

Sexual misconduct is against the policies of the ELCA

The Church should be a safe place where people can worship, learn, work, love, and receive care in a manner that is free from sexual misconduct.

The Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America works in cooperation with member congregations to prevent, detect, and remedy the effects of the sexual misconduct within the Church.

The Montana Synod is strongly committed to working with the Church agencies and local parishes to ensure that the Church at every level is free from any form of sexual harassment or misconduct. All forms of sexual misbehavior are unacceptable with the Church and are subject to intervention and/or disciplinary action. Such a policy complements the remedies provided in civil and criminal law for sexual misconduct and harassment.

The Montana Synod on Sexual Misconduct is available through the Synod office (406-453-1461), online at www.montanasynd.org and in every congregation. In addition, the Synod encourages every congregation to adopt its own sexual misconduct policy.

“In all relationships, an ordained minister is expected to honor his or her public promises, bear the burdens of others, and seek to build up the body of Christ.”

In public ministry as well as in private life, the ordained minister is expected to develop and nurture appropriate relationships with others, acting on ways that build and sustain trust.” (Visions and Expectations)

Who can help?

If you believe that you are a victim of sexual misconduct or harassment within the Church, please contact Bishop Jessica Crist, Associate to the Bishop Jason Asselstine, or a member of the Montana Synod First Response Team

Reporting sexual misconduct by Ministers of the Montana Synod of the ELCA

You may contact one of the following:

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First Response Team, Other Clergy & Laity:

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KEEPING THE CHURCH A SAFE AND SACRED PLACE FOR ALL!

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT
PREVENTION

FIRST RESPONSE



Montana Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Church's Concern

The Church needs to be a safe place for all. Every level of the Church and every agency and congregation affiliated with the Church must be free of sexual misconduct. When God's gift of sexuality is used faithfully, the Church is a safe place for all to worship, learn, work, play, and be helped in a manner that is free from sexual exploitation, abuse, or harassment. When the Church becomes an unsafe place, the integrity of the Gospel is impaired, particularly among those who are victimized.

Because pastors, AIMs, diaconal ministers and other rostered leaders are in a position of power, they should not violate another person's spiritual, emotional or physical well-being. On the contrary, rostered leaders have the responsibility of protecting the boundaries of persons, especially those who are vulnerable. Young people, as well as individuals experiencing life crisis situations like grief, familial conflict, or emotional turmoil of marital conflict, separation or divorce, are especially vulnerable to victimization.

"The expectations of this church regarding the sexual conduct of its ordained ministers are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift and trust from God. Ordained ministers are to live in such a way as to honor this gift and trust."

Ordained ministers are expected to reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for purposes of sexual gratification, and all attempts of sexual seduction and sexual harassment, including taking physical or emotional advantage of others." (Visions and Expectations)

What does sexual misconduct within the Church include?

- Sexual advance, which may or may not include sexual intercourse
- Requests for sexual favors
- Implied or blatant threats
- Innuendo, humor, and jokes about sex or gender – specific traits
- Suggestive or insulting whistling, gestures, or leering
- Offensive contact (patting, pinching, brushing against the body), attempted or actual fondling or kissing, or any other form of sexualized behavior, including intercourse
- Requiring submission to sexual conduct or communication in order to obtain the services of the Church, or to be employed there.
- Sexual conduct or communication that interferes with employment or the services received from the Church or those affiliated with the Church
- And other sexual conduct or communication that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment

Mutual Consent?

The belief that there was mutual consent does not exonerate the accused rostered individual. Sexual misconduct results when those in positions of authority use that authority to create an intimidating or hostile environment by violating the *healthy emotional and relational boundaries* that are vital in establishing trust in that relationship. From the perspective of this synod, there is no mutual consent.

What can you do?

If you feel you have been subjected to sexual misconduct within the Church:

- Say no to the individual. Be direct and firm. Tell the person without apology that you want the behavior to stop.
- Keep records of what happened and when. Document dates, times, places, witnesses, and the nature of the misconduct. Save letters, cards, or notes.
- Contact Bishop Crist or a member of the First Response Team. It takes courage to come forward and report an incident of sexual misconduct. We will make every effort to respond to you with respect and care.

The Response Team

The Response Team members, whose names and contact information are on the back panel of this brochure, are available to hear reports of church-related sexual misconduct. They will listen carefully and act expediently on your report. They reflect the Church's care and concern for you and will begin an immediate response. Specific allegations against a named rostered person will be relayed to the Bishop's office. The members of the Response Team act as representatives of the Bishop of the Montana Synod of the ELCA.

Please Remember...

- Don't blame yourself
- Don't delay. Misconduct may continue if you delay
- Don't keep it to yourself. You will help yourself and others by speaking out.
- Don't forget that sexual misconduct is a violation of Church policy and in many cases violates the law