

PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Serving in ministry with people you have grown to value and for whom you care is a great experience. Together, you are impacting lives as you work toward a common purpose. Strategizing. Sharing ideas. Finding times to brainstorm possibilities. Long hours. Long talks. And as ministry plans are taking shape, so is something else. Something never imagined. Something you thought would never be entertained. But here you are. Drawing close. Too close. Flashing lights on the verge of being unplugged and ignored.

If you find yourself being inappropriately attracted to someone with whom you serve, you need to ensure that you create a safe distance from this becoming a problem. It could mean asking the leader for a different role or even withdrawing from the program altogether. If you are married, it is almost always unwise to meet privately, 1 on 1, in opposite sex situations whether at the church or offsite venues. What is true is that these are moth to light situations that need to be dealt with quickly and decisively so both you and the ministry are not jeopardized. Like Joseph, don't walk – run, to get out of any situations that could be dangerous! Put boundaries in place, from the first day of your ministry involvement that will safeguard your commitment to Christ, to yourself, and to your relationship.

Remember, as a member of the ministerial team, whether paid staff or someone in voluntary leadership, you are in a position of trust. That means always treating others with respect and at no time, taking advantage of that trust, physically, spiritually or emotionally.

Sexual misconduct is a sin, an abuse of authority that violates God's covenant to act in the best interests of those in the family of God as well as those affected by the family of God. In no way is anyone serving on behalf of the church to engage in any manner that gains advantage over another for personal pleasure. Even if someone such as a congregant or employee invites sexual content in the relationship, this behaviour is prohibited.

For clarity, sexual misconduct referenced here, includes, but is not limited to: sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other kinds of verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as obscene or suggestive language or behavior, use of all forms of technology for sexual or pornographic purposes, unacceptable visual contact and sexual touching.

Quite aside from specific behaviours noted above, we as followers of Jesus, are to live to a higher standard, characterized by lives that are *'above reproach.'* This means abstaining from all sexual behaviour outside of what God designed and intends for men and women in a marriage relationship of husband and wife. *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"* Eph 5:31, Gen 2:24. *"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral"* Heb 13:4. *"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people"* Eph 5:3.

Sadly, we know that in the church universal, there has been significant failure in keeping God's command to *"flee sexual immorality"* with the result of brokenness and pain and where some have been violated by those bearing the name of Christ. Our sincere prayer is that this will never be anyone's experience associated with MRAC. With that said, should any impropriety occur, reports of sexual misconduct will be taken seriously and will be thoroughly investigated. Because information or rumors relating to such reports may affect the integrity and reputation of the accuser, the accused, the victim, the families and others concerned, the information that is

able to be shared with the larger church family may be limited. What, if anything, can be said will be determined on a case by case basis, under advisement from the District office as well as legal opinion, where appropriate.

Any person with a complaint of sexual misconduct that has occurred within the 'ministries of the church' or has resulted from the 'ministries associated with the church' are to direct their concerns to the Board chair and / or the Lead Pastor. If there is any possibility that what has happened is criminal in nature, reports will be made to the police. If accusations of a sexual nature involve ministry staff whether they be criminal in nature or not, the District Superintendent or his designate will be informed.

With that stated, at MRAC we want to be known as a people, indwelt by God's Spirit, who "*prefer one another in love*" and who "*flee sexual immorality*" because we "*know that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in us, whom we have received from God. We are not our own; we were bought at a price. **Therefore, we honor God with our bodies.***" 1 Cor 6:18-20