

Presbytery of San José

POLICY: ETHICAL PRACTICES FOR PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS

Policy Statement

The manner of life of those called as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament should be a demonstration of the Christian Gospel in the Church and in the World. (G-60106)

Rationale

Presbyterian Ministers of the Word and Sacrament have the responsibility from their ordination vows to trust Jesus Christ as Savior, to acknowledge Him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and to believe in one true God and the Holy Spirit. They are further committed to obedience to Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). All ministers, having received the grace of God and acting as God's servants, seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love their neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world. In both their personal and professional lives they strive to serve with integrity, intelligence, imagination and love, and to further the peace, unity and purity of the Church.

The Standards of Ethical Conduct approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998) are accepted as fundamental principles for ordained officers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S. A.). These standards are reproduced here as the policy for *Life Together in the Community of Faith* by members of the Presbytery of San Jose.

LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:

STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR

ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U. S. A.)

As an ordained officer in the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry. Therefore I will:

1. Seek to trust Jesus Christ as Savior, to acknowledge Him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and to believe in one true God and the Holy Spirit;
2. Be obedient to Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA);
3. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship and service;
4. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
5. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
6. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;

7. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual renewal;
8. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
9. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
10. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will:

1. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by the Presbytery of San Jose policy No. 20 on *Sexual Misconduct Prevention*;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music and presentations, and observe copyrights;
9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
- **15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only upon invitation of the moderator of session or, in case of inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session.
- **16. Provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
- **17. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

**These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.

III

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:

1. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
2. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;
3. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
4. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

Committee on Ministry Responsibilities/Role of Presbytery

Copies of this policy will be made available to all ministers on the roll of Presbytery and presented to each new minister who is received into membership in the Presbytery of San Jose. Copies will be distributed to churches and sessions. Information and awareness meetings could be planned to disseminate content of the policy.

Standards of Ethical Conduct embodied in the Report of the Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics should be made available to all ministers and churches (approved by the 210th General Assembly, 1998, and found on pages 625 to 628, 43.0001 to 43.0132, minutes) and published as Professional Code of Ethics, Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, 1998 (Presbyterian Distribution Service #OGA-98-009). Recommendations provided in 43.0022 can be reviewed and appropriate suggestions reported to the Office of the General Assembly.

This document is presented to encourage continuing ethical engagement of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament in developing and maintaining ethical behaviors. The aim is "promoting the peace and harmony of the churches, especially in regard to matters arising out of relations between ministers and churches ... to mediate differences and reconcile persons, to the end that the difficulties may be corrected by the session of the church if possible, that the welfare of the particular church may be strengthened, that the unity of the body of Christ may be made manifest." (G-11.0502i)

Minister Responsibilities

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament need to review this policy and the Standards of Ethical Conduct (GA 1998). Ministers will regularly re-examine their practices and responsibilities to ascertain that all remain in conformity with the principles contained herein.

Session Responsibilities

Sessions are encouraged to be aware of the content of this policy and the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members, Employees, Volunteers, and Ordained Officers of the PC (USA). Concerns and questions about perceived unethical conduct should be discussed with the Committee on Ministry.

Additional Responsibilities/Information

Concerns about conduct that is perceived as failure to comply with this policy should be directed to the Chair of the Committee on Ministry or to the Executive Presbyter.

by phone (408) 279-0220

by mail 888 North First Street, Suite 320

San Jose, CA 95112

by e-mail jane@sanjosepby.org