

Seven Points on Sexual Misconduct

A Brief Summary of Seven Key Points of
the *Policies, Standards and Procedures*
(“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in
America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct

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An Introductory Statement

In this booklet seven key points of the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct* (as approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the OCA at the Spring 2014 Holy Synod Meeting) are conveyed and commented upon for the edification of those who read this publication.

The full text of the PSPs, along with many other Resources for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct, is available on the OCA official website at <http://oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct>.

This booklet has been produced in this form for distribution to the parishioners and other affiliated persons of Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church, Terryville, CT. It is a “work in progress” and does not constitute the “final word” on any topic addressed herein.

This booklet is a rather heavily modified version of a booklet originally produced and published by Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church, Claremont, New Hampshire, which has been referenced and used as a source with permission. We express our gratitude for this permission.

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Point 1: Take Sexual Misconduct seriously.

A child whose physical/emotional purity, integrity and innocence is invaded and sexually abused is left terribly confused, mistrustful and full of pain. Children and adult victims also can suffer post-traumatic stress, depression, behavior disorders, drug and alcohol addiction and more.

Sexual misconduct causes tremendous damage. It is real. It has to be taken seriously by the parish.

What do we need to learn for the safety of our children, youth and adults? What about our response to the sin and the sinner? What is the evidence of our humility, health and good conscience?

What the ***Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct*** say...

“The Church laments the sin of Sexual Misconduct, and will not tolerate Sexual Misconduct by its Clergy or any Layperson.”

“The Church recognizes that Sexual Misconduct is a special problem with a profound impact on the lives of those affected. When servant becomes abuser, the relationship of trust necessary for ministry becomes diminished for all. The betrayal of this trust by transgression of sexual boundaries, denies our Christian identity.”

“These *Policies, Standards, and Procedures* are intended to prevent, to the extent possible, sexual misconduct by Clergy, Lay Workers and Lay Persons; ...to result in appropriate discipline where allegations are substantiated; to protect, to the extent possible, children and adults from those persons known to have committed acts of Sexual Misconduct; ... and to ensure that the Church takes necessary steps to discharge its responsibilities.”

Sections 3.01, 3.03, and 4.01 of the ***Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct***

Point 2: Understand the multiple forms that Sexual Misconduct can take.

Sexual misconduct covers a range of different sexually sinful behaviors.

Persons who commit sexual misconduct use some form of power, some apparent authority, or actual authority, over the other. This power and authority can be personal, spiritual, supervisory, or emotional.

Sexual misconduct is behavior that serves an ill, disordered, personal desire for sexual gratification, at the expense of the other, without the consent of the other.

What the ***Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct*** say...

“Sexual Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (1) Sexual relations and/or conduct by a Clergyman that violate the teachings and/or canons of the Orthodox Church
- (2) Any sexual involvement or sexual contact by a Clergyman or Lay Worker with another person, who is not the Clergyman’s or Lay Worker’s spouse, and who is under the age of legal consent, or who is legally incapable of giving consent.
- (3) Any unwelcome written, spoken, or physical sexual advance or conduct by a Clergyman or Lay Worker;
- (4) Any direct or indirect request or suggestion for a sexual favor by a Clergyman, Lay Person or Lay Worker where there is a Pastoral Relationship and/or an employment, mentor, and/or colleague relationship between the persons involved;
- (5) Any use or exploitation by a Clergyman, Lay Person or Lay Worker of a supervisory position or other position of authority in connection with such person’s sexual needs or desires;
- (6) The attempted development of a sexual relationship within a Pastoral Relationship, whether or not there is consent or apparent consent by both parties;
- (7) The initiation, continuation, or pursuit of a sexual relationship by a Clergyman, Lay Person or Lay Worker with someone with whom he/she has a Pastoral Relationship, even if the relationship is consensual; and/or
- (8) The use or exploitation by a Clergyman, Lay Person or Lay Worker of his/her position in connection with his/her sexual needs or desires.”

Section 2.11 of the ***Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct***

Point 3: Be aware of “grooming.”

Sexual abuse involving a child is a crime. But poorly understood are the risks. Poorly understood are the means by which to identify the abuser in progress.

Family, friends, and the community are often shocked when an abuser is discovered. It is rarely an outsider. Abuse is shocking because the abuser was a trusted person.

The abuser began as a “groomer.” “Grooming” is touching, stroking, holding, or other forms of behavior by the groomer which are physically, emotionally, or even conversationally, coming inappropriately close. The groomer may tell a lie that it is “all good,” “all in fun.” The victim may feel an unfamiliar bad feeling, but is persuaded to trust the groomer because of the imbalance of power.

The groomer desires to get the victim to a place where it is private, where there is no “light,” where there will be no witness.

What the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct* say...

“Where Sexual Misconduct has occurred, the reasons, or claimed reasons for such behavior is not relevant. Moreover, since Sexual Misconduct often occurs after a period of “grooming the victim”, it is still Sexual Misconduct although physical sexual relations did not occur if reasonable minds would conclude that sexual relations were the intended or probable consequence of the Clergy or Lay Worker’s actions.”

Section 2.11 of the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct*

Point 4: Remember: Sexual Misconduct includes Sexual Harassment.

Sexual misconduct includes what is called sexual harassment. This not necessarily physical or sexual contact, although there can be such contact.

Sexually inappropriate words or images, suggestions, touches, or direct or indirect requests for sexual favors can all constitute sexual harassment.

A sexual harasser's comments about clothing, about dreams, about bodily beauty, will have sexuality woven within them; and his or her comments causes the other person to feel very uncomfortable, especially as the unwanted behavior continues.

If the sexual harasser is asked to stop, he or she might try to justify his or her behavior. She might tell a lie. He might claim that he was "only joking," that it "wasn't meant that way," or that there is nothing inappropriate about his continued jokes, brushes, suggestive statements, or derogatory phrases.

What the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct* say...

Examples of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- (A) Physical, unwelcome touching;
- (B) Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments;
- (C) Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures, texts via all forms of media;
- (D) Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment, or to avoid some other adverse consequence, and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favors;
- (E) Inappropriate conduct or comments consistently targeted at only one gender, even if the content is not sexual;
- (F) In the case of a person in a position of authority –whether it is actual, moral, emotional, legal or any form of ascendancy of one person over another, any type of sexual activity or sexualized circumstances between him or her and one of his or her subordinates. While such activity may not explicitly be illegal, it is often against professional codes of ethics. Entering a sexual relationship with a subordinate, even when the contact is initiated by the latter, is unethical because of the subordinate's vulnerability.
- (G) Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report sexual harassment.
- (H) Some activities which are not strictly classified as erotic acts, e.g. mooning, streaking and skinny dipping, are sometimes also categorized as sexual misconduct and can be part of a case of sexual harassment.
- (I) The use or exhibiting of photographs, movies, videos or other imagery of a sexual or sexually suggestive nature that would reasonably be anticipated to cause embarrassment, arousal or discomfort to others.

Section 2.10 of the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct*

Point 5: Sexual Misconduct must be reported.

Sexual Misconduct must be reported.

The report, whether verbal or written, must be given to the Parish Rector (that is, the priest in charge of the parish) and the Parish Rector must, in turn, communicate the report to the Diocesan Hierarch (the bishop of the parish) and to the OCA Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA).

If, however, the Sexual Misconduct involves the Parish Rector, then the report is to be given to the Diocesan Hierarch (the bishop) and to the OCA Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA).

If it is the parish priest or deacon who becomes aware of a report of Sexual Misconduct, then he is to give that report in turn to the Diocesan Hierarch (the bishop) and to the OCA Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA).

What the ***Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct*** say...

“A Lay Person or Lay Worker must immediately report such conduct or comments to, at minimum, the parish rector, or head of the Institution (or whoever is responsible for the parish, monastery or Institution) who, in turn, has the responsibility to forward the report, preferably in writing, to the Ruling Bishop and the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations.... Should the parish rector be the direct or indirect subject of the complaint, the report of the Lay Person or Lay Worker shall be made to the Ruling Bishop and the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations. The Lay Person or Lay Worker may also report to any or all of the following: OCA Chancellor and the OCA legal counsel; any such person who receives such a report shall forward the same to the others named in this sentence.”

“A Clergyman must immediately report such conduct or comments to the following: (A) The Ruling Bishop; and (B) The Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations.”

“Anyone required by law to report Sexual Misconduct to local, county, state, federal or other law enforcement, social services, or other outside agencies, as applicable, shall do so.”

“Retaliation against a Victim or anyone who, in good faith, has made a complaint, or a report, or participated in an investigation under this Policy is prohibited. Complaints or reports of retaliation must be made in the same manner as a complaint or report of Sexual Misconduct.”

Section 8 of the ***Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct***

Point 6: State Law must be followed.

Connecticut law requires certain citizens to report suspected child abuse and neglect. These mandated reporters are people in professions or occupations that have contact with children or whose primary focus is children. The law requires that they report suspected child abuse or neglect.

What the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct* say...

“Anyone required by law to report Sexual Misconduct to local, county, state, federal or other law enforcement, social services, or other outside agencies, as applicable, shall do so. The date of any required reporting as well as the name, address and time of the reporting shall be included with the report of possible Sexual Misconduct where possible or as soon thereafter as is feasible. Each OCA parish and Institution is responsible for determining the legal reporting requirements to which it is subject.”

Section 8.05 of the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct*

Point 7: Follow the “Double-Coverage” or Two-Adult Policy” at all times without fail.

Among the best ways to prevent any abuse of a child is to avoid any situation where any child or group of children is left alone under the supervision of a sole adult.

No adult member of our parish should ever, under any circumstances, be alone with a young member of our parish, unless he or she is the parent and/or legal guardian of that child or youth.

There is never an occasion when this rule should be broken. There should always be two or more adults present wherever a child or children are present. This simple rule—referred to as the “Double-Coverage” or Two-Adult Policy”—is a very powerful means of ensuring that nothing problematic will ever occur regarding a child in our parish.

(Note: In certain circumstances, being out of hearing range is acceptable—being out of sight is never acceptable. Even when the Parish Rector is hearing the confession of a young person, that young person’s parent or guardian should be in the Narthex of the Church, able to observe the proceedings visually through the glass windows in the doors leading to the Nave of the Church from the Narthex.)

What the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct* say...

“Whenever possible, youth involved in Church ministries or programs should not be left in the care of or under the supervision of one adult. Two or more unrelated adults should be present, except for necessary brief absences, during any Church activity involving children. All overnight activities involving youth shall be supervised or chaperoned by at least two (2) unrelated adults, and if youth participants are both male and female, then supervisors or chaperones must be male and female.”

Section 13.01 of the *Policies, Standards and Procedures (“PSPs”) of the Orthodox Church in America (“OCA”) on Sexual Misconduct*

A Statement about the PSPs from the Parish Council

The Parish Council of Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church, Terryville, CT, passed this resolution at their August 4, 2014, meeting:

“Understanding that the Policies, Standards and Procedures (PSPs) of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) on Sexual Misconduct are a ‘work in progress,’ we accept them in the form in which they exist as of July 2014 and we will strive to comply with them in our parish. However, we do also reserve the privilege of reviewing any future amendments, additions, changes, etc., to the OCA PSPs, before implementing those future amendments, additions, changes, etc., in our parish. We also respectfully request that the OCA PSPs as they presently exist be reviewed and improved, especially as to the use of several confusing terms, especially the term ‘Lay Person.’ That term, ‘Lay Person,’ is not used in a consistent or conventional manner in the OCA PSPs as they presently exist. We have conveyed previously and will convey once again our concerns along these lines to appropriate persons working in and for the Orthodox Church in America and its Diocese of New England.”

APPENDIX

We reproduce here a letter addressed by Fr. John Hopko to the entire Parish in January 2004 as part of his occasional "Notes from Fr. John" series:

Notes from Fr. John: On Making our Parish a Safe and Nurturing Place

January 2004

Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

All of us, I am sure, want our parish to be a safe and nurturing place where all of us can come together in order to know, express and share the love of God and one another. We especially, of course, wish and hope that the younger members of our parish, right down to the youngest child, experience our parish in this way: as the presence and knowledge of Love, for God is Love.

Thankfully, our parish has historically been a good and safe place. However, given the present climate in the world, it is important that we now take concrete steps to make our parish an even safer and more secure place. We are being strongly encouraged to take such steps, and even are being given directives and guidelines about how to do so, by the bishops of our Church, the Orthodox Church in America.

However, as our parish council during the coming year discusses these matters and reviews the directives and other materials forwarded to us by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America regarding these issues, there are some things that we can already begin doing in our parish, right now, to ensure the safety and well-being of all its members, from the eldest to the youngest.

1) First and foremost, we ask that parents and legal guardians take the following simple step to ensure and defend the safety of their children: *Please accompany your child wherever he or she goes in the church building, the other buildings of the parish and on the parish grounds.*

For example, please do not allow your child to be unsupervised if he or she needs to use the restroom during the course of a church service. A parent should accompany the child who needs to use the restroom to and from the restroom. There should never be a situation where the responsible parent or guardian is upstairs in the nave of the Church and the child is downstairs alone, unsupervised.

Also, if, during the Coffee Hour after the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, a child wants to play outside on the grounds, then a parent should make him or herself available to supervise.

2) Secondly and very, very importantly, *we remind all adult members of the parish that they are never, under any circumstances, to be alone with a young member of our parish.* There is never an occasion when this rule should be broken. There should always be two or more adults present wherever a child or children are present. This simple rule is a very powerful means of ensuring that nothing problematic will ever occur regarding a child in our parish.

3) Third, while there are traditional means of greeting one another in our Church and society, *we must all make sure that we are keeping our hands and other parts of our bodies to ourselves.* While we ourselves may be comfortable in certain physical forms of expression, those same forms of expression may make others uncomfortable or even upset. It is possible to be warm

and loving with one another in ways that do not lend themselves to misinterpretation. Let's use those ways.

4) Fourth, we must remember that *when we announce and greet guests in a public manner at the end of the services we do so in order to allow all of us to know that someone new is among us.* We welcome guests and are extremely pleased when we have visitors. We pray and hope that some of these guests and visitors will soon become members of our parish family. However, for the safety of all involved, it is also important for us to know when someone unfamiliar is among us.

3) Fifth and finally, *please be informed that no inappropriate behavior will be tolerated, not even in the smallest way.* We as a parish and myself as its father and pastor are absolutely and, without fail, completely committed to the health and safety of every member of our parish-especially the smallest and weakest among us. Let's all do our part.

If anyone has any concerns in regard to the matters addressed in these notes, please contact me immediately.

Your servant in Christ,

Fr. John Hopko

Resources:

The Orthodox Church in America (OCA) official website page providing “Resources for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct” is available at:

<http://oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct>

The State of Connecticut’s Department of Children and Families (DCF) website is:

<http://www.ct.gov/DCF>

Church Contact Information:

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