

Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy

Purpose

Collier Street United Church is committed to providing safe environments for work, worship, and study, free from harassment and violence.

The church will not tolerate any behaviour by any person – including but not limited to its members, adherents, ministry personnel, non-ministry employees, and elected members, volunteers or visitors – that constitutes harassment, or is violent or threatens violence.

Harassment and violence in the workplace are prohibited by federal and provincial law and the laws of the church.

Policy

All complaints of harassment or violence toward anyone within the church— including but not limited to its members, adherents, ministry personnel, non-ministry employees, and elected members, volunteers or visitors – will be taken seriously and dealt with in a spirit of compassion and justice.

Harassment is defined as any unwanted physical, sexual, or verbal conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwanted, and is a form of discrimination. Harassment may involve a wide range of behaviour, from verbal innuendo and subtle suggestions to overt demands and physical abuse, and it includes psychological harassment.

A **poisoned environment** is a form of discrimination and can arise from even a single incident. It may be created by the comments or actions of any person, regardless of his or her status. The comments or conduct do not have to be directed at a particular individual.

Sexual harassment is defined as any attempt to coerce an unwilling person into a sexual relationship, to subject a person to unwanted sexual attention, or to punish a refusal to comply.

Violence is defined as the exercise of physical force or attempt to cause physical force by a person against a worker in a workplace that causes or could cause injury. It also includes statements or behaviours that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in the workplace, that could cause physical injury.

It is everyone's responsibility to raise concerns about harassment, violence, and discrimination within the workplace. It is also everyone's responsibility to take steps to address harassment, violence, and discrimination in the workplace.

Procedures

1. Harassment and violence are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

2. If the person complaining (the complainant) is able to do so, they should communicate directly with the person who is behaving inappropriately, to tell them that their behaviour is unacceptable and is being experienced as unacceptable by the complainant.
3. If the behaviour does not stop or the complainant is unable to speak to the respondent (the person behaving inappropriately), then a complaint should be provided in writing with detail as to the date of the incident(s), location, any witnesses, and a description of the incident(s).
4. The complaint should be sent to Collier's Ministry and Personnel Committee. All complaints of harassment or violence will be taken seriously and will be investigated.
5. Collier's Ministry and Personnel Committee will assess the complaint and the applicability of this policy to respond to the complaint. If there are other processes available to address the complaint, those may be recommended. Such other options could include mediation, a facilitated conversation, or other forms of dispute resolution.

NOTE: Conduct that involves the proper exercise of responsibilities or authority related to the provision of advice, assignment of work, counselling, performance evaluation, discipline and other supervisory/leadership functions does not constitute harassment.

6. The complaint will be provided to the respondent at the earliest possible opportunity by a member of the Ministry and Personnel Committee or appointee.
7. Investigations will be conducted and/or facilitated by the Ministry and Personnel Committee or appointee. The investigator will meet with the parties to the complaint in person; if there are any witnesses, conversations with the witnesses may be conducted in person or over the phone. Each stage in dealing with a case of harassment or violence needs to minimize further distress for the complainant and involve as few people as possible. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality to the extent possible.
8. The investigator will prepare a report with recommendations to resolve the complaint, and the report will be provided to the Ministry and Personnel Committee [M&P]. M&P will review the information gathered and prepare a recommendation for the Personnel Review Executive of Collier's Official Board. The Personnel Review Executive [PRE] is comprised of the Chair of the Ministry and Personnel Committee, the Chair of Official Board and the Minister. The PRE will review the recommendations and will approve the appropriate actions to be taken.
9. The Ministry and Personnel Committee will carry-out the approved actions, and will respond to the complainant and respondent (person being accused of harassment or violence), in writing, in a timely manner. The parties will be provided with information about the outcome as appropriate in the circumstances. Personal information will not be provided about any party, and all information will be held in as much confidence as is possible while still ensuring fair process.