

Code of Conduct

1. Preamble

1.1 Ministry is a call to serve both God and people. Credentialed Ministers are firstly accountable to God,¹ but also to church members, their local governing authorities (church board, eldership or responsible persons) and those who receive ministry.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.³

1.2 Accordingly, pastoral relationships are to be characterised by love, justice, care, and compassion.⁴ A minister is firstly a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ,⁵ and as such ministry is grounded by prayer, Bible study, regular worship and a readiness to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁶

1.3 Ministers of The Full Gospel Churches of Australia (FGA)¹ 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.

1.4 The following Code of Conduct should be understood in the context of other policies and procedures in place, especially the Child Protection Policy and Procedures, Sexual Harassment Policy, Anti-Discrimination Policy, etc. of the organisation in which the minister is working.

1.4.1 Each organisation is responsible to have in place, policies and procedures which ensure proper conduct and procedural integrity within its area of responsibility.

1.5 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 FGA.

2. The Purpose of the Code of Conduct

2.1 This Code of Conduct (The Code) is a guide for the behaviour of Ministers in FGA. It is articulated to assist leaders to serve in such a manner that their churches and ministries be safe places for all; they will be places where integrity is honoured, accountability is practised, misconduct is not concealed, but dealt with appropriately and forgiveness is encouraged to bring about healing and restoration.

2.2 FGA reserves the right to rescind any credential issued and, at its discretion, to set appropriate measures in place to restore and/or discipline the holder of any FGA 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.

¹ The Full Gospel Churches of Australia Limited is known as Full Gospel Australia or FGA

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

2.4 A breach of these provisions may be improper conduct and may result in disciplinary action. Such action is at the discretion of the National Executive and/or the National Board of FGA.

2.5 Ministers who hold a credential with FGA, as well as their local governing board or responsible persons are to read, understand, agree with and follow the Code, signifying their agreement by signing the document and returning it to The FGA. They also agree to inform the FGA of any breach of the code.

2.6 The signed code and its subsequent iterations remain in place and valid for the entire term of a minister's association with FGA and as long as he or she holds any credential issued by FGA.

2.7 From time to time the Code will be updated by FGA. The Code will be published on the FGA website (fullgospelaustralia.org.au). Ministers are responsible to remain aware of updated versions of the Code.

3. The Code of Conduct

3.1 Pastoral Example

3.1.1 Ministers should be above reproach,⁷ displaying values of the Gospel of Christ, obvious to members of the church and wider society.⁸ It is important for a minister to have a healthy lifestyle and a balance of service, recreation, and family life.⁹ This lifestyle should also be supported and encouraged for all members.

3.1.2 Ministers should be good citizens and obey the laws of the community.¹⁰ A rare exception may be when a Christian engages in non-violent civil disobedience.¹¹

3.2 Addictive behaviours

3.2.1 Scripture requires that we exercise caution in the use of alcohol.¹² Abstinence is a habit which is highly respected in FGA. 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.

3.2.2 A Minister must abstain from drunkenness, gambling and the use of illegal drugs¹³.

3.2.3 A minister should exercise caution with prescription medications, so that undue addiction is not the result of their use.

a. If a minister becomes aware of becoming addicted to a prescription medication, they should immediately seek help from their doctor or other specialist medical professional.

b. If a minister becomes aware of becoming addicted to a prescription medication, they need not notify FGA of the situation unless the addiction is accompanied by behaviours which breach the Code.

3.2.4 A Minister must abstain from the use or viewing of pornographic material.

3.2.5 A Minister should refrain from smoking.

3.3 Language

3.3.1 The use of offensive language should also be avoided (such as coarse language, sexual connotations, inappropriate language and racial, religious or other slurs).¹⁴

3.4 Ministry Matters

3.4.1 Authority to minister comes from Jesus Christ; the head of the Church.¹⁵ Christian leadership must never be manipulative or authoritarian.¹⁶ Ministers are servants of Christ, who should endeavour to become servant leaders as modelled by Jesus.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

3.4.2 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.

3.5 Qualifications:

3.5.1 Ministers must not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training, or experience.

3.5.2 Ministers should recognise their level of skill and experience. If they are unsure, they must seek additional advice from other colleagues or other professionals.

3.5.3 Ministers must not, under any circumstances act outside of their scope of practice and/or competence.

3.6 Ministry gifts:

3.6.1 It is a Pentecostal distinctive to honour the role of the Holy Spirit who imparts spiritual gifts.¹⁹ There are a variety of gifts²⁰ and the true exercise of these gifts will always be consistent with the fruit of the Spirit.²¹ For example, prophecy is to be exercised for "*strengthening, encouragement and comfort*".²²

3.6.2 A minister must always be willing to be held accountable, admitting to the possibility of human error when exercising the gifts of the Spirit.²³

3.7 Public statements:

3.7.1 A Minister must show respect and godly care to all people, inside or outside the Christian community.²⁴

3.7.2 Care must be taken in how Ministers speak of the ministry of others²⁵ and of people of other faith practices, since reputation is something highly valued in Scripture²⁶ and within our community.

3.7.3 Care must be exercised when Ministers express an opinion on controversial matters. They must distinguish between expressing an opinion and speaking on behalf of their local organisation, or FGA.²⁷

3.7.4 Credential holders and Ministers do not speak on behalf of FGA. Documents ratified and produced by the National Board of FGA identify the official position of FGA on any and every matter in every instance.

3.8 Staffing and volunteers:

3.8.1 A Minister must not be abusive in any way toward others.²⁸ Misuse of authority in leadership must never be employed. The power differential between congregational member, volunteers, staff and the 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 or for any reason whatsoever.

3.8.2 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.

3.9 Sexual Behaviour

3.9.1 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.²⁹

3.9.2 Homosexual behaviour is forbidden by Scripture.³⁰

3.9.3 Ministers must, as mentioned above (3.2.4), abstain from the use or viewing of pornographic material.

3.9.4 Ministers must not subject any congregational member, employee, volunteer or other person to any form of sexual harassment.

3.10 Children

3.10.1 Being especially vulnerable, children are entitled to be safe and protected. Ministry to children needs to be characterised by absolute trustworthiness.

3.10.2 The Senior Minister, Board or Responsible Persons and Leadership of the local church or ministry are responsible to implement a compliant Child Protection Policy. A copy of the organisation's Child Protection Policy must be supplied to FGA.

3.10.3 The Child Protection Policy will include procedures which will be enacted and followed within the Church or Ministry. All ministers within FGA are responsible to require that the Child Protection Policy and Procedures are followed in their organisation. All breaches of the policy and procedures are to be dealt with in accordance to the policy and procedures. FGA should be notified in writing (email to admin@fullgospelaustralia.org.au) of serious breaches immediately.

3.10.4 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 or Territory 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.

3.11 Physical contact

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

3.12 Pastoral conversations:

3.12.1 A Minister must be careful in pastoral conversations when a person talks about personal or sexual problems.

3.12.2 Ministers with FGA are not necessarily qualified counsellors; therefore, consideration must always be given to whether it is appropriate to refer a person to a suitable qualified and licensed counsellor. Ministers must not act outside their scope of practice (see 3.5.3 above).

3.12.3 All FGA credentials are for Christian ministry and are not qualifications for counselling. Counselling qualifications are administered by other independent professional bodies, not by FGA.

3.13 Financial Matters

3.13.1 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.³¹ 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 FGA.

3.13.2 Each Senior Minister must ensure the implementation of a proper system for financial integrity and accountability within their organisation.

3.13.3 All church and ministry accounts should be independently audited or reviewed on an annual basis.

3.14 Conflicts of interest

3.14.1 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.³²

3.14.2 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.

3.15 Taxation

3.15.1 A Minister must exercise caution with tax minimisation strategies and must not improperly use fringe benefit allowances. Financial advice from a qualified and certified accountant must be sought before the employment of any extraordinary scheme or concerning Fringe Benefits.

3.15.2 A Minister must pay their taxes in a timely and honest manner.

3.16 Confidentiality

3.16.1 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.

3.16.2 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.

3.16.3 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. Information systems include Computer records, which must be password protected with access limited to authorised persons. Paper records access must be limited to authorised personnel only.

3.16.4 Care must be exercised in the publication of personal information in church directories, newsletters, rosters, and websites, etc.

3.16.5 Care must be exercised in the publication of voices and images of individuals in internet environments. Appropriate permissions must be sought and stored in a secure information system.

3.17 Ministerial Professional Development

3.17.1 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,³³ up to and including further ministry or theological education.

4. The Implementation of the Code

4.1 This code is set in place by FGA and is a non-negotiable requirement for all credential holders of FGA.

4.2 Each credential holder will have access to a copy of the code via the FGA Website (<https://fullgospelaustralia.org.au>) and will ensure their compliance with it.

4.3 Each Board or responsible persons, elders, etc, responsible for the credential holder (signatures below) is entrusted with the responsibilities of ensuring the credential holder's compliance, investigation of allegations of non-compliance and notifying relevant authorities, and FGA of breaches of the code.

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

4.5 Failure to notify FGA of any breach of the code within these timeframes (4.4) is a further breach of the code.

Minister's Declaration

I, the minister making this declaration*, have read, agree to 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 (all the undersigned) take full responsibility for investigating any alleged breach of this Code, 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 FGA Australia. A copy of this signed Ministerial Code of Conduct will be kept in the minister's file.*

1. Board Member, Elder or Responsible Person, Making this Declaration

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

Full Name.....
 Position.....

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

2. Board Member, Elder or Responsible Person, Making this Declaration

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

Full Name.....
 Position.....

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

End Notes

- ¹ 1 Corinthians 4:4-5
- ² Ephesians 4:1-2
- ³ Matthew 5:48; Titus 2:7-8
- ⁴ Micah 6:8
- ⁵ I John 2:6
- ⁶ Matthew 28:19-20
- ⁷ 1 Timothy 3:2
- ⁸ Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1
- ⁹ Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Titus 1:6
- ¹⁰ Proverbs 24:21; Romans 13:1-4; 1 Peter 2:11-17
- ¹¹ Acts 4:18-20
- ¹² Proverbs 20:1; 1 Corinthians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 8
- ¹³ Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21
- ¹⁴ Ephesians 4:29; 5:4; Colossians 3:8
- ¹⁵ Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 12:27
- ¹⁶ John 15:15
- ¹⁷ John 13
- ¹⁸ James 3:1; 1 Peter 5:2-4
- ¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:7
- ²⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:4
- ²¹ Galatians 5:22-23
- ²² 1 Corinthians 14:3
- ²³ 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21
- ²⁴ Colossians 4:6
- ²⁵ Mark 9:40
- ²⁶ Proverbs 22:1
- ²⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:12
- ²⁸ 1 Timothy 3:2-5; Titus 1:7
- ²⁹ Proverbs 5:18, 6:32; 1 Corinthians 7:2
- ³⁰ Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:24-25
- ³¹ Romans 13:7-8
- ³² 2 Corinthians 8:21; James 2:1, 2-4
- ³³ Romans 13:7