

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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In this month's Topical Bulletin a sensitive subject will be addressed in view of the Holy Bible, for the question to be considered is: ***How are Christians to conduct themselves in this world in which sexual harassment is practiced?***

Webster's New World College Dictionary (4th Edition) defines *sexual harassment* as follows: "inappropriate, unwelcome, and, typically, persistent behavior, as by an employer or coworker, that is sexual in nature, specifically when actionable under federal or state statutes."

Biblically speaking, the Christian's behavior, whether a man or a woman, is to be first and foremost in accord with God's Holy Law as summarized by Jesus Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40 KJV) Therefore, let us take to heart: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10 KJV) Now, the word "love" comes from the Greek root word ἀγαπή {ag-ah'-pay} which means, in the preceding context, "*love: esp. brotherly love, charity.*" [Liddel-Scott Greek Lexicon, abridged]

LOVE is NOT to be confused with the LUST, which is commonly the case today in modern society which is saturated with a focus on sex outside the bonds of marriage. Holy Scripture says to all Christians: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter: because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." (1 Thessalonians 4:1-7 KJV) In the foregoing passage the term "vessel" is a translation of the Greek root word σκευος {skyoo'-os} which means, in the preceding context, "*the body, as the vessel of the soul.*" [Liddel-Scott Greek Lexicon, abridged] So, the term "vessel" refers to one's own body as well as the body of one's spouse, since "two, saith he, shall be one flesh." (1 Corinthians 6:16 KJV) "Lust" is a translation of the Greek root word παθος {path'-os} which means, in the preceding context, "*as a strong emotion of desire or craving passion; in the NT only in a bad sense uncontrolled sexual passion, lustful desire, evil craving.*" [Friberg Greek Lexicon] "Concupiscence" is a translation of the Greek root word επιθυμία {ep-ee-thoo-mee'-ah} which means, in the preceding context, "*in a bad sense of unrestrained desire for something forbidden lust, craving, evil desire.*" [Friberg Greek Lexicon]

Thus, there is a big difference between sinful LUST and Christian LOVE!

Hence, Christian men and women are to show true love toward God and their neighbor— that is, Christian men and women are to practice charity, which is genuine, unselfish, self-sacrificing care and concern for others. The Lord Jesus says to His followers, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” (John 15:12 KJV) Holy Scripture says to all Christians: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (1 John 4:7-11; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 KJV)

Accordingly, showing real love – charity – to our fellow human beings is not optional behavior for Christians, rather it is required behavior, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” (Ephesians 5:3-5 KJV) Thus, sexually harassing other people, or harassing them in any other manner, is surely NOT showing Christian love – charity – toward our neighbor. Let us always remember: WE CHRISTIANS ARE TO REFLECT GOD’S LOVE IN OUR DAILY LIVES IN ALL OUR DEALINGS WITH OTHERS.

It also behooves us Christians to realize that the term *sexual harassment* does NOT ONLY apply to using inappropriate language or gestures or touching, but also includes displaying an unwholesome, immodest appearance in public, for God’s Holy Word clearly instructs: “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God.” (1 Timothy 2:8-10; Deuteronomy 22:5 KJV) Hence, Christians should not do anything to sexually harass people, nor should Christians do anything that would encourage

others to approach them to practice sexual harassment. Let us never forget: “*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*” (Romans 14:21 KJV) Let us Christians, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do ye*. And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (Colossians 3:12-14 KJV)

Finally, all Christians need to constantly bear in mind that the ONLY place sexual activity belongs is within the bonds of holy wedlock between a man and a woman, for it is written: “Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” (Hebrews 13:4 KJV)

Let us daily and sincerely repent of all our sins of thought, word and deed, for “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9 KJV) Let us cling to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith as our personal Savior and Lord, for “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12 KJV) And, let us keep God’s will in mind as we endeavor to live a life of holiness by making use of His inerrant Word as “a lamp” unto our feet, “and a light” unto our “path” as we walk through life in this world. (Psalm 119:105 KJV)

m.e.l.