



# Ethics for Congregations

## Code of Ethics

### Introduction

The code of ethics describes the ways that we believe healthy and vital congregations go about their ministries. This code provides an outline of appropriate conduct within our communities, denomination, and the wider church. The affirmations within the code of ethics are intended to foster trust, encourage stewardship of resources and leadership, and above all make plain our expectations of one another as disciples of Jesus Christ.

#### ***A. As a congregation within the body of Christ, each community strives to act with integrity in its daily interactions with those outside of the church.***

A.1. We strive to live by the gospel injunction that our yes be yes, and no be no, especially in regards to civil statutes. We honor the creative work of others by abiding with copyright permissions and compensating those who share their creative work with us.

A.2. We embody our traditional posture of separation of faith from politics by refraining from using our non-profit status to support political candidates.

A.3. We seek to maintain integrity with the business community by meeting invoice due dates, not abusing discount privileges, not soliciting gifts in a coercive or threatening way, and not competing unfairly with local businesses in the commerce of products and services.

A.4. Our integrity also challenges us to work in a transparent manner to the extent that we avoid Dual Relationships or Conflicts of Interest.

A.5. We strive to be witnesses to Christ's peace in our relationships with one another and our wider community, especially in sharing our message and resources and how we speak to political issues of the day.

***B. As part of the global body of Christ each congregation seeks to be faithful to Christ's prayer for unity through prayer and support of the church locally, denominationally, and universally.***

B.1. We seek to live out our covenant with the denomination and district, supporting its local, national and international program by sending delegates to Annual and District Conferences, through gifts of time and money, and most of all through our prayers.

B.2. We recognize that other Christian communities around us are brothers and sisters in the family of God. We do not try to proselytize from among our sister communions. In regards to other communities of religions, we seek to understand and be respectful of their beliefs and practices. While disagreement is inevitable, we seek to enter public conversations with grace and compassion rather than fear and mistrust.

B.3. We support causes or organizations that reflect the historical and theological understanding of the church, and avoid partnering with groups that may detract from our stated mission.

***C. As a community of disciples following the way and teachings of Jesus Christ, the congregation seeks to treat one another with love and respect, conducting the business of the church openly and according to our beliefs.***

C.1. We adequately compensate guest speakers, interim pastors, and other leaders who provide professional services for the congregation.

C.2. We are a people of reconciliation and seek to resolve disputes or concerns through peaceful means rather than resorting to public courts for a resolution.

C.3. We work to exhibit love and respect for every individual and ensure that every person has access to our facilities and ministries. We aim to be sensitive to persons with special needs and seek to accommodate them with adequate access to our worship and pastoral services.

***D, Our call to discipleship prompts us to encourage and instruct our members in maintaining lifestyles, attitudes and actions that reflect the example and teachings of Christ.***

D.1. We steward our time, talent, and treasure as resources for the common mission of Christ's church. Our leaders responsibly manage all the resources and funds entrusted to them in the course of their duties.

D.2. We address promptly incidents of dissent among us and have a method in place for seeking resolution and reconciliation.

D.3. We cultivate a spirit of thanksgiving and generosity in all of our life, especially expressing our gratitude to all those who make a significant contribution to the church's work and worship, for all that we have is a gift from God.

D.4. We endeavor to maintain an environment and program free of sexual, psychological, or physical abuse and harassment, giving special attention to the protection of children, the elderly, and the disabled. In the event of an accusation of abuse or harassment we will deal with it forthrightly, promptly, and fairly, in order to stop the behavior in question, minister to all victims, effect change in the violator, and seek reconciliation.

***E. The work of a congregation, especially the contractual agreements with staff, creates unique ethical questions (Fiduciary Responsibility).***

E.1. We strive to be fair and equitable in our support of our staff, adopting the Guidelines for Pastor's Salaries and Benefits as our guide for determining what is adequate compensation. When diverting from these guidelines we will adjust expectations and time requirements appropriate to scale.

E.2. We provide a supportive and nurturing culture for our staff through an advisory committee which meets regularly with staff members in an advocacy and counseling capacity. This group will facilitate regular opportunities for performance evaluation of all staff by providing opportunities for appropriate congregational input.

E.3. We value the ministry of our current pastoral leadership and discourage our members from inviting former pastors to return to perform pastoral functions, such as weddings and funerals. We treat friendships with former pastors with special care so as not to undermine the ministry of current pastoral leadership

E.4. We strive to be open and transparent in our organization and rely on the ministry of all believers in our midst by identifying and nurturing the gifts and skills of our leaders. We expect our members called to leadership to execute the duties of their office in accordance with congregational by-laws. We entrust our leaders with the work of the church and expect them to avoid asserting undue influence in the matters of the congregation or seeking favors by nature of their position.

E.5. We conduct business openly, except when the agenda may deal with confidential personnel matters, and expect transparent and honest dialog from all our members at all times. We ask that our members not seek to influence decisions outside of established open forums through alternative and closed meetings or by campaigns through alternative media—in letters, by phone, or on the internet.

## **Key Terms**

### ***Conflict of Interest***

A situation in which someone in a position of trust has competing professional or personal interests that can make it difficult to fulfill duties impartially.

Even if there is no evidence of improper actions, a conflict of interest can create the appearance of impropriety.

### ***Dual Relationship***

A situation in which one person serves two roles, either by nature of their position in the organization, or in relationship to other persons.

Each congregation member is responsible for monitoring dual relationships to maintain the integrity of the work and ministry of the church.

### ***Fiduciary Responsibility***

Fiduciary means “held in trust.” It is a term used legally to describe the responsibility to act in the best interests of the stakeholders. It has a legal and an ethical dimension for persons in their role of congregational leadership and their covenantal responsibility with the congregation.