



PROFESSIONAL & ETHICAL STANDARDS OF MINISTRY APPLICABLE TO MINISTERING PERSONS OF CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN WA

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL & ETHICAL STANDARDS OF MINISTRY, APPLICABLE TO MINISTERING PERSONS BY CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN WA.

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to define the professional and ethical standards of ministry.

DEFENITION

“Ministering persons” means any person in a paid or voluntary role who is recognised as a Minister, Pastor, Chaplain and is accredited by COCWA.

These guidelines also apply to all employees and board or sub-committee members of COCWA.

They may also apply to COCWA Member Church Ministry staff and recognised leaders where a local church elects to adopt this code.

1.2 THE SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT

These principles and procedures apply to Accredited Ministers and Chaplains, Employees, Board and Committee members of Churches of Christ in WA (COCWA).

1.3 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to the view that all people should be able to live and work in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind.

The ethical practice of ministry has, amongst other things, significant legal implications for both the church and paid ministry staff.

1.4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This code of ethics seeks to apply to the ministerial relationship, those standards that God expects of all people. Ministers are therefore expected to be examples and models of Christian faith.

It is the unambiguous duty of any person in a ministry position not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, nor as an opportunity for abuse, of any kind.

This Code of Ethics and the related procedural document for investigating breaches of the Code of Ethics reflects a deep desire to promote accountable processes that express justice and compassion.

2. PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS OF MINISTRY

2.1 MINISTERING PERSONS AND PERSONAL LIFE

Ministering persons will:

2.1.1 Maintain the priority of relationships with their own spouse and family, acknowledging the duty of care they have for their own families and friends.

2.1.2 Use continuing education, or personal development courses (not necessarily formal courses of education) to learn and improve strategies of self-care.

2.1.3 Strive to keep public and private life above reproach.

2.1.4 Ensure that in ministry there is an acute awareness of the risk of over commitment and avoidance of responsibility.

2.1.5 Maintain and develop their own spiritual life. Be accountable, through appropriate external supervision, for their own emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health, and recognise its effect upon their professional engagements and pastoral care.

2.1.6 Avoid entering into arrangements or situations with colleagues, individuals or organisations, which may diminish the minister's ability to maintain professional integrity and independence.

2.1.7 Be intentional about cultivating good healthy relationships. This commitment requires caution with relationships, especially concerning sexual attraction, physical touch, other non-verbal communication and paying special attention to any particular individual.

2.1.8 An unmarried Minister seeking to form a godly and legitimate relationship with a congregation member is advised to establish accountability to a senior Minister and ensure that pastoral care for the congregation member is referred to another appropriate person.

2.2 MINISTERING PERSONS AND THOSE TO WHOM THEY MINISTER

Ministering persons will:

2.2.1 Practise or exercise ministry within the limits of their expertise and to the best of their ability.

2.2.2 Use continuing education and/or professional development (not necessarily formal education) to improve professional standards of care.

2.2.3 Refrain from using the power inherent in their role in an abusive or unprofessional manner, and from exploiting those in their care for any reason, e.g. sexual, emotional or financial purposes.

2.2.4 Treat those to whom they minister, and all with whom they come into contact, with compassion and respect for the human person.

2.2.5 Respect the dignity of the human person, regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference.

2.2.6 Respect the right of all people to make their own informed decisions and choices in life.

2.2.7 Respect the right to have a relationship of mutual trust, privacy and confidentiality. Accordingly, information divulged by people will not be discussed with others unless prior consent is given, except in exceptional cases, usually involving a serious risk to life or wellbeing. This includes the passing on of information to those in a ministry team.

2.2.8 Recommend the seeking of additional opinions and services where the ministry required is not within their competence or where there is a conflict of interest.

2.2.9 Refer people to another competent colleague, ensuring continuity of care, where there is a conflict of interest.

2.2.10 Ensure that where fees are charged for any service (such as marriage preparation, weddings, funerals), those to whom they Minister are aware of all fees beforehand, and are aware that pastoral needs take precedence over capacity to pay.

2.2.11 Exercise particular care in relation to physical contact, recognising that physical touch and personal attention can be very affirming and important for people's health and emotional well-being. However, great care is needed to ensure that personal attention and touching is of a non-intimate nature and is given in an appropriate open setting.

2.2.12 Refrain from sexual exploitation, sexual harassment or any other form of sexual relationship or sexualised behaviour towards a congregational member or other pastoral contact.

2.2.13 Encourage those to whom they minister to move towards self-determination under God, recognising the responsibility for their own lives.

2.3 MINISTERING PERSONS AND THE CHURCH

Ministering persons will:

- 2.3.1** Recognise that membership of the Body of Christ implies a partnership in ministry, and that they will follow the proper counsel of those to whom they are accountable (for example: Church Board, Elders, Leaders, Conference Committee or Conference Board).
- 2.3.2** Contribute professional expertise and experience to the development of ministry, policy and practice within Churches of Christ.
- 2.3.3** Uphold professional standards of practice in ministry, and work to further them.
- 2.3.4** Ensure that in pastoral situations these two commitments are maintained.
 - a. Ministry that is offered will be of the highest quality.
 - b. Ministers are accountable to those receiving that ministry for its quality and impact.
- 2.3.5** Work to incorporate all people within the life of the Church, and seek to provide ministry regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference.
- 2.3.6** Consult with the official church board, or relevant body, before accepting remuneration other than that agreed in his/her employment agreement. In part time ministry roles, this clause carries less weight, however a guiding principle would be that external employment should never impede or adversely affect a minister's ability to minister, as assessed together with the church board.

2.4 MINISTERING PERSONS AND COLLEAGUES IN MINISTRY

Ministering person will:

- 2.4.1** Ensure that all colleagues in ministry are treated with respect, consideration, fairness, and in good faith.
- 2.4.2** Recognise and respect the abilities, expertise, areas of responsibility, skills, talents, time commitments and views of colleagues in ministry.
- 2.4.3** Actively share professional knowledge, skills and experience with colleagues.
- 2.4.4** Be aware that personal conduct affects their own reputation and that of the profession.
- 2.4.5** Refrain from making comments that may damage the reputation of colleagues, cause anxiety to a person receiving ministry, or damage the wider profession and Church.
- 2.4.6** Seek mediation in the face of conflict with colleagues.

2.5 MINISTERING PERSONS AND SOCIETY

Ministering persons will:

- 2.5.1** Strive to improve the standard and quality of ministry, within the Church and wider community.
- 2.5.2** Acknowledge that ministers have a role in society that carries positive expectations and ensure that they act responsibly and with integrity, so as to maintain such a position of positive expectations and trust.
- 2.5.3** Seek to be an example of upright behaviour to the members of both the Church and the community, and seek in his/her example to display Christ-likeness in demeanour and actions.
- 2.5.4** Encourage those to whom ministry is given to live Christian principles throughout their lives.
- 2.5.5** Recognise the proper concern by the Church for all aspects of society, including political and justice issues. In doing so, ministers will encourage debate which is respectful of persons, expressed with humility and respectful of proper authority, seeking at all times to further Christian principles.