

CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE CABINET POLICY

MINISTERIAL DATING IN THE PARISH

Romance can be a joy to behold, much more to experience! It can be one of God's good gifts. However, the power inherent in the calling of ministry raises issues when a minister considers dating someone in the parish or the staff. Studies in the prevention of sexual abuse in the ministerial relationship indicate that because of the power inequity, there is a strong possibility of sexual abuse occurring when a minister pursues a romantic interest with a person for whom he or she has ministerial responsibility or with a person whom he or she supervises on the staff. Therefore for the good of the church and the persons involved, the recommendation of the Cabinet of the Central Texas Conference is that no appointed minister is to date or to pursue a romantic interest in a person for whom that minister has ministerial responsibility or with a person whom he or she supervises on the staff. Should the situation arise where a staff member develops such an interest, he or she is to contact the senior pastor immediately (in consultation with the S/PPR committee) in order to discern and develop an appropriate course of action.

It is also highly recommended to newly single ministers that, for their own benefit and advantage, they refrain from dating after a divorce for a minimum of one year. If a person desires to date during their first year of singleness, they are encouraged to first pursue counsel from a professional counselor and from their District Superintendent. It is imperative that the person respect the fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness standard of the *Book of Discipline*.

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STAFF DATING IN THE PARISH

Romance can be a joy to behold, much more to experience! It can be one of God's good gifts. However, the power inherent in the calling of local church staff leadership raises issues when a paid staff member considers dating someone in the parish, on the staff, or in other settings where there is direct leadership responsibility. Studies in the prevention of sexual abuse in the staff or ministerial relationship indicate that because of the power inequity, there is a strong possibility of sexual abuse occurring when a church staff member pursues a romantic interest with a person for whom he or she has responsibility or with a person whom he or she supervises on the staff. Therefore for the good of the church, the recommendation of the Cabinet of the Central Texas Conference is that no paid staff member is to date or to pursue a romantic interest in a person for whom that person has lay or clergy ministerial responsibility or with a person whom he or she supervises on the staff. Should the situation arise where a staff member develops such an interest, he or she is to contact the senior pastor immediately (in consultation with the S/PPR committee) in order to discern and develop an appropriate course of action.

It is also highly recommended to newly single staff members that, for their own benefit and advantage, they refrain from dating after a divorce for a minimum of one year. If a person desires to date during their first year of singleness, they are encouraged to first pursue counsel from a professional counselor and from their senior pastor and/or District Superintendent. It is imperative that the person respect the fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness standard of the *Book of Discipline*.

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