

# Sexual Harassment Policy

Of Taupo Baptist Church

Taupo, New Zealand

## Complaints concerning Sexual Harassment and Abuse

### The Reason for Detailed Documentation and Procedures

Society is increasingly aware of issues of sexual harassment and abuse. This awareness includes inappropriate sexual behaviour, abuse and criminal offending in a number of church communities.

The Baptist Union is committed to resourcing Baptist congregations and their leaders so that they are not only aware of the need to have good and effective documentation and guidelines but also to be equipped with knowledge and wisdom as to the processes which may lead to resolution of complaints and the restoration/redemption in the lives of those involved.

### **The Role of the Baptist Union**

The Union, while recognising the autonomy of its member churches, also understands the need that each of our congregations may have from time to time need for resources and guidance on some of the more difficult issues which confront our churches.

The Union cannot be involved in the resolution of all such matter. However, it does offer these protocols and processes and the expertise of people within our denominational leadership and churches. It can also draw on the expertise gained by other denominations to advise our churches on ways to resolve cases of sexual abuse and associated matters.

These are living documents and subject to change as need arises.

## **Statement of Commitment**

Because of the autonomous nature of each church and therefore the responsibility they must take, the Baptist Union of New Zealand is committed to resourcing member churches so they may provide a safe environment for all of their associated people, including pastors, employees, voluntary workers, members, adherents and children of all ages, in which they will be free of sexual harassment and/or sexual abuse.

Member churches and organisations within the Baptist Union of New Zealand will provide a positive, timely and just approach to dealing with any complaint or reasonable suspicion of harassment or criminal offending, providing support and fairness to both complainant and accused.

Member churches of the Baptist Union of New Zealand will set in place appropriate policies and protocols for the proper handling of such complaints against persons appointed by Baptist Churches, whether paid or unpaid, and to those who by association are an integral part of the leadership of the churches' ministries.

This protocol is approved by the Baptist Union, as providing the key principles and recommended procedures required in any protocol of member churches or organisations.

## **Fundamental Principles of the Policy**

- Every person, including every child and young person, is entitled to be safe from sexual harassment or abuse.
- It is recognised that the effects of harassment or of sexual abuse can be far reaching and seriously damaging to the emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual health of the victim.
- It is recognised that the investigation of serious harassment or sexual abuse (particularly where criminal offending or abuse of children or young persons is involved) requires the expertise of people or agencies with appropriate training and experience and the necessary statutory powers. Consideration must be given to involving such people or agencies in serious cases at the earliest possible time, especially in cases where the alle-

gation that a criminal offence has been committed or where the complainant or victim is under 17 years of age.

### **Persons making a complaint are entitled to...**

- be treated with respect and have their complaint taken seriously and be acted upon as true, unless and until such time as it is clear the allegation is unfounded or untrue.
- all reasonable/necessary support including pastoral care, to help them through the process and to aid in their recovery from the effects of the harassment or abuse.
- be given a copy of the policy and or protocols of the Church (or Baptist Union Guidelines) covering sexual harassment/abuse or criminal offending.
- be kept safe from further harassment or abuse including any unnecessary further emotional or psychological trauma inconsistent with the need to investigate or deal with the complaint
- a prompt response to the allegation
- be fully advised of the options available to them
- be kept informed of the progress of the response or investigation
- have their views considered before their allegation is handed on to any outside agency.

### **Every person complained against shall be entitled to....**

- be dealt with in a manner that is fair and just, having regard to the circumstances, nature and seriousness of the complaint
- be informed at the earliest appropriate time, having regard to the circumstances, nature and seriousness of the complaint, and of the substances of the allegation against them
- be provided with an appropriate level of support
- If as a result of a complaint being made it is believed that the safety of others may be at risk, the wishes of the complainant or victim regarding the response of the church or organisation to the complaint or disclosure, must be weighed against other factors in deciding upon any course of action.

The general principle must be that the well being, protection and safety of

others must always be considered and that in the case of children or young persons it shall be the first and paramount consideration.

- That in the case of suspected or known abuse of children or young persons under 17 years, the Child, Youth and Family should be advised / involved immediately with any subsequent disciplinary action being addressed by the member church or organisation as a consequential issue.

### **The Role of the Contact Person**

- Anyone with concerns or complaints of sexual harassment /abuse should feel free to approach the church's contact person for advice and information ...ie any person who believes they have been sexually harassed or abused, or a person against whom allegations have been made.
- The role of the contact person(s) is to listen to what the inquirer has to say, and to provide information as to the options available to deal with the problem, and explain what each option will involve, so that the inquirer can make an informed decision as to their course of action.
- The wishes and feelings of the person making the inquiry will be respected.
- If the inquirer wishes only to talk and not take further action, that will be taken into account, but if it becomes apparent that the safety of others is an issue then appropriate action will be taken.
- If necessary, appoint an Investigation Team

### **Notes on Sexual Harrassment**

Sexual harassment usually means any objectionable or offensive sexual behaviour to any individual or group of individuals. Sexual harassment includes both physical and verbal conduct, including misuse of visual and written material often with an underlying element of coercion or threat. It is behaviour which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment can happen to anyone, female or male, regardless of gender, age, culture, or personal appearance. If a person says they feel harassed, while this is subjective, it is up to others to respect that feel-

ing. Although women are most often sexually harassed by men, same-sex harassment also occurs.

**Sexual harassment can include:**

- Inappropriate touching
- Visual innuendos
- Comments emphasising sex or sexual orientation
- Offensive jokes and/or names
- Leering
- Compromising invitations
- Misuse of power or position
- Demands for sexual favours
- Misuse of pastoral or counselling situations
- Sexual assault

Taupo Baptist Church has detailed protocols and policies for dealing with complaints against anyone in a leadership roles, whether paid or unpaid. These protocols have been formulated by the Baptist Union of NZ, and are available from the church office upon request.