

MAKING OUR CHURCH SAFE FOR ALL

SEMINAR ON PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT
IN CHURCH



EXPERIENCE ON FORMULATING A SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY IN CHURCH

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KOWLOON UNION CHURCH

- KUC is an independent, non-denominational ecumenical and international church.
- Our church motto is “Where All Are One”.
- We gather people of different traditions and cultures in the worship of the triune God,
- We welcome friends from diverse background regardless of their race, nationality, age, gender and sexual orientation. We embrace our unity in diversity, and take diversities as the gift of God.



FORMULATING A SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY IN KUC

- 2012: Miss K in a sexual molestation incident
- 2013: HK Christian Council enacted the Policy on Anti-sexual Harassment
- 2014: KUC's Mission, Outreach & Ecumenism Committee (MOE) drafted a position statement, but it was put on hold...(umbrella movement, change of leadership etc)
- 2017: staff handbook section on anti-harassment and anti-sexual harassment was highlighted to protect staff of all levels



FORMULATING A SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY IN KUC

- 2018: work resumes; thanks to the Gender Justice Ministry of HK Christian Council and the #MeToo/ #ChurchToo movement, Working Group was formed
- 2019: The WG refined the draft position statement into a set of Guidelines to Respond to Harassment
 - made reference to the Equal Opportunity Commission



POSITION STATEMENT: BEGIN WITH **BELIEF** BASED ON OUR CONSTITUTION

KUC Constitution:

In obedience to the Holy Spirit, the purpose of KUC shall be to gather people of different traditions and cultures in the worship of the triune God, to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, to nurture believers in the Christian faith, to engage in mission, to respond to human need and to work for justice and peace for all.



POSITION STATEMENT: BEGIN WITH **BELIEF** BASED ON OUR CONSTITUTION

- Harassment is a violation of human dignity
 - Anyone has the right to say no and make a complaint
- The Church will take possible actions to prevent it from happening and to address the problem once identified
- The church is committed to promote the consciousness of justice, fairness, sincerity and openness in respect of gender equality and mutual respect



POSITION STATEMENT: BEGIN WITH **BELIEF** BASED ON OUR CONSTITUTION

- The church is committed to provide a safe environment for all people to worship, grow in faith and serve in God
- The church provide pastoral support to the complainant, the accused and their respective families



POSITION STATEMENT: DEFINITIONS

- Harassment is any form of unwelcome, unsolicited or unreciprocated behaviour that denigrates someone, offends them, or humiliates them on the grounds of their race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, disability or other background or identity. Harassment creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment that causes people to suffer or negatively affects them.



POSITION STATEMENT: DEFINITIONS

- The Hong Kong legislature has passed three ordinances that may be relevant to the issue of harassment, namely:
 - Cap. 480 Sex Discrimination Ordinance;
 - Cap. 487 Disability Discrimination Ordinance; and
 - Cap. 620 Race Discrimination Ordinance.



POSITION STATEMENT: DEFINITIONS

- The Ordinances are applicable to areas such as employment and the provision of service. A person shall be liable for one's unlawful action, and through civil proceedings, the KUC Council is liable for the unlawful action of its employees and any of its authorized agents. Furthermore, each Ordinance has provisions detailing examples or cases in which a person may experience harassment.



POSITION STATEMENT: OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A CHURCH

- Elements of oppression/harassment based on gender, race, and other social categories exist; but as a Christian community, we must strive to overcome these within our midst, and also to be the salt and light of the earth -- being part of the struggles in the wider community to eliminate these, wherever we find them
- Staff, church leaders and members are encouraged to attend workshops and training with a gender-based understanding on harassment, especially sexual harassment, and its prevention.



POSITION STATEMENT: OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A CHURCH

- To further the church-wide effort, KUC offers the following documents to guide our aim to end and prevent harassment:
 1. Guidelines to Respond to Harassment
 2. Educational materials to raise awareness and understanding on various forms of harassment (HKCC-Anti sexual harassment leaflet)



POSITION STATEMENT: OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS A CHURCH

- For anyone wishing to make a complaint, they should contact the minister-in-charge and/or the council chairperson as outlined in the KUC Guidelines to Respond to Harassment



SHARE SCREEN TO GO THROUGH KUC GUIDELINES



KEY ISSUES FOR THE POSITION STATEMENT/GUIDELINES

- Prevention is better than cure
- Handle complaint immediately
 - No tolerance of harassment
- Clear/Fair/Procedural justice
- Avoid conflict of interest
- Confidentiality
- Informed choice



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

1. Position Statement: make clear the stand and values of the church as a faith community
2. Setting up of working group to enact the Position Statement & Policy/Procedures/Guideline
 - Members should be those who have good awareness on harassment especially sexual harassment, gender sensitive, relevant experiences in human rights, open and willing to learn new things on the subject matter



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY – WORKING GP

- The working group members go for related training
- The composition of the working group members included different gender, race and nationality as much as possible
- Identify resource persons for consultation during the process: EOC, HKCC, NGOs working on the issue



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY - REFERENCE

3. References in the making of position statement and policy include:
- Hong Kong Christian Council: Policy Against Sexual Harassment (1 Oct 2013) and educational materials made by the Working Group on Gender Justice.
 - Legal and education materials from Equal Opportunity Commission
 - Sexual Harassment Policy, Christian Conference of Asia (13 April 2010)



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY – REFERENCE

- World Student Christian Federation Policy on Sexual Harassment
- Uniting Church in Australia: Safe Church Manual 2010
- Pastoral Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Sexual Misconduct at Special Events Run by the Uniting Church in Australia



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY - EDUCATION

- ❖ It took us five years to finally endorse an official document on anti- (sexual) harassment
- ❖ During all these years, we have continued to educate our congregation



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY - EDUCATION

- Continue the education process by increasing concerns and awareness of the issue
 - Encourage congregational members to join training workshop and related educational events such as the Tama and Bathsheba concerts to raise awareness on sexual harassment in church settings, that organized by the Gender Ministry of HKCC



KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING THE ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY - EDUCATION

- We organized workshops on anti-sexual harassment within our church community
- We hosted forums, seminars and events related to sexual harassment in our church. It has been a strong sign for our church's stand and support on the anti-sexual harassment campaign



CULTIVATE A CHURCH COMMUNITY WITH GOOD SOIL - GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

Lesson learned from Jean Vanier and David Haas's cases:

- “The theology of gender complementary entrenches and sanctifies gender inequality - gender inequality is the root of all violence against women worldwide. What is needed to change for our church is the institutional church's consecration and elevation of male power. The hierarchy can create as many training programs, policies and procedures as they like, but until they address male dominance as the underlying cause of sexual abuse, the crisis will never be resolved.”

(“We need to talk about David Haas” by Jamie L. Manson. 30 June 2020 National Catholic Reporter)



GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

I will also share the importance of cultivating a community with gender equality, democratic practice, mutual respect and social justice.

1. Worship & preaching
2. Leadership – break male supremacy culture & hierarchy
3. Gender division of work
4. Democratic Practices based on values human rights
5. Mission and Outreach programs & Social Ministry



GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

I. Worship & preaching

- a) Use of language for the liturgy: gender neutral wordings to eradicate male supremacy culture. Instead of using Father God, we try “God the Parents” & “Creator God” to represent God’s image.
- b) Preaching with gender perspective. Disciples of equals have been emphasized. Women’s discipleship has been highlighted and embrace.



GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

- c) Women's Sunday for International Women's Day in March and Anti-Violence against Women Sunday to echo the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in November. Uphold gender equality and strong message on VAW as part of our faith practice.
- d) International Human Rights Sunday to echo the importance of human rights and dignity. Democracy and participation



GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

2. Leadership

- a) Female & male members are equally encouraged to join in Council, Trustees and Committees
- b) Gender balanced have been practiced and as part of church life
- c) Multi-racial and nationality
- d) Cross social status (CEO, Professor, Doctor, Teacher, Domestic Worker, Refugee...)

(Treat everyone equally as God's children and servants to serve in the church)



GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

3. Gender division of work

a) Try to break gender stereotyped in arranging roles in service.

-Male members take up roles and duties traditionally taken by women such as washing dishes in the kitchen after tea and coffee fellowship.

b) Roles and duties are arranged according to talents, interests, availability of time.



GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

4. Democratic Practices based on values human rights
 - a) Equal opportunity for participation in church
 - b) Members' voice is taken seriously
 - c) Decision making through discussion and consensus
 - d) Good check and balance system
 - e) Ministers and church leaders are held accountable and be opened for constructive criticism



P GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES PERSONAL SHARING

- f) Communicate different views and ideas in a respectful way
- g) Showing mutual respect and understanding with people different from us through active listening
- h) Being sensitive to others' culture and feelings, change and adjust our own behaviour and action to make others feeling comfortable.
- i) Agree to disagree



GENDER EQUALITY/JUSTICE/DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

5. Mission and Outreach programs & Social Ministry
 - a) Voice and stand for social justice &: issued or signed Statement to the public
 - b) Demonstrating solidarity and collaborating with Christian Organizations and NGOs working on human rights, women's rights and services to promote dignity and equality.



CHALLENGES & DIFFICULTIES

- Opposite and different views
 - *Be Patient to communicate/increase mutual understanding*
- The Church is busy and have different concerns
 - *Setting priority and time frame*
- The process is more important: cultivate a good soil

CHALLENGES & DIFFICULTIES

- Fear of broken relationship; church is called to forgive, reconcile and unity,
- *The spirit and practice of unity cannot be truly fulfilled and achieved if justice is not done to the victims . True forgiveness and reconciliation is to make harasser accountable and victims are given justice. (Matthew 18:15-20)*

WHERE ALL ARE ONE

- To address the harassment issue and in particular sexual harassment is one of the duties of the church to embrace life with human dignity as everyone is God's beautiful creation. Any violation of human rights and dignity through sexual abuse, it is a violation of the body of our Holy God.



WHERE ALL ARE ONE

- To build a community as One Body in Christ, we need to keep our body sacred and whole by eradicating human rights abuses and abuse of power by figures with authority

There is no real love, peace & safety
if there is no justice

THANK YOU!

