

**Methodist Church of New Zealand
Te Hāhi Weteriana O Aotearoa**

Administration Division
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CHRISTCHURCH

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**STANDARDS FOR
MEMBERSHIP & MINISTRY
AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

Standards for Membership and Ministry

Definitions: For the purposes of these standards:

Ministers: means Presbyters, Deacons and any Lay Person named on the Stationing Sheet.

Courts of the Church: means the formal decision making bodies such as Parish Council, Synods, Boards, Conference.

Ministry

1. Professional Conduct

1.1 Relationships:

- (a) Ministers shall respect the call and stationing of other Ministers. They shall recognise those people who are colleagues, or those with whom they are in team ministry, as equals in standing and responsibility in the fulfilment of their duties as a Minister in that appointment.
- (b) Ministers have particular authority in relation to other Ministers and lay staff shall:
 - (i) Be guided by the principles of collegiate ministry;
 - (ii) Exercise their authority justly and in a clearly accountable manner;
- (c) Ministers who are under the particular authority of other Ministers or lay staff shall accept the guidance and direction of those who have been given authority over them by the Church.
- (d) Ministers shall respect the professional expertise of members of other disciplines/professions with whom they work in the Church or other institutions.
- (e) Retired Ministers and Ministers in non-congregational appointments shall recognise the inherent power they have in the congregations in which they are members. In seeking to express the principles of collegiality they:
 - (i) shall respect the call and appointments of those in ministry;
 - (ii) may support and encourage those in ministry if asked to do so;
 - (iii) shall not encourage discontent about or seek to interfere with the ministry of a Minister (whether in their own congregation or elsewhere);
 - (iv) may express leadership within the congregation of which they are a member when invited to do so by the Minister in the appointment

1.2 Competence

- (a) Ministers have a responsibility to maintain high standards of knowledge and skills in all the areas of ministry relevant to their appointment. This responsibility requires that Ministers undertake continuing education appropriate to this ministry.
- (b) Ministers shall not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training or experience.
- (c) Ministers shall refrain from offering to undertake and / or engage in work beyond their level of competence; and shall make appropriate referrals. Referrals are appropriate when a person does not have the required:
 - (i) professional competence or expertise;
 - (ii) pastoral competence;
 - (iii) cultural competence or experience;
- (d) Where Ministers are faced with circumstances where they are asked to provide care beyond their normal level of competence they shall:
 - (i) seek guidance from a person with appropriate competence;
 - (ii) discharge the care to a suitably qualified person as soon as possible.
 - (iii) notify their supervisor;
- (e) Ministers shall end a pastoral relationship when it is not beneficial for the other person or where the help needed is outside their pastoral and professional competence.

1.3 Professionalism

- (a) Ministers shall not engage in sexual relationships with people in their pastoral care.
- (b) Ministers have a responsibility to provide unbiased pastoral care to those with whom they disagree, and to consult their supervisor in relation to the situation.
- (c) Where there is an actual or potential conflict of interest in matters affecting Ministers, their family or their financial interests, the Ministers shall absent themselves from discussion and decision.
- (d) Ministers shall recognise the influence that is inherent in their role and shall not use this influence in a manner which is abusive or unprofessional. In particular, they shall not use their position to:
 - (i) gain personal or financial advantage for themselves or family members;
 - (ii) harass or intimidate other people including other ministers;
 - (iii) exploit or abuse other people physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually or financially.

1.4 Confidentiality

- (a) Ministers shall not breach confidentiality. In the context of a pastoral relationship, confidentiality is an assurance that Ministers will not share written, electronic or spoken information about an individual with other people, including their own family members, or use it for a purpose other than for which it was collected.
- (b) Information received in the context of a pastoral relationship shall remain confidential unless:
 - (i) the person gives permission for the particular disclosure; or
 - (ii) retaining such information would result in significant physical, emotional or sexual harm to another person or persons; or
 - (iii) required by law; or
 - (iv) disclosure is necessary to prevent financial loss to some other person due to fraud or other dishonesty or where undue hardship might result. or
 - (v) disclosure is required in accordance with the terms of placement/employment applicable in a particular appointment.
- (c) In a pastoral relationship Ministers shall take care to discuss the nature and limits of their confidentiality with the other person.
- (d) Ministers should ensure the integrity of any records, particularly electronic records, by putting in place appropriate security procedures.
- (e) Confidentiality also requires that Ministers shall not seek to gain sensitive or confidential information to which they are not entitled or which would require another person to breach a confidence.
- (f) Ministers shall share with the intended audiences information from Synod and Conference (and their agencies) that is meant to be disseminated.

2. Gifts and Fees

- 2.1 Ministers shall not seek financial gain for themselves or their families from a pastoral relationship beyond recognised fees, stipends and entitlements.
- 2.2 Ministers shall not use their ministry to recruit clients for private practice or commercial interests. Ministers in fulltime ministry shall not use their ministry skills as a basis for significant commercial benefit while in fulltime ministry with the Church.

3. Relationship with the Law

- 3.1 Ministers shall inform the General Secretary of any matter which may lead to legal action against the Minister and/or the Church.

- 3.2 There may be times when the member affirms the necessity for civil disobedience for moral reasons. It shall be done openly and with a willingness to accept the consequences of the law (however in such cases, no moral justification for violence against another person or property is acceptable).
- 3.3 Ministers shall act lawfully at all times (and shall not encourage another to act unlawfully) unless to do so would clearly contravene their Christian conscience.
- 3.4 Ministers will encourage, as part of the pastoral task, participation in the shaping of social policies advocating the promotion of social justice, improved social conditions and a fair share of the community's resources. While respecting the law, ministers will act to change unjust laws.

4. Relationships with Institutions, Organisations, the Wider Church or with other Professions

(For example hospital, prison or ecumenical organisations)

- 4.1 Ministers shall be aware of those Codes of Ethics or similar guidelines in institutions or ministry locations where they may work (eg. hospitals, prisons). Ministers in such ministry locations have a responsibility to abide by those Code of Ethics also.
- 4.2 Ministers shall acknowledge situations when their ministry takes place in a particular structured work environment. Ministers shall comply with all the relevant standards, policies, procedures, practices, guidelines, governance arrangements and performance management practices that apply to employees, workers and those in ministry within that organisation. Notwithstanding, for ministers in appointments the Regulations governing appointments will always apply.
- 4.3 Where the demands of institutions or other organisations conflict with this Code of Ethics, Ministers shall clarify the nature of the conflict between those demands and the principles of this Code. Ministers shall inform all parties of any conflict and seek to resolve it.
- 4.4 Ministers who exercise ministry in organisations with their own policies and procedures for matters also covered under the Code shall normally seek to resolve issues following the procedures of that organisation.

5. Breach of Standards for Membership, Ministry and Professional Practice

- 5.1 Breach of the Code of Ethics refers to any violation of the requirements or principles of the Code by Ministers. It includes any instance where Ministers have deliberately encouraged another to breach the terms of the Code. It also includes any breach which occurs via the internet or through other technology even in circumstances where those who have been affected cannot be identified.
- 5.2 When Ministers know of a Code violation by another Minister, and it seems appropriate, they shall informally attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the matter of concern to the attention of that Minister in a constructive manner. If this is not practical, or does not address the issue of concern, the facts shall be reported to the General Secretary.

6. Ministry and Membership

6.1 Relationships:

- (a) Members and Ministers shall work within the polity of the Methodist Church of New Zealand, respecting the rights and responsibilities of those who share leadership in the Church, both lay and ordained.
- (b) Members and Ministers shall:
- (i) accept the theological validity of the ordination of both women and men for ministry in Christ's church as a Minister;

- (ii) be willing to work with and support women and men as colleagues in the ordained ministries; and
- (iii) be willing to encourage, equip and support both women and men in all forms of ministry in the Church and to teach the Church's position in this regard.

6.2 Relationships with Courts of the Church

- (a) Ministers and members shall be aware of and respect the guidance and decisions of the courts of the Church, and maintain accountability within the discipline of the Church.
- (b) Ministers and members have a responsibility to participate fully in their local church courts, Synod, and in the wider work of the church.
- (c) Preachers and worship Leaders may not use their preaching role to inflame conflict within the Congregation, or between the congregation and other courts of the church. Processes and decisions of courts of the Church should be reported accurately and fairly.
- (d) Disagreements need to be conducted in a way that expresses Christian community and commitment to rational debate based on evidence and argument, not personal attacks and mere assertion of opinion.

Professional Practice

In this Code, "Minister" refers to Candidates, Lay Ministers, Deacons, Presbyters, Youth Workers and Ministers from another denomination serving in the Methodist Church of New Zealand

This Code is to be applied within the faith and unity of the church and Regulations of the Church which state the Church's requirements in relation to the conduct and accountability of its Ministers.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Christian community is called into being by God through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The church is sustained by Christ through baptism, the Eucharist and preaching of the Word. Its life and fellowship is derived from the fact that the Church is the Body of Christ, the presence of Christ in the world. We are united in a fellowship of love, service, suffering and joy through our shared faith in Christ. We worship, pray, give our witness, study Scripture and other sources of faith, offer pastoral care to each other, develop deep friendships, and seek to be mutually accountable. We are, for this reason, a deeply intimate community.

- 1.2 Ministers have a particular place within that community. They touch people's lives at many points of joy, pain, celebration, grief and vulnerability. They are responsible for providing leadership in the community's task of worshipping, proclaiming the good news of Jesus, providing pastoral care, standing with those who suffer, and working for justice and peace. They minister within a pastoral relationship in which they seek to enable other people to focus on God as the source of healing, restoration and wholeness.

As part of their responsibility to promote and maintain the Church as a missional community Ministers may occupy ministry positions in any of the Councils of the Church. This may mean that they will give more emphasis to some parts of their ministry than they would in a congregational placement. This form of ministry carries particular responsibilities in regard to other staff in the organization.

- 1.3 The pastoral relationship occurs within a faith community whose life and relationships are established by Jesus Christ. The pastoral relationship has its meaning, and is established and maintained, as the church enables others to meet Jesus who nourishes our lives. The pastoral

relationship is part of the way the church is nourished and built up as the Body of Christ, and nurtures life in the world. As a result of this context, ministers also have relationships and responsibilities within the broader community which are based on their responsibilities within the faith community.

- 1.4 It is the seriousness of the pastoral relationship, and the vulnerability of people in that relationship, which make it necessary for Ministers to appreciate their unique position and the way they touch people's lives. They exercise considerable influence and power. It is essential that each individual Minister recognises the power they have and understands the boundaries that the church requires to be observed within their ministry.
- 1.5 Because the pastoral relationship occurs in a deeply intimate community, friendships will develop. These will, at times, challenge the capacity of Ministers to provide the pastoral care that belongs to their role as Minister. Ministers have responsibility to distinguish times when objective pastoral care is required. They have the responsibility to discern the boundaries of the pastoral relationship, to offer professional pastoral care when it is required, and to discern when their relationships overstep the appropriate level of friendship and intimacy, or when they are exercising power inappropriately in relation to others in the pastoral relationship.
- 1.6 The Methodist Church of New Zealand understands that as Ministers live out God's call to ministry, all relationships shall be characterised by the love, care and compassion that was embodied in Jesus Christ. The requirement is that Ministers will exhibit a mature Christian faith in all their relationships and in particular embody integrity, trust and compassion.
- 1.7 People enter ministry as a response to a call from God and the Church. It is this call that requires that all Ministers carry out their ministry in a professional and accountable manner.
- 1.8 The Methodist Church of New Zealand is a multi-cultural church and as such is made up of faith communities from across many different cultural backgrounds. Each culture has its own unique expression of community and relationships. which need to be borne in mind when overseeing the behaviour of ministers. In ministry with people from diverse cultural backgrounds these unique expressions form an important part of the intimate community which is formed and inform how Ministers express their ministry.
- 1.9 It is recognised that rural and isolated communities present particular difficulties in term of professional/personal relationship; availability of supervision and access to support. This intensifies the responsibilities of presbyteries for care of such persons, and in assisting Ministers to fulfil the Code of Ethics.

2. The Pastoral Relationship

(N.B. Ministers should note the relationship between this section and Section 4: Particular relationships)

- 2.1 Recognising that all relationships in the Christian community are intended to nurture the church and people's relationship with Christ who is Lord of the Church, in the context of this Code of Ethics, the pastoral relationship means the relationship between a Minister and another person:
 - (a) "in which the Minister is providing spiritual care for the person; or
 - (b) where the person has looked to the Minister for guidance, protection or care; or
 - (c) where the person has made contact with the Minister in their responsibility or function as Minister"

Ministers are in a pastoral relationship with all members and adherents of a Congregation through the commitments they make at their induction, commissioning or other service of

recognition. Where Ministers are in a non-Congregational placement, they are in pastoral relationship with those persons they come in contact with by virtue of their placement. Where Ministers are not in, or are yet to commence, a placement they are in a pastoral relationship with those persons they come in contact with by virtue of their role as a Minister. Ministers may form pastoral relationships in a variety of contexts. Where Ministers form relationships through the internet and other technology any pastoral relationships they form are to be conducted in a manner consistent with the Code.

- 2.2 The pastoral relationship is concerned for maturity in Christian life, and for fullness of life for all people, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, economic circumstances or other personal characteristics. It is a relationship in which Ministers seeks to express an ethic of care, which includes nurturing the other person's power over their own life as they relate to others and to God.
- 2.3 The pastoral relationship is nurtured and guided through the commitments of commissioning, ordination or other service of recognition. These commitments reflect the intention of Ministers to exercise their ministry:
- (a) through faith in Jesus Christ and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit;
 - (b) within the faith of the church;
 - (c) by being nourished and guided by the study of Scripture;
 - (d) through announcing the Good News in Christ to those outside the community of faith;
 - (e) through faithful affirmation of, and celebration of sacraments;
 - (f) in a mutual manner, offering pastoral care and nurturing people in faith, recognising and valuing other peoples gifts, training them for ministry and working cooperatively with their ministry;
 - (g) through working for justice and peace;
 - (h) by striving for peace and unity among all Christian people;
 - (i) by engaging in ongoing study;
 - (j) by respecting the guidance and decisions of the councils of the church;
 - (k) within the discipline of the church.
- 2.4 Ministers shall exercise their ministry in a manner that expresses:
- (a) commitment to God;
 - (b) inclusiveness of the Gospel;
 - (c) accountability;
 - (d) commitment to the call of the church to ministry;
 - (e) the professional nature of the relationship, and ensures:
 - (i) that Ministers do not seek to meet their personal needs through the pastoral relationship;
 - (ii) that clear boundaries are recognised and observed (i.e. the relationship and behaviour are appropriate to the pastoral relationship);
 - (iii) respect, sensitivity and reverence for others;
 - (iv) confidentiality;
 - (v) non-abusive use of power;
 - (vi) commitment to justice.

3. Professionalism

- 3.1 Ministers shall exercise their ministry to the other person in the pastoral relationship in a professional manner. This includes, but is not limited to:
- (a) offering the best quality care, leadership of worship and preaching of which they are capable;
 - (b) offering appropriate Christian teaching;
 - (c) appropriately dealing with emotional and spiritual needs;
 - (d) being sensitive to people's different social contexts;

- (e) following recognised and acknowledged modes of working in specialist areas such as bereavement, trauma and suicide;
- (f) being sensitive to the needs and vulnerability of the children and young people with whom they work, ensuring that the professional nature of the relationship is made clear in an appropriate way;
- (g) being sensitive to the needs of, and ways of relating to, people from any different cultures with whom they have contact including being aware of one's own inherent cultural bias.

3.2 Self Care

Ministers shall take responsibility to:

- (a) address their physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health needs and, where appropriate, seek assistance from a qualified professional;
- (b) participate in supervision;
- (c) give adequate priority to their relationship with their family;
- (d) nurture personal relationships which assist them in their wholeness;
- (e) take appropriate and regular leave, and time off from work for recreational activity.

3.3 Supervision

- (a) Ministers have a responsibility to recognise that they are also vulnerable, requiring them to maintain their professionalism in difficult circumstances.
- (b) Ministers shall keep appropriate pastoral records (eg. details of appointments and referrals and a journal of critical incidents).
- (c) Professional supervision means the relationship Ministers have with another professional whereby the Minister is assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry (as per the definition at the commencement of the code) including competencies, time management, priorities and any difficulties arising in ministry.
- (d) Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that they receive regular professional supervision.
- (e) Ministers shall discuss with their supervisor any ongoing situations of conflict in which they are involved in the course of their work.
- (f) Where applicable, Ministers shall maintain membership requirements of any relevant professional association (eg, psychologists or counsellors.)

4. Particular Relationships

4.1 A particular relationship refers to a close personal relationship between a Minister and another person such as:

- (a) a very close personal friendship or relationship; or
- (b) a close family relationship; or
- (c) a marriage; or

4.2 Some particular relationships may exist within the pastoral community. In such circumstances the Minister should not be the sole provider of pastoral care, but steps should be taken to ensure professional pastoral care is available to the other person (eg. the spouse of the Minister, a close friend).

4.3 In all circumstances it will be appropriate for a Minister to cease a pastoral relationship in order to enter a particular relationship within the pastoral community. In the event that a Minister and a person with whom they have been in a pastoral relationship identify a potential particular relationship, the Minister shall:

- (a) disengage from the pastoral relationship and arrange alternative pastoral care for the other person;
- (b) seek advice on the appropriateness of such a particular relationship, preferably through supervision;

- (d) disclose the relationship to an appropriate officer of the Church (eg. chairperson of the Parish Council, Synod Superintendent or other appropriate person within the appointing body).

5. Gifts and Fees

- 5.1 Where Ministers receive gifts resulting from the pastoral relationship the Minister shall use discretion concerning the acceptance or return of gifts by considering the intent, value and affordability of the gift and whether there is a risk of the Minister being compromised or losing objectivity. Advice shall be sought from the General Secretary if the Minister is uncertain or others have expressed uncertainty about the appropriateness of a gift.
- 5.2 Ministers accepting a gift to satisfy cultural traditions should be sensitive and gracious while still considering the appropriateness of gift. Where Ministers do accept the gift they should then look at the appropriate use of the gift to benefit the community of faith. Ministers should not seek to use “cultural traditions” as a basis for accepting an otherwise inappropriate gift.

6. Breach of Standards for Membership, Ministry and Professional Practice.

- 6.1 It is the responsibility of the General Secretary to deal with an allegation of a breach of this Code.