



MENLO CHURCH

Ethical Misconduct Policy

Approved by Session on June 9, 2026

Oversight: Governance Committee

Review Period: 2 year review

Next Review Date: June 2026

Policy Statement

This Ethical Misconduct Policy affirms the conviction that Menlo Park Presbyterian Church (Menlo Church) and all who serve within it—particularly those in pastoral, staff, or lay leadership roles—are entrusted with a public, spiritual, and moral responsibility. Consistent with Scripture and ECO polity, ethical misconduct constitutes a serious violation of that trust, especially when it involves the misuse of authority, influence, or relational power for personal benefit, whether through coercive, exploitative, or consensual actions that contradict Christian moral and ethical principles.

Menlo Church is committed to fostering a community of believers marked by integrity, accountability, and care, in which pastors, employees, leaders, members, and those exploring faith may worship, learn, and serve without fear of abuse, manipulation, or moral compromise. Accordingly, Menlo Church will not tolerate ethical misconduct, including sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or other conduct that undermines the trust inherent in leadership, violates Christian ethical standards, or compromises the mission and witness of the church.

Following this commitment, Menlo Church will take allegations of ethical misconduct seriously and will seek to prevent, report, investigate, and, when appropriate, discipline such misconduct in a manner consistent with Scripture, ECO polity, and applicable law, whether or not the conduct also constitutes a violation of civil or criminal statutes. The purpose of this policy is to provide clear standards and procedures that promote accountability and justice, protect those who are vulnerable, safeguard the integrity of the church's ministry, and, where possible, support repentance, healing, and restoration for all persons involved.

Policy Scope

This policy covers all pastors, employees, and elders at Menlo Church.

Definitions

Ethical Misconduct

For purposes of this policy, ethical misconduct includes any conduct by a covered individual that violates applicable federal, state, or local law; constitutes sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or other unlawful discriminatory or abusive behavior; or involves fraud, theft, dishonesty, retaliation, misuse of digital communication and technology or other actions that expose the church or its members to legal, financial, or reputational harm. Conduct may constitute ethical misconduct under this policy whether or not it results in criminal charges, civil liability, or formal legal proceedings.

Consistent with Scripture and with ECO polity, ethical misconduct also includes conduct by a covered individual that violates the moral teachings of the Christian faith or the vows, responsibilities, and trust inherent in pastoral, staff, or lay leadership roles. Such misconduct includes, but is not limited to, sexual misconduct, sexual relations outside the covenant of marriage, misuse of authority or influence, boundary violations within pastoral or ministerial relationships, and other behavior that undermines the integrity of Christian discipleship, breaches relational trust, or brings harm to individuals or to the witness and ministry of the church, whether such conduct is coercive or consensual.

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct is a form of ethical misconduct and includes any sexual behavior or sexualized conduct that violates biblical moral teaching, breaches relational or professional boundaries, misuses authority or trust, or causes harm to individuals or to the witness and ministry of the church. Sexual misconduct may occur between persons of the same or opposite gender and may be coercive or consensual.

Sexual misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual relations or sexual activity outside the covenant of marriage
- Any sexual contact, communication, or behavior within a pastoral, ministerial, supervisory, counseling, teaching, or other relationship of trust or authority
- Sexual exploitation, coercion, abuse, assault, or contact involving force, threat, intimidation, or manipulation
- Creating or participating in a sexualized environment that is inappropriate, intimidating, or degrading, including sexually explicit language, jokes, images, or materials
- Sexual harassment, as defined below

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of sexual misconduct and is prohibited by law. It includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct explicitly or implicitly affects employment, participation in ministry, or other benefits; unreasonably interferes with an individual's work,

learning, or worship; or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment within the church or its ministries.

Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the same or opposite gender, may involve supervisors, colleagues, congregants, or others, and may be committed intentionally or unintentionally. In determining whether conduct constitutes sexual harassment, Menlo Church shall consider the totality of the circumstances, including the nature, frequency, severity, and context of the conduct.

Dishonesty and Fraud

Dishonesty and fraud constitute ethical misconduct and include any intentional act of deception, misrepresentation, or misuse of resources for personal benefit or to the detriment of the church. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Intentionally misrepresenting circumstances to gain benefit, including falsifying records, omitting critical information, or knowingly making false or misleading statements
- Misusing church assets, including premises, supplies, equipment, or financial resources, for unauthorized or personal purposes
- Abuse of position by assigning work to subordinate staff that is unrelated to the mission and ministry of the church
- Theft of church property or resources
- Unauthorized removal, use, or distribution of physical or digital assets belonging to the church

Abuse and Retaliation

Abusive or retaliatory conduct undermines the safety, dignity, and trust essential to the church community and is strictly prohibited. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- The intentional use of offensive, demeaning, or derogatory language toward another individual
- Threatening or intimidating behavior, including physical actions or gestures intended to cause fear or harm
- Any form of retaliation against an individual who, in good faith, reports a concern, participates in an investigation, or raises questions regarding ethical conduct

Under no circumstances will retaliation be tolerated. For staff members, additional guidance and protections are outlined in the Whistleblower Policy contained in the Staff Handbook.

Notification

This policy shall be provided to all pastors and employees as part of the Staff Handbook which is reviewed and acknowledged annually. Employees shall be notified of any material changes to this policy in a timely manner. Elders will also be asked to review the policy annually and provide a written acknowledgment of agreement to comply shall be obtained.

