Full Gospel Australia
life for communities

Ministerial Code of Conduct

1. Preamble

1.1 Ministry is a call to serve both God and people. Ministers holding a credential issued by The Full Gospel Churches of Australia are firstly accountable to God,[1] but also to church members, their local governing authorities (church board, eldership or responsible persons – "oversight") and those who receive ministry.[2] They are also accountable to Full Gospel Australia in order to hold their credential. 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 holiness, righteousness, 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] The ministerial relationship is a fiduciary one, this means that all actions taken by the minister should be in the best interests of the person to whom they are ministering and/or the people in their congregation or ministry. These actions include but are not limited to acting with a duty of care, loyalty, good faith, confidentiality, prudence, and disclosure.

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 work.

1.4 The following Code of Conduct should be understood in the context of other policies and procedures in place in the organisation in which the minister is working including, but not limited to, the FGA Safe Ministries Strategy in its entirety, the Sexual Harassment Policy, and the Anti-Discrimination Policy.

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 are safe places for all; they will be places where integrity is honoured, accountability is practised, misconduct is not tolerated nor concealed, but dealt with appropriately, lawfully and where 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 practice of discharging a person's duties, obligations, or responsibilities.

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 if a person has committed improper conduct.

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

2.4 A breach of these provisions may be improper conduct and may result in disciplinary action up to and including cancellation of ministerial credential(s). Such action is at the discretion of the National Board of FGA or the National Leadership.

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 FGA. They also agree to inform 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 and other signatories are solely responsible to remain aware of and abide by all updated versions of the Code. **All signatories are responsible to maintain their awareness of any changes to the code by checking the FGA website.**

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 those within their ministry.

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 the minister's own or another's faith.

3.2.2 A Minister must abstain from drunkenness, gambling, and the use of illegal drugs[13].

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 other 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 Offensive Language

3.3.1 The use of offensive language should be avoided (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 overbearingly authoritarian.[16] Ministers are servants of Christ, who should aspire to leadership as modelled by Jesus.[17] Leadership in all its dimensions must always be accountable, 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 professionals.

3.5.3 **Ministers must not, under any circumstances act outside 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 gifts[20] 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.[24]

3.7.2 Care must be taken in how Ministers speak of the ministry of others[25] and of people of other faith practices, since reputation is something highly valued in Scripture[26] 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 FGA's official position 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 or ministry 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 or prophetic utterances to control individuals or 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 above (3.2.4), abstain from the use or viewing of pornographic material.

3.9.4 Ministers must not engage in, permit, or tolerate any form of sexual harassment or abuse toward any congregational member, employee, volunteer, or other individual.

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 All Credential Holders, Board Members or Responsible Persons and Leadership of the local church or ministry are responsible to implement a compliant Child Protection Policy. All Credential holders must notify FGA of their organisation's compliance, counter signed by their board or responsible persons. Annual declaration of compliance is required at credential renewal.

3.10.3 The Child Protection Policy will include procedures which must be enacted and followed within the Church or Ministry. All ministers within FGA are responsible to require that their organisation's Child Protection Policy and Procedures are followed in their organisation. All breaches of the policy and procedures are to be dealt with in accordance with the policy and procedures. FGA should be notified by email 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.

3.10.5 Each Minister will remain compliant with the whole of the FGA Safe Ministries frameworks, and all other Policies and Procedures released by Full Gospel Australia from time to time.

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 maintain appropriate care in pastoral conversations.

3.12.2 Ministers 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.

3.13 Financial Matters

3.13.1 A Minister must set an example and exercise 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.

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 or ministry financial accounts should be transparent and available for scrutiny to all full board members[2] at all times within normal business hours.

3.13.4 Bank accounts must be under normal security (at least two to sign) excepting petty cash and limited debit card arrangements which are monitored by more than one person.

3.13.5 All church and ministry accounts should be independently reviewed on an annual basis.

3.13.6 All credential holders are responsible to ensure that their Full Gospel Australia fees and charges are paid on time. Renewal fees are due 30 June each year.

3.14 Conflicts of interest

3.14.1 Ministers must avoid any potential conflict between personal finances and pastoral responsibilities. Any conflict of interest or any significant personal gift or bequest[32] must be immediately disclosed to the oversight of their church or ministry.

3.14.2 A Minister must avoid borrowing money from, or lending money to, a person with whom there is a pastoral relationship.

3.14.3 Particular care must be exercised in the appointment of a spouse, family member, or close personal friend to any position of ministry, or as an employee, or trading partner of the church or ministry. All such appointments must be ratified by careful consultation with the oversight.

3.14.4 Credential Holders must maintain the utmost integrity in all their financial dealings. Ministry funds must not be used for personal spending, gain, or gifts to friends, business acquaintances or family.

3.15 Taxation

3.15.1 A Minister must exercise caution with tax minimisation strategies and not improperly use fringe benefit allowances. Financial advice from a qualified accountant must be sought.

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

[2] Full Board Members refers to those people who sit on the board permanently. Some boards appoint temporary board members for special projects or purposes, or junior board members who are under training as emerging leaders. These are not automatically included as having full rights as board members.

3.16 Confidentiality

3.16.1 Trust is essential in pastoral ministry. Pastoral carers must note that formal interviews and casual conversations in a ministry context are pastoral encounters where confidences and confidential information is exchanged. This information must be treated with the utmost care and transparency.

3.16.2 Exceptions include when disclosure is required by law or 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 and appropriate care must be taken with securing them. Records of pastoral care are considered health records. 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 Conduct

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] including further ministry or theological education.

3.17.2 Minsters will undertake ongoing professional supervision, within the guidelines set by FGA.

3.17.3 Ministers are required to interact with Full Gospel Australia leadership (State and National Leaders, and Head Office Communications) in a timely and respectful manner. Ministers are required to be contactable, thus keeping Full Gospel Australia up to date with their contact details.

3.17.4 Ministers are required to attend at least one Full Gospel Australia conference or pastor's gathering each year and to ensure they have personal contact with their State Leaders and/or National Leaders each year.

3.17.5 Ministers are required to renew their credential each year in June, and endeavour to complete their renewal process in a timely manner (by June 30th) each year.

3.17.6 Ministers must always act and speak and write in good faith and in a manner that upholds the integrity, goodwill, and reputation of The Full Gospel Churches of Australia.

a. Ministers must refrain from making public statements, comments or representations that are defamatory, maliciously critical, or harmful to Full Gospel Australia's reputation, leadership, staff, or mission.
b. Full Gospel Australia Ministers must refrain from collaborating with, assisting, or acting on behalf of external entities whose objectives conflict with, or seek to undermine the mission, or stability of other FGA credential holders and/or The Full Gospel Churches of Australia.

3.17.7 Ministers are granted access to Full Gospel Australia's proprietary information, systems, and networks based on a relationship of trust. Ministers must keep all non-public information confidential.

a. This includes organisational strategies, board or executive deliberations and minutes, financial data, legal matters and pending operational changes.

b. Ministers with access to internal documents, directories, databases, or personal information of credential holders, leadership, staff, or volunteers, are strictly prohibited from harvesting, exporting, copying, distributing or utilising these for personal, commercial, or external purposes.

c. The duty of ministers to maintain this confidentiality regarding Full Gospel Australia's internal data, databases, and intellectual property remains binding after the minister's credential expires, is suspended, is revoked or removed, or is voluntarily surrendered.

3.17.8 All materials, branding, systems developed by or for The Full Gospel Churches of Australia remain the exclusive property of the organisation.

a. Credential holders may only use Full Gospel Australia's trademarks, logos, acronyms, training materials, curriculum and methodologies as explicitly authorised by The Full Gospel Churches of Australia.

b. Ministers shall not replicate, copy, adapt, modify or reverse engineer FGA's organisational intellectual property, programs, or systems to create competing materials, services, frameworks or entities.

c. Ministers must not disclose proprietary content, intellectual property, or internal materials, or share them publicly, upload them to external databases or provide them to external organisations.

d. Any breach of confidentiality or intellectual property results in immediate, automatic suspension of credential pending a formal review by the board of The Full Gospel Churches of Australia.

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.

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 Responsible Person, accepting responsibility for the credential holder (signatory) takes the responsibility of ensuring the credential holder's compliance with this code, investigation of allegations of breaches and **notifying relevant authorities, and FGA of breaches of the code**.

4.4 **Breaches of this Code**. The Minister in breach and signatories must notify the FGA Head Office **within 7 days** (**24 hours for serious breaches, or if civil or criminal action is involved**) via email.

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

4.6 A current copy of this Code of Conduct must be kept by all signatories.

4.7 This Code of Conduct will be reviewed from time to time by Full Gospel Australia. An updated copy is published on the FGA website, and it is the responsibility of each signatory of the code to ensure they are acting according to the latest version of the code.

4.8 All signatories to this code are responsible to advise FGA in writing by email to admin@fullgospelaustralia.org.au or post to PO Box 195, Capalaba QLD 4157 within 24 hours of when their status changes. For example, if a signatory of the code ceases to be a board member of the organisation overseeing the credential holder, they cannot

be reasonably expected to maintain vigilance over the actions of the credential holder. However**, if they do not inform FGA of their change in status, FGA will assume they are continuing their responsibility of oversight**.

4.9 On the occasion of a change in the local organisation's board, both the Credential Holder **and** the remaining (signatory) board members are responsible to ensure a new updated copy of the Code is signed and submitted to FGA within 24 hours. **A Credential Holder must not under any circumstances serve as a minister without an up to date and countersigned Code of Conduct being submitted to FGA**.

5. Signing and Submitting this Code of Conduct

5.1 This Code of Conduct must be signed by the credential holder to whom it applies.

5.2 This Code of Conduct must be signed by two responsible persons within the organisation overseeing the credential holder.

5.3 Failure to have three signatories (the credential holder and two other responsible persons) will render this document null and void. A new document will need to be submitted.

5.4 All copies of the Code of Conduct submitted to FGA must be legible. Unclear submissions will not be accepted.

5.5 A Completed (signed) Code of Conduct (Signing Page) may be submitted as a PDF document via email to admin@fullgospelaustralia.org.au or hard copy posted to PO Box 195 Capalaba QLD 4157.

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Minister's Declaration of Compliance with the FGA Code of Conduct

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.....

* ***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..... Contact Details.....
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..... Contact Details.....
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