



# A Summary of the Policy on Sexual Ethics Related to Sexual Misconduct in Ministry

Florida-Bahamas Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**This summary** contains the introduction and topics that are defined and discussed in the full version of the policy, found at <http://www.fbsynod.com/downloads/OfficeoftheBishop/EthicsPolicy2013.pdf>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is a good gift of God. The faithful response to God who has created us male and female is our commitment to use our sexuality only in ways that glorify God.

When God's gift of sexuality is used faithfully, the Church is a safe place for all to worship, learn, work, and be helped in a manner that is free from sexual exploitation (including commercial 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.

The Florida-Bahamas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to preventing sexual misconduct within the church and to responding with justice and compassion when such misconduct occurs. This Statement of Policy describes how this Synod intends to fulfill these commitments. This Synod recognizes that responding to allegations of sexual misconduct requires determination, sensitivity, flexibility, respect and care for all persons affected, including the victim, the rostered person, their families and friends, the congregation, this Synod, and the whole church.

This policy is intended to provide a framework for guidance in dealing with these cases while preserving this Synod's discretion to treat each person and each case in a manner necessitated by differing facts, circumstances, and needs of those affected. This policy cannot be imposed as rigid law, binding this Synod and others to its dictates; it must be interpreted and applied compassionately in accordance with the theological and biblical principles of the Gospel.

- A. Definitions**
- B. The Role of Congregations**
- C. Role of This Synod**

## II. SYNOD POLICY

An ELCA Strategy for Responding to Sexual Abuse in the Church (Nov. 1992) recommended that nine elements be included in any synodical policy regarding clergy sexual misconduct and applies as well to sexual misconduct of lay rostered persons. This Synod has decided to incorporate those nine elements as follows:

- A. Adequate Preparation**
- B. Initial Contact—First Response**
- C. Initial Investigation of the Complaint**
- D. Conversation with the Rostered Person**
- E. Assess the Information**
- F. Consultation or Advisory Panel**
- G. Formal Hearing**
- H. Disclosure**
- I. Follow-up**

Congregational Statement of Affirmation  
POLICY ON SEXUAL ETHICS IN MINISTRY  
Florida-Bahamas Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

***Peace Lutheran Church***

The community of faith needs to be a safe place for all. When God's gift of sexuality is used faithfully, the church can be a safe and sacred place for all to worship, learn and be about the mission of Jesus Christ. Our proclamation of the Gospel is impaired when our church community becomes an unsafe place because of sexual exploitation, abuse or misconduct.

***Peace Lutheran Church*** affirms the Policy on Sexual Ethics in Ministry of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA. The commitment of Peace Lutheran Church is to make readily available to members and friends of this congregation information about sexual misconduct and the means to respond if a person feels appropriate sexual boundaries are being crossed. Sexual misconduct includes sexual intercourse or other physical intimacies outside the bonds of marriage (including commercial sexual exploitation), improper sexual advances, inappropriate sexual innuendoes and jokes, intrusive touching, or other offensive and unwelcome sexually oriented behavior.

When the sexual misconduct involves a pastor or rostered lay leader, this congregation recognizes the need to immediately contact the Office of the Bishop by telephone (813/876-7660), by email ([bishop@fbsynod.org](mailto:bishop@fbsynod.org)), by letter, or by personal visit. Communications may be addressed to the Bishop Robert Schaeffer, Florida-Bahamas Synod, 3838 West Cypress Street, Tampa, Florida, 33607-4897, and marked "confidential." In certain situations, such as child abuse, statutory rape, and sexual harassment, the law often requires notification of the proper civil authorities of the alleged misconduct.

Furthermore, sexual misconduct by any lay leader, teacher, congregant or other person associated with this congregation should be reported to the Pastor of ***Peace Lutheran Church***. Such notification of sexual misconduct should be made immediately by telephone **239-437-2599**, by letter, or by personal visit to the pastor. Communications should be addressed to the Rev. Walter Still at 15840 McGregor Blvd., Ft. Myers, FL 33908 and marked "confidential." The Pastor will then consult the Office of the Bishop to determine the appropriate response to make to the report of sexual misconduct.

The commitment of ***Peace Lutheran Church*** is to provide a prompt and careful response to such reports, and to assure that all persons involved are treated with respect and provided pastoral care. Copies of the first contact brochure, *Keeping the Church a Safe and Sacred Place for All*, as well as the copies of the synod's policy on Sexual Ethics in Ministry will be made available to all in the congregation.

**10/01/2013**