

CODE OF ETHICS

**BAPTIST CHURCHES
OF TASMANIA**

**Code of Ethics
and
Ministry Practice
for
Tasmanian Baptist
Pastors**



Introduction

Ethics are absolutely the bedrock of ministry. The need for integrity is magnified in the present culture of intense scrutiny of the behaviour of people with a public profile.

The purpose of this Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice is to encourage ethical reflection and behaviour by all pastors serving Christ within the framework of Tasmanian Baptist churches. The term “pastor” in this document applies to all persons accredited by the Pastoral Committee.

Compliance with this Code of Ethics is mandatory for all Accredited Pastors. Non compliance can lead to disciplinary proceedings, including possible retraction of accreditation.

A pastor ought to consult with the General Superintendent if any issue of doubt arises with the implementation of any aspect of this code,

1. Personal Conduct

1.1. Personal life of the minister

The pastorate is not merely a profession, but a calling from God which pervades every part of a minister’s life. 1 Timothy 4:16 says, *Watch your life and doctrine closely.*

Ministers will take responsibility for:

- (a) the maintenance and development of their own spiritual life;
- (b) the maintenance of their physical and emotional health;
- (c) establishing and maintaining the priority of their relationship with their spouse and family; and
- (d) establishing and maintaining responsible, law-abiding, ethical citizenship.

1.2. Commitment to continuing education and equipping

Pastors are encouraged to continue education and equipping, through formal study programs and/or relevant seminars, books and journals to promote growth in their faith, knowledge, character and ministry skills.

1.3 Relationships with colleagues

- (a) Pastors will respect the call and placement of other ministers, whether colleagues of a local pastoral team, pastors in other Baptist churches the wider denomination or other denominations.

- (b) Pastors who have authority in relation to other pastors and/or lay staff will exercise their authority justly, with respect and with clear accountability.
- (c) Pastors will not commence new churches or fellowships by splitting from an existing church or plant new churches in the area of an existing Baptist church without appropriate negotiation with that church and with the Baptist union of Tasmania.

1.4 Relationship with the denomination

The pastor's primary loyalty is always to the Lord Jesus who is the Head of the Church. Pastors called to serve within the Baptist denomination will express their loyalty to the wider work of Tasmanian Baptists by prayerful interest, support and participation as they are able in the corporate endeavours of the denomination.

1.5 Relationship with the wider community

- (a) As followers of Christ, pastors are called to live as "salt" and "light" (Matthew 5:13&14) in the world.
- (b) Pastors' involvement in the wider community will display a Christ-likeness that includes concern for social justice and the moral and spiritual needs of their community.
- (c) Where pastors speak out on community or political issues they must ensure any statement is factually correct and comments and/or actions are based on moral and spiritual principles and expressed with humility.

2. Pastoral Relationships

2.1 Working relationships

- (a) Pastors will ensure that all colleagues in ministry, whether pastoral, administrative or ancillary staff are treated with respect, consideration, fairness and in good faith.
- (b) In the interests of effective ministry together, pastors will recognise and respect the abilities, expertise, areas of responsibility, skills, talents, time commitments and views of colleagues in ministry.
- (c) Pastors will refrain from offering or agreeing to undertake and/or engage in work beyond their role, training or professional competence and refer to other suitably qualified persons where necessary.

- (d) Where conflict arises between ministry colleagues the principles of Matthew 18 must first be applied. In the event the conflict is not resolved and relationships restored, pastors will seek the assistance of a suitable mediator.

The Superintendent may recommend appropriate procedures.

2.2 Pastoral care

- (a) Pastors will not use the power inherent in their role in an abusive or unprofessional manner.
- (b) Pastoral care will be offered without bias to all within their charge. Where a pastor has a significant relationship with an individual within the fellowship (e.g. a close personal friendship, a close family relationship, a marriage or in the case of a single minister, a relationship which is becoming romantic) the pastor will ensure that pastoral care is made available from another suitably qualified person or seek advice from the Superintendent.
- (c) When a pastoral relationship is not beneficial for the person receiving care a pastor will
- refer the person to another suitably qualified pastoral carer,
 - renegotiate the relationship to one which is beneficial or
 - terminate the present pastoral relationship.
- (d) It is expected that pastors will obtain ministry supervision from a respected, appropriately qualified mentor or spiritual director.
- (e) Pastors will ensure that they treat members of their congregation and members of the public with respect, consideration, fairness and in good faith.

2.3 Professional integrity

Whilst people enter into a pastoral ministry in response to a call from God and the Church, this call requires that they carry out ministry in a professional and accountable manner. An integral part of any call is a clear delineation and acceptance of the appropriate lines of accountability.

- (a) Pastors must keep appropriate pastoral records, including such things as details of appointments and referrals and a journal of critical incidents.

- (b) Pastors will have a moral and spiritual commitment to truthfulness and refrain from plagiarising, both in their preaching and presentation of written material. Sources will be appropriately acknowledged.
- (c) Pastors must openly declare any potential conflict of interest (perceived or actual) to their church leadership and where appropriate to the Superintendent. This includes the intention of standing as a candidate for any political party.
- (d) Pastors will not seek financial gain for themselves or their families from a pastoral relationship beyond their recognized stipends and entitlements. This does not preclude a part-time employed pastor entering into other paid employment.
- (e) Pastors who receive gifts resulting from the pastoral relationship must use discretion concerning the acceptance or return of those gifts by considering the intent and affordability of the gift, and whether the gift places the pastor at risk of being compromised or losing objectivity.
- (f) Pastors will not use their ministry to recruit clients for private practice or commercial interests.
- (g) Pastors will not engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour.

2.4 Confidentiality

Information received in the context of a pastoral relationship shall remain confidential *unless*:

- (a) the person gives permission for the particulars to be disclosed; or
- (b) retaining such information could potentially result in significant harm to another person; or
- (c) required by law; or
- (d) information is received that discloses that a criminal offence may have occurred or is likely to occur, then that information should be passed onto the Superintendent; or
- (e) disclosure is necessary to prevent financial loss to some other person due to fraud or other dishonesty or where undue hardship might result (as stated in the *Privacy Act 1988*)

For the above reasons, in a pastoral relationship pastors must take care to discuss the nature and limits of their confidentiality with the other person.

2.5 Sexual misconduct

Inappropriate sexual behaviour contravenes God's Word and is unethical and unacceptable. Inappropriate sexual behaviour covers a range of welcomed and unwelcomed behaviours

- (a) Where cases of inappropriate sexual behaviour are suspected amongst pastors, they must be thoroughly investigated under the provisions of the Baptist Union's "Crossing the Boundary" and "Responsible Care" documents. In the case of offending pastors this information must be promptly passed on to the Superintendent for reference to the Pastoral Committee.
- (b) Where cases of child sexual abuse are reported or suspected the General Superintendent and the Tasmania Police and other appropriate authorities must be notified.

3. Relationship with the Law

- (a) A pastor will seek, as far as reasonable and practicable, to uphold and encourage others to uphold the law.

Where a Pastor wishes to exercise faith-based conscientious objection to a law, he should first advise both his church leadership and the Superintendent.

- (b) Should a pastor, in the conduct of ministry, become aware of fraudulent activity, corrupt conduct or other criminal activity he or she must immediately notify the Superintendent.
- (c) If in any circumstance whatever a Pastor becomes aware of (or has reason to suspect) sexual abuse of a minor, Tasmania Police must immediately be formally advised.

4. Working with Other Institutions and Professions

- (a) Pastors must familiarise themselves with the Codes of Ethics or similar guidelines in other institutions where they may minister (e.g. hospitals, schools and Correctional Centres).
- (b) Where the demands of another organization conflict with this Code of Ethics, pastors will seek to clarify the nature of the conflict between those demands and the principles of this Code, inform all parties concerned of any perceived conflicts and seek to resolve them.

5. Breach of Code of Ethics

- (a) Breach of the Code of Ethics refers to any violation of the requirements or principles of the Code by Pastors. It includes any instance where

pastors have deliberately encouraged another to breach the terms of the Code.

- (b) When a pastor becomes aware of another pastor breaching this Code they should, in private, attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the matter of concern to the attention of that pastor in a constructive manner. If this is not practical, or does not address the issue of concern or does not resolve the issue, the pastor ought to be advised of his intention to report the facts to the Superintendent.
- (c) Pastors are required to inform the Superintendent if the behaviour of any pastor, lay employee or lay appointee could be considered as inappropriate sexual behaviour. (as defined in section 2.4).

6. Exceptional Circumstances

Throughout this document there are a number of circumstances that require the Superintendent to be notified. However in cases where the Superintendent is unavailable or it is deemed inappropriate to notify him, the Union President or Chair of Pastoral Committee is to be notified.

Resources referred to in the development of this material include:

Anglican Church of Australia, Guidelines for Conduct of clergy and church officials in the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, 2000.

Churches of Christ in Australia, Code of Ethics applicable to Ministers of the Churches of Christ, 1999.

John Mark Ministries, www.pastornet.net.au/jmm

The Baptist Union of Queensland, A Guide to Professional Ethics for Ministers of the Baptist Union of Queensland, 1994, 2005.

Uniting Church in Australia, Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, 2000.

Approved by
The Council of
The Baptist Union of Tasmania
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