

# *Theological and Policy Statements Regarding Sexual Harassment*

*The following are theological and policy statements of The United Church of Canada, approved by the 34th General Council in August 1992. They are shared with both host and visitor so that the receiving program may provide a safe environment in which to pursue relationships and cross-cultural learning.*

## **Theological Statement**

God intends that all human beings enjoy a full life, free from abuse and injustice. (Micah 2:1-2, 8-9) All human beings are created in God's image and are deserving of mutual respect and protection. Sexual and physical harassment, abuse, and exploitation are sinful, violating both persons and mutuality within community. They arise from unequal power relationships, usually based on age, gender, and/or position of authority.

Sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse are destructive to persons in that they impede people's ability to develop and use their gifts of creativity and wholeness. Sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse impede growth, distort relationships, lead to alienation and distrust, and constitute a misuse of power.

The church has a particular responsibility to protect the vulnerable, the weak, and those with limited voice. (Deuteronomy 10:19; Isaiah 61:1-2) The church is called to denounce injustice and to repent once-tolerated evils, including those that it has been complicit in perpetuating. The church is called to be a transforming presence, to promote right relationships within its midst and in the world.

Jesus teaches that mutuality and respect are essential for faithful living. We are called, therefore, to create and sustain relationships that are based on the dignity of each person as blessed by God and on the mutual respect that is invited by such blessing.

## **Policy Statement**

The United Church of Canada will not tolerate and will seek to eradicate any behaviour by its members (lay and order of ministry), volunteers, adherents or employees, which constitutes sexual abuse (sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, pastoral sexual misconduct, sexual assault) or child abuse.

The United Church of Canada is committed to providing a safe environment for worship, work, and study in all pastoral charges, congregations, institutions, agencies, organizations, or other bodies that operate under its name. Complaints related to sexual abuse or child abuse will be taken seriously and dealt with in a spirit of compassion and justice.