

Harassment Prevention Policy

Erin Presbyterian Church Knoxville, Tennessee

Adopted by Session June 26, 2025

Purpose: The Harassment Prevention Policy of Erin Presbyterian Church is grounded in the concept that every human being is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and in these words from Jesus: "You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 23:37-39). As such, the Church opposes all forms of harassment and seeks to provide space where all employees, ministers, members, vendors, and guests can flourish free of harassment. This policy applies to all persons while on church property or participating in church activities or business. We realize that conversation and interactions often are a matter of interpretation, and that users of this policy may have different understandings of words like "offensive" or "inappropriate." In general, the sensibilities of the person on the receiving end of communications should be guarded, and this policy relies on open communication and mutual commitment to seek an environment that is welcoming to all people.

Scope: This policy applies to church members, officers, pastors, teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, employees, and volunteers working in, with, and for the Church.

Definition: All forms of harassment, including those based on a characteristic protected by law, such as race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or domestic partner status, religion, age, disability, veteran status, or other characteristic protected by state or federal law, are prohibited.

In the Church harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following actions:

- Spreading malicious rumors, gossip, or innuendo.
- Excluding or isolating someone socially.
- Bullying.
- Intimidating a person.
- Physically abusing or threatening abuse.
- Making jokes that are 'obviously offensive' by spoken word or e-mail.
- Yelling or using profanity.
- Criticizing a person persistently or constantly.
- Belittling a person's opinions.
- Using racist slang, phrases, or nicknames.
- Making remarks about an individual's skin color or other ethnic traits.
- Displaying racist drawings, or posters that might be offensive to a particular group.
- Making offensive gestures.
- Making offensive reference to an individual's mental or physical disability.
- Sharing inappropriate images, videos, e-mails, letters, or notes.
- Offensively talking about negative stereotypes.
- Making derogatory age-related comments.
- Wearing clothing that could be offensive to a particular group.

Employees: The Church strives to provide a work environment free of harassment. Harassment of employees by management, supervisors, coworkers, or non-employees is prohibited.

The following harassing conduct is applicable primarily to the employment environment of the Church:

- Constantly changing work guidelines
- Undermining or deliberately impeding a person's work
- Establishing impossible deadlines that will set up the individual to fail
- Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information
- Intruding on a person's privacy by pestering, spying or stalking
- Assigning unreasonable duties or workload which are unfavorable to one person (in a way that creates unnecessary pressure)
- Creating a feeling of uselessness (underwork)
- Unwarranted (or undeserved) punishment
- Blocking applications for training, leave or promotion
- Tampering with a person's personal belongings or work equipment

Sexual Harassment: While harassment is not necessarily sexual in nature, and all forms of harassment are prohibited, special attention should be paid to sexual harassment. "Sexual harassment" is generally defined under both state and federal law as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. More details are available in the Erin Presbyterian Church Sexual Misconduct Prevention policy.

Retaliation: Erin Presbyterian Church does not tolerate any form of retaliation against any victim, or witness, who reports a violation of this Harassment Prevention Policy. Any person who believes that they have been retaliated against should initiate a complaint under this policy.

Complaint Procedure: It is appropriate, but not required, for any person who feels that they have been harassed under the definition of this policy to address the behavior first with the offending party, if it is possible to do so without significant conflict or danger. If the harassing behavior is repeated, pervasive, and/or overly offensive, the complaint should be taken to the Pastor/Head of Staff and/or Clerk of Session, and/or, in the case of employees, to the Chair of the Personnel Committee. All complaints will be investigated promptly and, to the extent possible, with regard for maintaining confidentiality. If the investigation confirms conduct contrary to this policy has occurred, the Church will take immediate, appropriate, corrective action, as determined by the Senior Pastor/Head of Staff, the Personnel Committee, and/or the Session.

Reviews: All clergy, session members, and educators at Erin must receive or repeat the Boundaries Training, provided by the Presbytery of East Tennessee, every three years. As part of Erin officer training, newly elected leaders of the Church will review this policy and acknowledge their understanding and agreement to comply.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Session.

The broader church membership, to which this policy also applies, will be made aware of this policy annually, and a copy of the policy provided by the Clerk of Session upon request.