

Ministerial Code of Conduct for Ministers who hold a Credential with The Full Gospel Churches of Australia.

Preamble

Ministry is a call to serve both God and people. Credentialed Ministers are firstly accountable to God (1 Corinthians 4:4-5), but also to church members, their local governing authorities (church board, eldership or responsible persons) and those who receive ministry (Ephesians 4:1-2). Ministers are public figures whose lives are on display and are viewed with considerable public scrutiny. A high degree of compliance is expected with the biblical call to holiness (Matthew 5:48; Titus 2:7-8).

Accordingly, pastoral relationships are to be characterised by love, justice, care, and compassion (Micah 6:8). A minister is firstly a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, (1 John 2:6) and as such ministry is grounded by prayer, Bible study, regular worship and a readiness to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20).

Ministers of The Full Gospel Churches of Australia (Hereafter in this document denoted as Full Gospel) are to live and minister in accordance with biblical values. Additionally, it is expected that every profession has a code of conduct that sets an example of excellence for the society in which it seeks to minister.

The following guidelines are designed to identify areas, articulate relevant principles, note areas of caution, and state what is clearly prohibited in terms of biblical conduct for Ministers in Full Gospel.

The Purpose of the Code

This code is a guide for the behaviour of Ministers in Full Gospel. It is articulated to assist leaders to serve in such a manner that it will cause our churches and ministries to be safe places for all; places where integrity is honoured, accountability is practised, misconduct is not concealed, and forgiveness is encouraged to bring about healing and restoration.

Full Gospel reserves the right to rescind any credential issued and, at our discretion, to set appropriate measures in place to restore and/or discipline the holder of any Full Gospel credential who has committed improper conduct. Improper conduct is generally regarded as behaviour that in all the circumstances of a case is an inappropriate or incorrect way of discharging a person's duties, obligations, or responsibilities.

This Code of Conduct sets out the standard that is expected of persons holding a Full Gospel credential, and therefore is an important document for determining whether a person has committed improper conduct.

A breach of these provisions may be improper conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Such action is always at the discretion of the National Executive of The Full Gospel Churches of Australia.

Ministers who hold a credential with Full Gospel, as well as their local governing board or responsible persons are to read, understand, agree with and adhere to this Code of Conduct, signifying their agreement by signing the document and returning it to The Full Gospel Churches of Australia. They also agree to inform the Full Gospel Executive of any breach of this code of conduct, i.e. any improper conduct committed by the minister holding a credential with Full Gospel. The signed code of conduct remains in place and valid for the entire term of that minister's association with and as long as he or she holds a credential issued by Full Gospel.

The Code of Conduct

Pastoral Example

Ministers should be "*above reproach*" (1 Timothy 3:2). The values of the Gospel of Christ should be obvious to members of the church and wider society (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1). It is also important for an effective minister to have a healthy lifestyle and a balance of service, recreation, and family life (Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Titus 1:6). This lifestyle should also be supported and encouraged for all members.

Ministers should be good citizens and obey the laws of the community (Proverbs 24:21; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:11-17). The only rare exception may be when a Christian engages in non-violent civil disobedience as a matter of protest (Acts 4:18-20).

Addictive behaviours:

Scripture requires that we exercise caution in the use of alcohol (Proverbs 20:1; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 8). Abstinence is a stand that is highly respected in Full Gospel. Extreme caution must also be exercised with all potentially addictive and harmful behaviours that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardise our own or another's faith.

A Minister must abstain from drunkenness, fighting, gambling, abstain from the use of all illegal drugs (Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21) and refrain from the use or viewing of pornographic material. A Minister should refrain from smoking.

Language:

The use of offensive language should also be avoided (such as swear words, coarse language, sexual connotations, inappropriate language and racial, religious or other slurs).

Ministry Matters

Authority to minister comes from Jesus Christ; the head of the Church (Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 12:27). Christian leadership must never be manipulative or authoritarian (John 15:15). Ministers are servants of Christ, who should endeavour to become servant leaders as modelled by Jesus (John 13). Leadership in all its dimensions must always be accountable, and it is essential that ministers act responsibly in the best interests of those they serve (James 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2-4). Ministers must have in place a body of people with whom they have an open and honest relationship and to whom they are accountable for their ministerial and private conduct.

Qualifications:

Ministers must not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training, or experience. Ministers should recognise their level of skill and experience. If they are unsure, they must seek additional advice from other colleagues or other professionals. **Ministers must not, under any circumstances act outside of their scope of practice and/or competence.**

Ministry gifts:

It is a Pentecostal distinctive to honour the role of the Holy Spirit who imparts spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7). There are a variety of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4) and the true exercise of these gifts will always be consistent with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). For example, prophecy is to be exercised for "*strengthening, encouragement and comfort*" (1 Corinthians 14:3). A leader must always be willing to be held accountable, admitting to the possibility of human error when exercising the gifts of the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21)

Public statements:

A Minister must show respect and godly care to all people, inside or outside the Christian community (Colossians 4:6). Care must be taken in how Ministers speak of the ministry of others (Mark 9:40) and of people of other faith practices, since reputation is something highly valued in Scripture (Proverbs 22:1) and within our community.

Care must be exercised when Ministers express a personal opinion on controversial matters. They must distinguish between expressing an opinion and speaking on behalf of their local church or Full Gospel (1 Corinthians 7:12).

Staffing and volunteers:

A Minister must not be abusive in any way toward others (1 Timothy 3:2-5; Titus 1:7). The misuse of authority in leadership must be avoided. The power differential between a congregational member and Minister must not be, under any circumstances, misused for personal, professional or other gain. Ministers must not use their perceived power to inappropriately persuade others at any time.

Ministers must not attempt to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit to manipulate or coerce a person. This includes attempting to use healing for financial gain; attributing miracles for personal glory; or using a word of knowledge to control an individual; or using prophecy to control people. Accountability in all areas of ministry is essential.

Sexual Behaviour

Sexuality is a gift from God and integral to human nature. Ministers must value this gift by maintaining chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage (Proverbs 5:18, 6:32; 1 Corinthians 7:2). Homosexual behaviour is forbidden by Scripture (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:24-25). Ministers must, as mentioned above, refrain from the use or viewing of pornographic material.

Children:

Being especially vulnerable, children are entitled to be safe and protected. Ministry to children needs to be characterised by absolute trustworthiness. The Senior Minister and leadership of the local church or ministry are responsible to implement a compliant Child Protection Policy. A copy of their Child Protection Policy must be supplied to Full Gospel Australia.

Every person who ministers to children and/or vulnerable persons within the local church or ministry must possess a Working with Children Check (WWCC) issued by their State Government. It is the Senior Minister's responsibility and duty to ensure that this is adhered to and that all WWCCs are current and valid.

Physical contact:

Caution must always be exercised when initiating or receiving physical contact including gestures of comfort that may be unwanted or misinterpreted.

Pastoral conversations:

A Minister must be careful in pastoral conversations when a person talks about sexual problems. Consideration must always be given to whether it is appropriate to refer a person to a suitable qualified and licensed counsellor. Ministers with Full Gospel are not necessarily qualified counsellors. The Full Gospel credential is for ministry and should not be seen as a qualification for counselling. Counselling qualifications are administered by independent professional bodies, not by Full Gospel.

Financial Matters

A Minister must set an example and have integrity in all their financial dealings. This includes the timely payment of debts, the effective management of finances, as well as providing for their family (Romans 13:7-8). Failure to do so will have a significant impact on the church and the perceptions of the wider community and can result in the loss of their credential and/or disciplinary action taken by Full Gospel.

Each Minister must ensure the implementation of a proper system for financial integrity and accountability. All church and ministry accounts should be independently audited.

Conflicts of interest:

It is important to avoid any potential conflict between personal finances and pastoral responsibilities. Any conflict of interest must be immediately disclosed to the Board or Elders or Responsible Persons of their church or ministry. It is important to disclose to the Senior Minister or board or eldership or responsible persons any significant personal gift or bequest (2 Corinthians 8:21; James 2:1, 2-4).

A Minister must avoid borrowing money from, or lending money to, a person with whom there is a pastoral relationship. Particular care must be exercised in the appointment of a spouse or family member to a paid position in the church or ministry. It must be done only with careful consultation with the board or eldership or responsible persons.

Taxation:

A Minister must exercise caution with tax minimisation strategies and must not improperly use fringe benefit allowances. A Minister must pay their taxes in a timely and honest manner.

Confidentiality

Trust is essential in pastoral ministry. Those involved in pastoral care must note that formal interviews and casual conversations in a ministry context are pastoral encounters where confidences and confidential information is received. This information must not be disclosed and must be treated with the utmost care. Exceptions include when disclosure is required by law (subpoena or abuse notifications), where there are concerns for the safety of the person or others, or when the information is in the public domain.

Pastoral records: Pastoral notes and records are important, but appropriate care must be taken with securing them. Any record of a pastoral session is considered a health record, which is governed by national legislation. Computer records must be password protected and access limited to authorised persons. Paper records access must be limited to authorised personnel only.

Care must be exercised in the publication of personal information in church directories, newsletters, rosters, and websites, etc. This also extends to publishing voices and images of individuals.

Ministerial Development

It is important to continue to develop ministry skills through a variety of means including education, professional supervision, peer support, and mentoring. It is expected that Ministers will undertake ongoing professional development (Romans 13:7), including further ministry or theological education.

The Implementation of the Code

With any breach of the Code of Conduct, the Minister in breach and/or their board, eldership or responsible persons must notify the Full Gospel Churches of Australia **within 7 days (24 hours if civil or criminal action is involved)** via email and followed by normal mail. Failure to notify is a further breach of the code.

Declaration

I have read, agree with and will comply with this Code of Conduct. On becoming aware of any breach of this Code, I will inform the Full Gospel Churches of Australia within the timeframe set out in the Code.

While we (the undersigned) take full responsibility for investigating any alleged breach of this Code of Conduct, we recognise the authority of the Full Gospel Churches of Australia to withdraw or suspend the credential of any minister at their own discretion.

Minister Making the Declaration*

Signed..... Date.....

Full Name..... **Credential Held/Applied For**.....

**To be signed by the minister applying for a credential, or who holds a credential with Full Gospel Australia. A copy of this signed Ministerial Code of Conduct will be kept in each minister's file.*

Board Member, Elder or Responsible Person, Making this Declaration

Signed..... Date.....

Full Name..... **Position/Title**.....

Board Member, Elder or Responsible Person, Making this Declaration

Signed..... Date.....

Full Name..... **Position/Title**.....

Acknowledgements

This code has drawn on the following codes of conduct, ethical statements, and ministerial guidelines:

- Ministerial Code of Conduct for Credentialed Ministers in the Assemblies of God in Australia. <http://accvic.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/MinisterialCodeOfConduct.pdf>
- *Faithfulness in Service*: A national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers (General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia Child Protection Committee, Draft - 2004)
- *Code of Professional Ethics for the practice of Pastoral Ministry*: A guide for church workers and their communities (General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia Child Protection Committee, Draft -2003)
- *The Code of Good Practice*: (Anglican Church of Australia Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 2005)
- *Code of Ethics applicable to ministers of Churches of Christ and the protocol for investigating complaints on matters pertaining to Sexuality*: (Churches of Christ in Australia adopted 1997 and amended for Churches of Christ in Queensland 1998-1999)
- *Pentecostal Ministerial Ethics*: Ps. Harry Leesment (1988) *Statement of Moral Integrity*: Pastor Rick Warren.
- *A Statement of Restoration and Re-instatement of Disciplined Ministers*.
- New South Wales Registration Board: Guidelines for Psychologists.
- Coffs Harbour Baptist Church: Pastors and Leaders Code of Ethics 2015.
- WorshipCentre Christian Church, Brisbane: Life Journey; Code of Conduct; Child Protection Policy.