

## **Mennonite Church USA Protocols (*Not subject to edits by VMC*)**

### **Protocol and Procedure for Ministerial Misconduct Files**

The Leadership Development office of Mennonite Church USA keeps Ministerial Misconduct Files of formally accused and processed cases of misconduct by credentialed leaders in our denomination. The purpose of the Ministerial Misconduct Files is to help prevent future abuse by credentialed leaders who have been accused and found to have engaged in ministerial misconduct. This protocol and procedure document guides the Leadership Development staff in the use of the Ministerial Misconduct Files, clarifying when the files are accessed, and by whom, as we strive for transparency in our efforts to prevent abuse. This document has been made accessible to all conference ministers for their awareness and compliance.

The Ministerial Misconduct Files contain copies of the ministerial misconduct proceedings sent from area conferences to the national office at the conclusion of each formal investigation. Area conferences will include documentation from each of the steps outlined in the *Ministerial Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedure*. The misconduct status of a credentialed leader is indicated in the “Status Notes” section of their file on MennoData, Mennonite Church USA’s national database.

Conference ministers and the national office will consult the misconduct file of any credentialed leader who desires to renew their Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) form or to be considered for a ministry position in Mennonite Church USA. The purpose of referencing the Ministerial Misconduct Files is to more fully vet credentialed leaders with a record of previous misconduct.

Conference ministers will alert any interested search committee in writing of any credentialed leader’s misconduct, including the date and nature of the charge, resulting judgment, any sanctions and the compliance of the credentialed leader. Additionally the MLI form itself indicates a candidate’s previous incidents of misconduct.

Though Ministerial Misconduct Files are maintained with professional confidentiality, their existence is not secretive in nature, and the national office encourages their consultation through the appropriate channels for the purpose of abuse prevention.

### **Who has access to the content of the Ministerial Misconduct Files and the list of credentialed leaders with records?**

- The director of Leadership Development and the denominational minister over the calling system have access to the full list of names and content of records in the Ministerial Misconduct Files, and reserve the right to access the information as they deem appropriate and necessary.
- Conference ministers have access to all the names and files of credentialed leaders within their specific conference as indicated in the “Status Notes” in MennoData, Mennonite Church USA’s national database.

Other requests connected to formal investigations will be considered collaboratively by denominational ministers.

**In what situations would a conference minister reference the Ministerial Misconduct Files?**

- The Leadership Development office provides an orientation for all new area conference ministers which includes reviewing the misconduct cases of any credentialed leader in their conference and the documentation in the Ministerial Misconduct Files.
- When a credentialed leader with a Ministerial Misconduct File is being considered for a ministry position in any area conference of Mennonite Church USA, the area conference minister will access their file and provide any interested search committee in writing of the credentialed leader's misconduct, including the date and nature of the charge, the resulting judgment, all sanctions and the compliance of the credentialed leader.

**In what situations would the national office reference the Ministerial Misconduct Files**

The Leadership Development office will provide access to a Ministerial Misconduct File when:

- There is a request from a conference minister who is dealing with a complaint of misconduct against a credentialed leader in their conference.
- A pastor makes a request to fill out a Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) form and is known to have a previous record of misconduct in the Ministerial Misconduct Files.
- When and if required to do so by law.

**What information in the files can be given to persons who request it?**

Requested information will be given to:

- The conference minister and credentialing ministry committee of the conference holding the leader's credential or considering a credentialed leader for a possible position.
- Authorities conducting a formal or legal investigation will be given copies of the complete file.
- Either the complainant or the accused credentialed leader may request copies of documents which they earlier authored.
- Either the complainant or the accused credentialed leader may also request copies of any letters that were specifically addressed to them.

*Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann, denominational ministers April 18, 2017*

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