

Commentary: Why isn't the church a leader in calling out sexual harassment?

November 8, 2017

Early in my first pastorate I found myself leading a church in the process of redevelopment. Because we worked, essentially, in a construction zone, offices were here, there, and everywhere depending on what work was being done where in the building. The senior minister's study at the time was far away from the other administrative offices, upstairs in a little side room off the sanctuary. Most days it was quiet and peaceful, but occasionally I felt a bit isolated, then eventually vulnerable.

There was at the time a man in the congregation who began showing up unannounced in my office. The first time it happened, he startled me by appearing at the door with a gift: a women's magazine article with tips for losing weight and looking sexier. When I expressed surprise, both at his sudden appearance and the "gift" he'd brought me, he did not seem to understand why I would be unnerved by the incident. It happened two times after that; once he brought me flowers and the other time some candy.

I finally called the chair of the board of trustees of the church ...

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