

RESURRECTION COVENANT CHURCH of CHICAGO
Policy on Caring for Our Community in Instances of Sexual Assault and Abuse

As a congregation of Christian faith, Resurrection Covenant Church is committed to creating and maintaining an atmosphere of safety in which members, friends, and visitors can worship, learn, and interact free from sexual harassment, abuse, or assault. Any person in the congregation who has a concern or knowledge of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual assault involving a congregant or staff member of the congregation is urged to contact the pastor or a member of the leadership team. Concerns about professional sexual misconduct (including harassment, abuse, and/or assault) by one of the pastors should be brought to the immediate attention of the chair of the leadership team or any other board member. The Leadership Team is listed on the church's website: www.rescov.org and can be contacted by email: chair@rescov.org. This policy is also available on the church's website.

Sexual Harassment

The term "sexual harassment" refers to any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment occurs when any of the following are true:

- Submission to such actions is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment or relationship with the church.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such actions by an individual is used as the basis for employment or ministry/program decisions affecting such individuals.
- Such actions have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or ability to participate in church activities; or has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or worshiping environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome behavior that has sexual overtones, including:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, emails, or invitations;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, or inappropriate hugging or holding;
- Visual contact, such as leering, staring at another person's body;
- Verbal contact, such as requests for sexual favors, inappropriate comments of a sexually suggestive nature, or telling jokes with sexual content;

- Continued romantic pursuit or expression of sexual interest or desire after these efforts have been rejected, or after being informed that they are unwelcome.

If you experience sexual harassment at Resurrection Covenant Church, and you feel comfortable to speak directly with the person, we encourage you to let them know that their behavior is not welcome, and also inform pastoral staff and/or leadership team. It is okay if you are unable, uncomfortable, or feel unsafe, to deal directly with the person; if that is the case, or if the conduct continues after you speak directly with the person, please seek out a leadership team member or the pastoral staff to report it. The pastoral staff and leadership team will promptly investigate, will take action necessary to address the behavior, and will report the resolution to the person making the complaint. There are no statute of limitations on reporting incidences of sexual harassment. The leadership team is named on the website.

No one should experience any form of retaliation for having reported sexual harassment or having participated in an investigation of a report of sexual harassment. Anyone who feels that he or she has been retaliated against should immediately report it to a member of the leadership team.

Sexual Abuse

The term “sexual abuse” is any unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent (*American Psychological Association*, <https://www.apa.org/topics/sexual-abuse/>).

Sexual Assault

The term “sexual assault” refers to sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Attempted rape;
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching;
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator’s body;
- Penetration of the victim’s body, also known as rape (*RAINN [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network]*, rainn.org)

Resurrection Covenant takes allegations of sexual abuse and assault very seriously. **If you observe or experience sexual abuse or assault at Resurrection Covenant**, you should immediately seek out a pastor or a leadership team member to report it. If the misconduct is committed by a pastor, seek out a leadership team member to report it. The leadership team member will take the appropriate next steps, which will depend on whether the person is an ordained clergyperson. The pastor and/or leadership team

member will promptly investigate and take necessary steps to address the behavior, and report the resolution to the person making the complaint. There are no statute of limitations on reporting incidences of sexual assault or sexual abuse. The leadership team is named on the website. Any information received and any record maintained by Resurrection Covenant regarding allegations of abuse or assault shall be kept confidential until it is a matter of public record. This means only those who need to know will have access to these records. Those with a need to know may include for example, an attorney representing the Church, the pastor and/or the leadership team.

Support for those reporting allegations:

- If an assault is alleged from a pastor, a leadership team member will report the incident to the superintendent for the Central Conference and to the Board of Ordered Ministry or relevant authority who will direct the investigation of allegations.
- If the assault is alleged from a congregant, a member of the Care Team and a member of the pastoral team will meet with both parties with the potential result being a referral to police authorities.
- The Care Team is composed of the pastor, the chair or vice-chair, and two members of the congregation selected by the Leadership Team.
- A member of the leadership team (or a member of the congregation) and a member of the Care Team will be assigned to support the complainant during and after the allegation process.

Support for those accused of sexual allegations:

- A member of the Care Team and a member of the pastoral team or congregation will provide resources for therapy, social services, and provide support during and after the allegation process.

Sexual Misconduct: Leadership and Power Dynamics

At Resurrection Covenant Church, we encourage and support our pastoral staff in nurturing safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries, and referring those in need to helpful and supportive resources. It is critical that our pastors understand that they are recipients of a sacred trust, the abuse of which is likely to cause severe injury to those involved and to the church.

A “ministerial relationship” is defined as a relationship between a clergyperson, employee, or volunteer; and a person receiving direct supervision, individual spiritual and/or pastoral counseling, and/or providing confidential or privileged information to the clergyperson, employee, or volunteer.

Leadership team members and lay leaders are also elevated to a position of responsibility and authority in the congregation, whether real or perceived.

All these relationships carry an inherent imbalance of power. Whether clergy or lay, using one's position of power to enter into a sexual relationship is sexual misconduct.

At times, a clergyperson, employee, or volunteer may develop an appropriate, mutual, and consensual sexual relationship within the context of Resurrection Covenant Church ministry, if there has been no direct supervision or individual spiritual counseling. Such relationships are to be entered into with extreme caution and a spirit of discernment, as sexual misconduct can still occur within these relationships.

Sexual Offenders

Resurrection Covenant Church affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a Christian community open to those who are in need of worshiping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles.

In order to keep our congregation as safe as possible, any person accused of a sexual offense of any kind, whether within or outside of our community, will be placed on a tailored limited access agreement without prejudice. We are not equipped to judge the veracity of the accusations, but the accusations themselves initiate the application of the tailored limited access agreement, both for the safety of our congregation, and for the safety of the accused. The leadership team will be convened within 10 days of such accusations being made known to the pastor or leadership team in order to develop the agreement (which may be subsequently revised upon more information). The limited access agreement will remain in effect until all accusations have been resolved, and the safety of the congregation is no longer threatened because of the accusations (see below). Persons will not continue to attend or participate in any programs or services of the congregation until a limited access agreement is signed by both parties (church and accused).

Any person convicted of a sexual offense, or with a history of known sexual offenses, will also be placed on a tailored limited access agreement without prejudice. The leadership team will be convened within 10 days of such a person being made known to the pastor or leadership team in order to develop the limited access agreement. When possible, this will be done in consultation with the person's parole officer and/or treatment provider, so it may be determined that they can safely participate in the adult life of the congregation and remain in compliance with the conditions of parole, when relevant.

Any person accused, arrested, convicted, or with a history of known sex offenses who will not sign the limited access agreement, or who violates a signed agreement, will be denied access to any programs or services at the congregation.

If you are accused of a sexual offense, please know that these policies are for your safety, as well as that of the congregation. Please speak with the pastor about your situation so that the appropriate steps can be taken. Your confidentiality will be protected; however, if and when the accusations become a matter of public record, the congregation will be notified.

If you are arrested, or have been convicted of a sexual offense, please know that these policies are for your safety, as well as that of the congregation. Please speak with the pastor about your situation so that the appropriate steps can be taken. We will make the congregation aware of your arrest/conviction and that you are under a Limited Access Agreement.

Any person who confesses or is found to be guilty of violating this policy will be removed or dismissed from his or her position and/or will be barred from participation in any programs or services of the congregation. Staff, volunteers, and clergy will read and sign a declaration that they have read and will abide by this policy. Signed copies will be kept on file.

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Sample Limited Access Agreements

Introductory paragraph in cases of allegation

A criminal complaint or allegation of sexual misconduct has been made about you to the pastor or leadership team member. While this complaint is being investigated, in order to protect our congregation from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the Care Team (the pastor, the chair or vice-chair, and up to two other people appointed by the chair and the pastor) unless or until the complaint or allegation becomes a matter of public record. It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

Introductory paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender

Resurrection Covenant Church affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a Christian congregation open to those who are in need of worshiping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. Based on your prior convictions, our policy is to place you on a tailored limited-access agreement. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of an incident or accusation for both you and the congregation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership; however, your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our congregation, and to ensure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Template for Accusations Involving Only Children or Youth

Within the following guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property, or at congregation-sponsored events. This includes abiding by the following:

- Do not talk with children.
- Remain in the presence of the appointed adults at all times when children are present.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances:

[INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION]

I have reviewed this agreement, and I agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this agreement will be reviewed every six months, and will remain in effect for an indefinite period.

Signature:

Date:

Pastor signature:

Date:

Chair signature:

Date:

Template for Accusations Involving Adults

Within the following agreement, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, adult education on congregational property, all adult social events outside of private residences, and well-supervised intergenerational events. You must relinquish all, and may not assume any further, leadership roles within the congregation. You must not be alone with any individual of any age on congregation property, or at congregation-sponsored events. You are to avoid any contact with children on congregation property, and at congregation-sponsored events. This includes abiding by the following:

- Remain in the presence of at least two adults at all times
- If a child or another adult in the congregation approaches you when you are alone, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
- Do not join Breakout Rooms on Zoom

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances:

[INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION]

I have reviewed this agreement, and I agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this agreement will be reviewed every six months, and will remain in effect for an indefinite period.

Signature:

Date:

Pastor signature:

Date:

Chair signature:

Date: