D. Screening and Supervision of Youth Workers⁵

Parishes and other church-related institutions are required to screen and supervise anyone, including lay employees and volunteers (excluding Church School teachers) who work with children and youth.

1. Parish clergy will be responsible for appropriate hiring practices which will include:
 - a. an application form, signed by the applicant, with personal and historical data such as name, address, telephone number, date of birth, education, employment, references and a statement which says that the applicant has never been convicted of child abuse.
 - b. a summary of a personal interview conducted with standard interview questions about work experience, education and, interaction with children,
 - c. three documented reference checks,
 - d. a documented background check from the State Police or Department of Social Services in your locality,
2. Parish clergy will provide for the maintenance of documented records on all youth and child employees or volunteers who regularly work with youth or children, including the above mentioned records and a notation of the date when the employee or volunteer ceased to work with youth or children and the reason why.
3. Parish clergy will keep on file signed statements by all of its clergy, employees or volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities that they have received the diocesan manual about prevention of sexual abuse for youth workers. Parish clergy will keep on file signed statements by all of its clergy, vestry members and employees that they have received this manual on Clergy Sexual Ethics.
4. No person with a civil or criminal record of child sexual abuse or who has admitted prior sexual abuse or anyone who has a paraphiliac diagnosis as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, will be allowed interaction with children or youth.

V. Diocesan Policy for Responding to Complaints of Clergy Sexual Misconduct

A. When a Complaint is Received

1. All complaints involving clergy sexual misconduct or suspected sexual misconduct are to be referred to the bishop. The Bishop will personally assure the person making the complaint of the Church's concern regarding the complaint and that the complaint will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. The Bishop shall appoint a Process Coordinator (PC) to oversee the investigation and follow through. At the earliest opportunity, the PC will ask the person making the complaint to sign a written statement which includes the date, location, time and a description of the alleged misconduct and

⁵ See Diocese of Southern Virginia's [Policies and Practices for Prevention of Child Abuse](#)

the names, addresses and telephone numbers of any witnesses if known. If no written statement is made, the Bishop at his discretion may decide to follow the procedures outlined in this policy, in which case the Bishop will follow all applicable procedures, including notification of the alleged offender. If the complaint alleges sexual misconduct by the Bishop, the Standing Committee will perform the functions assigned to the Bishop by this policy.

2. If the complaint alleges sexual abuse of a minor or an incompetent adult by a cleric, the PC, will immediately notify the relevant law enforcement authorities. The Bishop and any other church official or employees with knowledge of the alleged abuse will cooperate fully with the law enforcement authorities. Further action by the Bishop will be guided by the progress of the law enforcement investigation.
3. In cases involving sexual exploitation and harassment, the Bishop, within two days of receiving the written statement described in section 1 above, will assign the complaint to the Standing Committee of the Diocese. A Pastoral Response Team will be appointed by the PC pursuant Sec. VI A. The Bishop's office will immediately notify the complainant (or the alleged offended person if not the complainant) and the alleged offender, that the complaint has been assigned to the Standing Committee. The Bishop will personally assure the complainant (or the alleged offended person if not the complainant) and the alleged offender of the Church's concern regarding the complaint and of the thorough investigation and response which the complaint will receive. The Bishop may also immediately issue a pastoral directive to the alleged offender proscribing any contact with the complainant (or the alleged offended person if not the complainant) until after the Standing Committee has completed its work.
 - a. The Bishop will appoint an advocate both for the alleged offended person and the alleged offender. The advocate may be a cleric or lay person who can provide support in a role separate from the investigative process. This person is not to be considered a source of legal advice or psychological therapy.
4. The Standing Committee will begin investigating the complaint as soon as possible but in no event later than five working days following the receipt of the complaint.
5. The Standing Committee will attempt to interview the complainant (or the alleged offended person if other than the complainant), the alleged offender, and all other witnesses. Both the alleged offended person and the alleged offender may be accompanied by persons of their choosing at the interview. The Standing Committee may, at its discretion, consult with parish wardens and staff members from present or previous contexts of ministry. The Standing Committee will at all times strive to ensure the privacy of the alleged victim and the complainant if other than the alleged offended person as well as the alleged offender. The diocesan and national canons establish the nature and burden of proof required.
6. The PC will arrange for an evaluation within thirty days of the alleged offender by a person professionally qualified and experienced in the evaluation of clergy sexual misconduct. The evaluator shall not be (and shall not have been) in a therapeutic relationship with the alleged offender. The Bishop will require the alleged offender to undergo the evaluation. Upon receipt of the appropriate releases, the results of the evaluation will be available to the Bishop, the PC, the Standing Committee and the alleged offender. The requirement of an evaluation may be waived at the Bishop's discretion if the Standing Committee recommends that the evidence does not initially appear to warrant an evaluation. The Diocese will pay any costs not covered by insurance for the evaluation.

7. Any party or witness to an alleged act of clergy sexual misconduct may submit a statement in writing to the Standing Committee, if desired.
8. The Standing Committee will make a preliminary written report and recommendations to the Bishop within fourteen (14) days. The Standing Committee will move as swiftly as possible towards completion of a final report and recommendations to the Bishop. The final report will include the original written statement of the complainant, all written statements submitted by other persons, and a recommendation as to whether or not a presentment will be brought.
9. Upon receipt of the Standing Committee's recommendation, the Bishop may meet individually with the complainant or the alleged offended person (if other than the complaining witness) and the alleged offender. The Bishop will not at any time following the making of the complaint hear the sacramental confession of any of the persons listed above but will recommend an appropriate person who can, without encumbrance, administer the Sacrament.

B. When a Determination is Made

1. At the Bishop's direction, the PC will immediately inform the complainant or the alleged offended person (if other than the complainant), and the alleged offender.
2. If the Standing Committee determines that the complaint is unsubstantiated, a written report to that effect will be placed in the file and a copy will also be placed in the cleric's diocesan personnel file. The Bishop will meet with the complainant to discuss the determination and may also meet with the alleged offender to discuss any steps that may be necessary to make the determination known.
3. If the Standing Committee determines that the complaint is substantiated, the Bishop will take the following steps:
 - a. The Bishop will meet with the offended person to express the Church's deepest regret and to discuss appropriate responses by the Church to assist in the offended person's healing. The offended person may be accompanied by persons of the his or her choosing. The Bishop will determine what therapeutic or other assistance should be offered to the offended person.
 - b. The Bishop may meet, if appropriate with the victim's spouse and/or family to discuss how the Church may assist them.
 - c. The Bishop, or a representative appointed by the Bishop, will meet with the offender. The offender may be accompanied by other persons, if the offender desires. The Bishop will discuss with the offender the actions the Bishop intends to take. If appropriate, the Bishop will refer the offender for therapy by persons professionally qualified in treatment of clergy sexual misconduct. If disciplinary action under Title IV of the Canons of the Episcopal Church or the Canons of the Diocese of Southern Virginia is appropriate, such action may include the issuance of a pastoral directive, presentment, and/or inhibition. Whenever an allegation of clergy sexual misconduct is substantiated, the Bishop will act immediately to remove the offender from current position.
 - d. The Bishop may meet, if appropriate, with the offender's spouse and/or family to discuss how the Church may assist them.
 - e. In making any decision about professional rehabilitation and future employment for the offender, the Bishop will be guided by the assessments of those experts in the treatment of clergy sexual misconduct who have treated the offender. In most cases, significant involvement in personal psychotherapy will be required before

any re-deployment in the Church is considered. Public acknowledgement of the misconduct, including exoneration of and restitution to the offended person, will normally be required before re-deployment in the church.

- f. The Bishop will notify the wardens, if the offender serves a parish, or representatives of the place of ministry, if the offender does not serve a parish, and discuss with them what assistance would be most helpful for healing. The bishop will recommend an open congregational meeting to begin the process of healing in the congregation. The Bishop or the Bishop's representative will attend such a meeting.
 - g. If it appears that there has been a possible violation of any federal or state law, the Bishop will notify law enforcement officials.
4. All records of Standing Committee members and determinations by the Bishop will be held in strict confidence and kept separate from ordinary personnel files; however, these records will be made available by the diocese if they are requested by a subpoena. Standing Committee members will not retain personal copies of investigatory records. In keeping with the "Truth Telling" norm expressed previously, however, the "necessary" facts will be shared with the congregation.
 5. The Bishop, Standing Committee members and all other representatives of the diocese will make every effort to protect the privacy of victims of clergy sexual misconduct.
 6. The process suggested in this document may be applied to any category of misconduct in Church ministry and is not restricted solely to allegations of sexual misconduct.

VI. Pastoral Response to Offended Persons and Congregations

A. General Guidelines for Institutional Response

When an incident of clergy sexual misconduct has come to light, the lay leadership of the congregation should be made aware of the issues as a first priority. The process of congregational healing is closely linked with the knowledge and leadership of this group.

1. A Pastoral Response Team will be appointed.
 - a. The PC with the Bishop's concurrence, will appoint no fewer than five men and women, including clergy and lay persons, mental health professionals and persons with skills in crisis intervention, communication and pastoral care. Other professionals with specific skills in congregational development, family systems theory, grief counseling, and other specialties may be brought in as needed.
 - b. The Pastoral Response Team shall not include any persons whose judgment or objectivity might be impaired because of a relationship with or knowledge of any parties or witnesses to a complaint.
2. An open congregational meeting is called. The Bishop or the Bishop's designate is present to provide the facts known, being sensitive to the civil rights of all who are involved.
3. There is a need to balance the privacy of the offended person(s) against the important posture of openness with the congregation. The identities of the those persons need to be kept in confidence insofar as this is possible. Any details which may identify the offended persons must be guarded carefully.
4. The congregational meeting can be traumatic. Appropriate personnel trained in crisis ministry and in issues of clergy sexual misconduct should be present and be available for small group or one-to-one counseling immediately after the formal presentation.

5. The "Trauma Debriefing Process" described in Appendix I on page 14 of this handbook should be followed at the congregational meeting.
6. If new information should come to light after this initial congregational meeting, further meetings may be held following this process. Minor modifications can be made as needed to fit particular circumstances. These congregational meetings should have as their theme, "The Church is the place for truth."

B. Additional Resources the Church Should Use

1. Removal of a clergy person for sexual misconduct is grave. Christians are charged to pray for all human conditions. The congregation shall begin regular prayer for the offended person, the perpetrator, and the congregation at large.
2. Public notice of local counselors qualified to deal with instances of sexual misconduct shall be announced, distributed in writing and posted on bulletin boards. At least three referrals should be listed. Publicizing the availability of professionals will not only help known offended persons, but will provide a means for more reluctant offended persons to face their fears in a safe environment.
3. Preaching on the subject of violations of trust is discouraged.
4. Public meetings with panels of expert speakers on sexual misconduct in the work place and clergy sexual misconduct are encouraged. Awareness of the problem may be heightened by exploring the underlying causes of sexual misconduct and the social ambiguity surrounding it. The observance of responsible boundaries for relationships in places of work and between the clergy and their parishioners and staff will be fostered by these forums.
5. Liturgical acts of corporate penitence can provide the congregation with a realistic perspective, although these acts should not occur until the congregation has entered a phase of acceptance of their condition. Penitence should not be used to mask unexamined pain and anger.

Modify the Reconciliation of a Penitent for congregational use in which all can confront and confess their own weakness and sin on a social level. Include an opportunity for preaching on everyone's need to recognize the illegitimate use of power to intimidate others and the subtle illusions of intimacy that characterize many relationships. Guide the anger and hatred for the perpetrator, and redirect the petty gossip that inevitably surrounds incidents of sexual misconduct toward healthy dialogue about the nature of wholesome relationships. Ask, "What can we learn from this?" and "How do we prepare a safe environment for professional work in this place?"

6. Request frequent communication, verbally or in writing, from the Bishop or the PC regarding the course of action being undertaken for the offended person and congregation.
7. Do not neglect to remember the offended persons and their families, securing a safe place for them in community life.
8. Provide a means for the congregation to visit an accused member of the clergy who may be in prison (e.g., sending mail, notes at holiday seasons). Do not let the congregation forget that they have a moral obligation to pray for and to minister to the clergy person and his or her family throughout the imprisonment.
9. Congregations comprise many kinds of people. Even after a court conviction, some parishioners will continue to honor their former clergy person for personal, nonprofessional reasons. They must be accorded a safe environment in which to express their feelings, or they will be lost to the community.

10. The broken pastoral and professional relationship is like a death. Grief is personal and individual. Anniversaries and special occasions, appeal and parole hearings, and newspaper articles on the person or the subject may stimulate episodes of anxiety, anger, or fear. The clergy and lay leadership of the congregation should be prepared for these to arise and see them as part of a prolonged grief process.
11. Allegations of inappropriate sexual conduct exclusive of sexual misconduct involving parishioners will also be reported to the Bishop.

C. Long Term Congregational Healing

1. Ministry to the Congregation

The continuing ministry to a congregation which has been traumatized by an incident of clergy misconduct may take any of several forms, including:

- a. meetings between the diocesan staff and the parish lay leadership to assess the healing process of the congregation. This should include conversations with the interim priest and the parish staff.
- b. study groups which consider the issue of clergy ethics, perhaps by discussing a selected book on the topic.
- c. congregational self-evaluation, including the use of a questionnaire or survey instrument.
- d. congregational focus groups which address the question, "Where are we now in our process of moving ahead?"
- e. formation or appointment of a Committee on Congregational Life to assess needs and plan programs for continued healing.

2. Congregational Redemption

Some congregations which have worked through a history of clergy sexual misconduct take a special vocation in a related area. Some have offered themselves to other congregations which are confronted with the same issues, some have offered their building for use by community groups which address issues of sexual abuse, and some have developed "Stranger Danger" or other programs for young people about protecting themselves from abuse. These are signs that the congregation has indeed moved into the redemptive activity of letting its pain be a gift for others.

3. A New Look at Clergy-Congregation Relations

Perhaps most heartening are those congregations which have taken a clear-eyed look at clergy-congregation relations. These congregations have become aware that, while each member of the clergy is responsible for his or her own behavior, there are congregational factors which can contribute to a climate in which clergy sexual misconduct happens. These congregations commit themselves to provide:

- a. honest feedback to their ordained leadership through a regular process of mutual evaluation and at the same time to accept honest feedback from their clergy.
- b. sufficient time off and continuing education time so that clergy are less at risk of becoming burned out or isolated.
- c. funding and support of benefit packages which allow clergy to consult with professional caregivers when needed.

- d. support fostering clergy family life and maintenance of boundaries between home and church by the establishment of clear policies developed in consultation with the clergy.
- e. sufficient time for involvement in diocesan activities.

The so-called "new" issue of clergy sexual misconduct presents the entire Church with an opportunity to come to new levels of clarity about expectations of the clergy, professionalism of the clergy, relationships between men, women, and children, and indeed, about the shared nature of ministry itself.

APPENDIX I

Trauma Debriefing: A Model for a Congregational Meeting

A. Symptoms of Trauma

When a congregation experiences critical incidents and trauma, an assortment of these symptoms, both immediate and delayed, may be displayed:

1. a loss of energy or a feeling of paralysis
2. distrust of leadership, which is often projected onto future leadership
3. divisions within the group
4. some group members isolating themselves and withdrawing from the group
5. anger, displaced onto unrelated issues or which is out of proportion
6. a conspiracy of silence about the traumatic event
7. despair about the group's future
8. blaming and distortions of responsibility for the event
9. seeking a "quick fix" without thoughtful reflection
10. difficulty making decisions which are normal and necessary

All of these are possible corporate responses to trauma. They will not go away unless the trauma is processed and integrated into the congregation's life. The parallel of destructive "family secrets" is obvious.

B. Congregational Debriefing

1. A Model for Congregational Debriefing

A useful model to follow for congregations which have experienced a trauma is a corporate debriefing. This model is drawn from disciplines which do crisis counseling, such as emergency medicine, law enforcement, military science, crisis chaplaincy and disaster response. A trauma debriefing allows participants to integrate the reality of the event with their own responses to it. The congregation trauma debriefing model has been shown to be an effective way to communicate data, to surface feelings, and to lead a congregation into the future unhindered by the past. A trauma debriefing experience is:

- a. a structured, directed process for presenting factual data.
- b. an opportunity to accept the reality and chronology of events.
- c. a chance to ventilate the feelings present during the trauma.
- d. a time to explore the repercussions and consequences of the event.
- e. an opportunity to plan further responses to the event.
- f. a group experience.....it is important to get as much participation as possible.

2. Steps of a Trauma Debriefing for a Congregation

- a. Hold the debriefing as soon as possible after learning of the event. Make certain everyone is notified of the debriefing, perhaps by a telephone tree or overnight mail.
- b. Select a leader or co-leaders who have had experience with this kind of process. The Bishop or other diocesan authority should be present at the debriefing, although he or she should not take the role of leader.

- c. Hold the congregational debriefing at the church if possible. Although an opening prayer is fine, do not make it a liturgical event.
- d. Have the Bishop or diocesan representative and a member of the lay leadership of the congregation greet those present.
- e. Move quickly to a self-introduction by the leader of the debriefing. He or she will then explain the process and the guidelines for the debriefing.
- f. The confidentiality of the participants in the traumatic event is a matter that will vary depending on the circumstances. What is important is the assurance that no one will be placed in jeopardy because of any disclosures which may happen during the debriefing.
- g. The facts and chronology of the trauma are presented. This is not a time for feelings to be expressed; the group may need some direction to hold the expression of their feelings until the next phase. Questions, notes on paper at an easel, and a summary all help to encapsulate the facts of the situation. The purpose here is to give all those present a common record of the traumatic event (a "consensual reality").
- h. The leader now invites the expression of feelings. In large meetings, dividing into small groups may encourage people to express their feelings. No feelings, however trivial, intense or unusual, are to be discounted. The feelings are simply to be collected and heard, and no effort should be made to fix, soothe, or smooth over them. People may need to be directed and supported in expressing their own feelings, not the feelings of someone else.
- i. People are invited to place the events within a context or perspective (perhaps this is likely to come naturally, but it may need the leader's direction). In this phase, there may be expressions of confusion or helplessness. There may be some curiosity about how other groups resolve an event of this sort. People may have an awareness of paradox: Why do bad things happen? How can it be that such a talented member of the clergy could be involved in misconduct? Why do things like this happen in a church? Where does responsibility lie? What about the resources of our faith?
- j. The leader then asks for those present to turn their attention to the repercussions of the event. What might the future look like? This step bridges the trauma with the ongoing life of those involved in it. This may be a time to explore some of the issues for the congregation in the near future. These issues may also be listed on newsprint or summarized verbally.
- k. The final step involves the scheduling and planning of a follow-up session one or two months into the future. It also includes a discussion of the ways in which the pastoral and sacramental needs of the congregation are to be met and a description of the resources available to people who may need counseling or other specialized attention.

Appendix II
Understanding "Reasonable Grounds"

"Reasonable Grounds" are those grounds which have a rational foundation. Any of the following would be helpful in establishing them:

- A. a complaint from a victim;
- B. a statement of a credible eye witness or a credible witness to a recent complaint;
- C. a statement of another which is buttressed by credible detail from the surrounding circumstances;
- D. a credible witness who corroborates the statement of another.

However, the following would always be excluded as providing reasonable grounds:

- A. gossip
- B. unsubstantiated conclusions.

Sexual exploitation, including but not limited to the development of or the attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a cleric, employee, or volunteer and a person with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual.