

# **POLICY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT DENTON AREA EMMAUS COMMUNITY**

Sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual misconduct are problems within society in general and can affect the religious community, including churches, church schools, seminaries, and para-church organizations such as the Walk to Emmaus. The Denton Area Emmaus Community (DAEC) expressly forbids sexual harassment of any kind, whether involving lay leadership, clergy, laity, or pilgrims. The DAEC regards sexual harassment as undermining the climate of mutual respect between people and as inhibiting the moral, ethical, and spiritual mission of Emmaus and the Church.

Thus, it is fitting that DAEC provide clear statements regarding our understanding of the problem and provide members of this community with education and guidance on these matters.

## **WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

Sexual harassment is any unwelcomed sexual conduct or activity, including inappropriate language or directives. It can be "Quid pro quo," in which the unwelcome sexual conduct is accompanied by threats of punishment or promises of rewards; and "hostile environment," which refers to conduct which is essentially sanction-free, but creates an "intimidating, offensive, uncomfortable, or hostile environment."

## **TYPES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

1. Generalized sexist remarks or behavior: this includes demeaning or offensive comments or questions, jokes, stories, pictures, or unwelcome and inappropriate touching. Such behavior may affect the entire group dynamic and contribute to the creation of a "hostile" (negative, uncomfortable, tense, etc.) environment.
2. Unwelcome but sanction-free advances: this includes unwelcome or persistent requests for sexual or social activity or questions or implications about one's sexual behavior or preference without overt threats or promises, although threats are implicit.
3. Sexual advances accompanied by overt promises of reward: the invitation to sexual or social activity is accompanied by a promise of a reward or benefit which is in the harasser's power to offer or bestow, i.e., serving on conference room team or advancement to a higher position, gift from the book table, rides to/from the dining hall or any other such offer of reward.
4. Sexual advances accompanied by overt threat of punishment: this includes coercion of sexual or social activity by the use of threats which are in the harasser's power to carry out, i.e., threats to prevent a person from advancing or serving at other Emmaus events or other activities.
5. Sexual crimes: this includes unacceptable touching or the use of physical force or its threatened use, such as assault or sexual assault. **THESE ARE CRIMES AND MUST IMMEDIATELY BE REPORTED TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT.**

## **RESPONDING TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Persons who are subjected to sexual harassment must:

1. State your objections at the time of the incident:

A clear statement of objection to the person committing the offense when the incident occurs may prevent further occurrences whether or not the individual realized or knew that their behavior was offensive. Objections should be stated in a clear and direct manner no matter the difficulty. Should the objections not be stated in this manner the offender may not interpret the statement as an objection. Be persistent in your objections and avoid further contact with the offending party(ies) if at all possible until you can follow up with step two. You must act at the time of the incident with your objections. Tell someone. It is often difficult to assess a situation objectively and it can be helpful to talk to a trusted friend or colleague. If you are uncomfortable talking with a friend, ask to speak with the Community Spiritual Director or the Community Lay Director.

2. Document the incident:

2. Note dates, times, places, and individuals involved and/or present, together with descriptions of any and all incidents. Keep notes, answering machine messages, voicemails, electronic messages, letters, or any other communications received from the harasser as well as your response to them.

3. Report the incident:

If stating your objection(s) to the harasser is not feasible or does not end the offending behavior, contact a member of the DAEC Board of Directors. If a board member cannot be located in a reasonable amount of time, the incident may be reported to the Lay Director or Spiritual Director during weekend events or trainings; or the event organizer or clergy person during other events, such as gatherings. Persons who are subjected to sexual harassment are often reluctant to file charges and/or report the incident, whether out of misplaced self-blame, sympathy for the harassers, or fear of reprisal or any other factor. However, if the behavior is never reported, the harasser may feel free to conclude that it is ok to continue in the behavior. An adequate understanding of Christian love demands that the Community enable the reporting of incidents of sexual harassment, investigate any and all allegations, and provide reasonable protection against future incidents of sexual harassment by the accused.

### **When an incident of sexual harassment is reported:**

1. It shall be the responsibility of the DAEC Board of Directors to investigate complaints of sexual harassment. The Community Lay Director shall decide how a complaint is to be investigated when a report is received from a board member, weekend Lay and/or Spiritual Director(s), or event organizer(s).

2. When unusual problems [such as sexual harassment] arise during weekends that seriously threaten the integrity or any aspect of the Walk, including team meetings and preparatory meetings, the board has responsibility for making decisions concerning the situation. If an immediate decision is necessary or the board cannot be brought together in a timely manner, the Community Lay Director can act with the Community Spiritual Director and the Board Representative on the team to consult with team leaders in Christian love and help them evaluate their leadership in relation to their commission from the board. In such unusual circumstances, the Community Lay and Spiritual Directors can make decisions as needed on behalf of the board (taken from The Upper Room Handbook on Emmaus). The nature of the allegation and/or concern about future sexual harassment by the accused or the integrity of the Walk weekend may cause an immediate response by the board to protect against further adverse incidents by the accused. This response may include barring the accused from continued participation in the remainder of the event. Such actions should be taken in Christian love and shall not constitute the investigation of the incident itself, but only a way of separating the accused from accuser and maintaining a safe and nurturing environment for the remainder of the event.

3. When a member of the board is notified that an incident of sexual harassment has occurred, that board member in turn is responsible for ensuring that the Community Lay Director has been notified about the incident as soon as reasonably possible.

4. The dignity of all persons involved in incidents of sexual harassment should remain a high priority in responding to complaints of sexual harassment. The board strives to support and protect those who make a complaint, as well as provide fair and just treatment of the accused. Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process to insure the integrity of the process and to protect those involved.

**The DAEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The board accepts responsibility for keeping itself informed about the issues related to sexual harassment through various ways, i.e.: literature, workshops, and/or consultation with experts on the issues. The board will also be responsible for providing materials and presentations to the DAEC. Any member of the Emmaus Community is welcome (and encouraged) to approach any board member for advice, information, or concern on these matters.

<b>Rev #:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Author:</b>	<b>Type of Revision:</b>
<b>Original</b>	<b>08/11/2017</b>	<b>Glen Bottoms</b>	<b>Original Document. Reviewed with the DAEC Board at the monthly meeting of December 12, 2017.</b>
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