



National Conservative Christian Church

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Code of Ethical Standards

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“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...” Philippians 1:27a

We as commissioned, licensed or ordained ministers, who are called by God and credentialed by the National Conservative Christian Church, do solemnly commit to a life of joyful obedience and selfless service in order to glorify God and build up His people. Furthermore, we agree to abide by the following code of ethical standards:

General Standards

1. Committed to maintain current, responsible, and respectful affiliation with the Presbytery of this organization which has issued my ministerial credentials.
2. Committed to continuing education and professional achievement. Every level of leadership will continue personal and professional growth through participation in continuing education programs, studying the scripture, consultations, conferences and seminars.
3. Committed to personal, spiritual, physical and emotional health. To seek assistance for our own inner and interpersonal conflicts, from appropriate resources.
4. Committed to providing Biblical counsel for those issues and problems within the sphere of our training and competence.
5. Committed to develop and maintain professional relationships in various ministerial disciplines and activities.
6. Committed to the welfare of any person under our care.
7. Committed to adhering to this Code of Ethical Standards as responsible, professional pastoral caregivers.
8. Committed to representing this church with an awareness that we are servants and co-laborers of the Lord Jesus Christ. That we agree to be His representatives in the communities that we serve.

Professional Standards

1. Ministers will apply their knowledge and training for the benefit and edification of the persons they serve.
2. Ministers will not use their unique position of trust for personal gain or unfair advantage at the expense of their followers.
3. Ministers will be selective as to whom they counsel.
4. Ministers will make appropriate referrals to other professionals when necessary.
5. Ministers will limit counseling to Biblical counseling. Ministers will avoid using solely secular psychological, psychiatric and medical diagnosis. Example: The counselor may refer to someone as being depressed and discuss Biblical options for dealing with depression, but they will not diagnose them as having a depressive disorder such as “manic-depressive illness”, “bipolar” or any other solely secular diagnostic term. Ministers do not practice nor provide secular

psychological, medical or psychiatric services unless they are appropriately trained and licensed to do so.

6. Ministers providing Biblical counseling and care will:
 - a. Pray during sessions.
 - b. Read Scripture during sessions and give Scriptural assignments as part of the counseling.
 - c. Keep a Bible open and visible during counseling sessions.
7. Minister's will use a counseling agreement that:
 - a. Requires each person being counseled to sign. In the case of minors a legal guardian must sign.
 - b. Acknowledges that the minister is providing Biblical counseling and specifies that the pastoral counselor is not a state licensed counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or therapist.
 - c. Has a clause that the client agrees not to sue the church or ministry for any expenses or damages that result from any of the minister's counseling services.
 - d. Has a clause that confidential information may be disclosed to appropriate state law enforcement or authorities when required by law.
8. Ministers should track appointments using scheduling software, a calendar or by other means.
9. Ministers providing pastoral counseling / care should keep detailed records of the counseling sessions. These should include:
 - a. Date, time and location of the sessions and how many sessions there have been with this individual.
 - b. Names of those present and reason for their participation.
 - c. Reason for counseling.
 - d. Anything unusual that occurs as part of the counseling session.
 - e. Scriptures read and Biblical advice given.
 - f. Other actions that the individual was encouraged or discouraged from doing.
10. Ministers need to be aware of state laws that affect them. These would include mandatory reporting, counseling laws and regulations as well as any other laws in their state that apply to their ministry.
11. It is not wise or recommended for ministers to counsel members of the opposite sex alone. If this is unavoidable the minister should endeavor to put safeguards in place. These can include, but are not limited to meeting in a public place, using a location with windows where other can easily see in or using a professional office / location where other people are nearby.
12. Never counsel a minor outside of the easy line-of-sight of another minister or person.
13. Never go into a child's home while the parents are absent.
14. Never touch anyone in an inappropriate way.
15. All financial arrangements, fees or donations will be discussed clearly, professionally and ethically with any person requesting such information.
16. Ministers should not and will not make unprofessional and non-Christian remarks about other ministers or professionals.
17. As clergy leaders of the National Conservative Christian Church, it is our intent to communicate and cooperate with other ministers and professional persons in the communities we serve.
18. Each minister is encouraged to develop and maintain a network with other like-minded ministers and Christian personal care givers.
19. It is not our policy to give pastoral care to persons who are currently receiving counsel from another Christian minister or mental health professional, without their prior knowledge and consent. The other minister shall be consulted or communicated with, after having received the subject individual's "informed consent".
20. Ministers who are providing pastoral care / counseling should obtain "Professional Liability Insurance" also known as "Errors and Omissions Insurance."

21. It is the responsibility of the credentialed minister to obtain professional liability insurance. The NCCChurch does not provide this and is not responsible for the actions of credentialed ministers.

Relationship Standards

1. Ministers will demonstrate respect, love, and value to each person, regardless of race, religion, gender, income, educational level, ethnicity, or social position. If any of the above issues would interfere with your ability to render unbiased, pastoral care, it is the responsibility of the minister to make a professional referral in the best interest of the subject person.
2. Neglect or an inability to provide reasonable service even for appropriate reason is unethical and unprofessional. Every reasonable effort should be made to refer to another minister or professional for appropriate care.
3. Each individual has the personal freedom to make informed choices. People are responsible to make their own life choices. The minister shall not make life choices or decisions for the person, unless the individual is unable to do so, and where their physical, emotional, or spiritual safety is endangered.
4. Ministers shall not condemn people for their moral, religious, or social standards. Ministers are however, expected to teach Biblical standards of behavior and morality.
5. Ministers shall conduct themselves in a Christ-like professional manner. Emotional pressure, exploitation, or inappropriate language will not be permitted.
6. Sexual contact, exploitation or harassment on any level is unethical. All forms of sexual behavior, even when a person invites or consents to such activities, is inexcusable. Sexual activity is defined as, but not limited to, all forms of overt and covert seductive speech, gestures and behavior, as well as physical contact of a sexual nature. Harassment is defined as, but not limited to, repeated comments, gestures or physical contacts sexual in nature.
7. Unrealistic statements to individuals about the outcome of any counseling process is unethical and unprofessional.
8. Given the complexity of some pastoral relationships, ministers must avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of parishioners.

Confidentiality Standards

1. Credentialed ministers of the National Conservative Christian Church will at times have conversations that shall be regarded as extremely confidential. This shall be considered protected, privileged communication, an act of confession made by a penitent to a clergy person, which may be personal, liturgical, devotional or sacramental. This is privileged information and is communication intended only to be addressed by the minister and is expected to remain in this one-to-one relationship of trust. It can be released only with the consent of the one who confessed or revealed it. This is initiated out of a religious orientation and seals the minister from releasing any information to anyone without the expressed written consent.
2. A credentialed minister who violates, or discloses information as described in the above paragraph is subject to disciplinary action that may include loss of credentials, prohibited from performing the sacramental, liturgical, pastoral care duties of this office of trust, or dismissal. The welfare of the parishioner is to be protected by the minister.
3. When a person receiving pastoral care makes a statement to a minister in the presence of a third party, that statement is usually not protected by confidentiality privilege. The presence of a third party negates any inference that the statement was intended to be privileged communication or an act of confession.
4. All credentialed ministers of this church shall carefully protect the privacy and identity of their counselees and their situations. The minister will avoid revealing information about parishioners, whether publicly or privately, unless the minister has been given informed consent

by the subject adult individual or legal holder of confidentiality privilege for minors, in the form of expressed, written permission, and that the release of such information would be appropriate to the situation.

5. All records of counselees, or persons or groups receiving pastoral care are to be stored, handled, or disposed of in a way that assures security and confidentiality, of those individuals and their situations.
6. In the event that a situation requires the identity of a counselee or third party to understand the situation fully, only the first name of the person shall be used when engaged in a supervision or consultation, unless excused by previously obtained written permission. Situations where more than one person or group is involved, written permission from all legally accountable persons who have been present during the counseling must be obtained before any disclosure can be made. It is the minister's responsibility to impress upon other consultation or supervision professionals, the importance of confidentiality in the case.
7. Written consent forms shall be obtained from individuals before any audio or video tape recording, or permitting of third party observation of any pastoral care sessions.
8. Ministers shall take every precaution necessary to safeguard a current or former parishioner's identity when using references to them within the publication of an article in a professional journal, giving classroom examples, or in preaching or public presentation.
9. These standards of confidentiality are not designed to be used to avoid appropriate intervention when it is necessary: i.e., when there is evidence of child abuse or abuse of minors, the elderly, the disabled, the physically or mentally incompetent. It is the professional responsibility of each clergy person to be aware of and informed about the laws on such matters in the state in which you provide pastoral care ministry. You must abide by your state's mandatory reporting regulations.
10. The limitations of confidentiality, such as those based on the civil laws of each state, regulations and judicial precedent shall be explained to each counselee as part of the interview process prior to any pastoral counseling being provided. Examples of limitation or exceptions to confidentiality include but not limited to such situations as:
 - a. Legal mandate, when child abuse is revealed, suspected or apparent.
 - b. When the revealing of the information would present a clear and immediate danger to a person or persons.
 - c. Legal proceedings in which the member, pastoral counselor, care giver, minister does not have the confidentiality privilege.
11. In the event of pastoral care given to a person under eighteen years of age, the specific content of communications with the minister is confidential, the minor's parents or legal guardians however, have a right to receive general information on the process of care given or methods used.

Disciplinary Procedures

Each current credential holding minister of the National Conservative Christian Church is committed to upholding these established ethical standards. Each minister voluntarily submits to the evaluation of other ministers as to standards of professional ethics with regard to the following procedures. Upon a complaint being lodged against a minister, a refusal or failure by such minister to cooperate with an investigation or inquiry may be considered grounds for dismissal or revocation of credentials.

If a serious complaint, unethical situation, legal action or allegation against a minister arises they are required to inform the National Conservative Christian Church headquarters as soon as reasonably possible. If the action or allegation is being brought by someone other than the minister in question the person bringing the information forward must provide a written statement or provide written evidence to cause an investigation. In the situation where a third party is bringing the allegation or information

forward the minister will be notified that there has been a complaint or allegation against them. The identity of the person bringing the information forward may be withheld if there is an appropriate reason or safety concern.

The initial investigation and determination will be conducted by the senior pastor or another member of the NCCChurch leadership team. If the situation can be addressed at this level and a reasonable resolution or disciplinary action can be attained the matter will be resolved between the member of the leadership team and the minister. This is in keeping with Matthew 18:15-19 where we are instructed to go to the person privately as a first step.

If the investigation, determination and appropriate resolution cannot be attained during the initial investigation, one or more of the leadership team or the board of directors will be asked to participate in the ongoing investigation until an appropriate action can be taken.

In some situations legal counsel may be consulted. If the NCCChurch is requesting legal counsel it will incur the cost thereof. If the minister is requesting legal counsel the minister and not the NCCChurch will incur the legal fees.

The investigation may gather information from a variety of sources, including but not limited to:

- Another professional organization.
- Another Christian ministry.
- Television, radio, internet sources or news media.
- Law enforcement, attorneys or state investigators.
- Any individual directly or indirectly associated with the situation.

The minister against whom an allegation or complaint has been made will be treated with the utmost care, support and professional Christian courtesy. No assumptions of guilt or innocence should be formed, before the investigation is completed.

If the allegation puts the minister or another person at risk the minister's clergy credentials will be suspended and the NCCChurch will request that they cease from ministry until the investigation is completed.

Upon completion of an investigation or inquiry of a minister credentialed by the National Conservative Christian Church, the following actions may be taken:

1. **Exoneration.** The allegation or complaint did not have sufficient foundation. Thus, the member is exonerated, free of accusation or allegation.
2. **Admonishment.** This occurs when a minister is unaware of having violated the "Code of Ethics." The minister must accept educational admonishment about ethics and professional standards.
3. **Reprimand.** This is a serious rebuke or reproof of a minister. In this case the minister has either admitted or accepted responsibility for the situation. This rebuke will be in writing and may include further disciplinary action such as probationary status, adjustment to additional agreements, supervision or academic work.
4. **Probationary Status.** This action is based upon an assessment that the minister needs to work on a particular practice or behavioral issue, clearly identified and presented in written format. The written format will reasonably assure that the violation will not occur again. The minister may continue his or her pastoral ministry and caregiver role, as long as he or she will not pose a threat to the well-being of himself or herself or others. The term of probationary status may be extended if deemed necessary by the Ministerial Ethics Committee. The committee may, at any

time during the probation, re-evaluate its action and may change it based upon a new understanding of previous information or compliance with the terms of the probation.

5. **Suspension.** Suspension is the same as probation with one major difference. The minister must cease and suspend all ministerial functions unless specific allowances are made.
6. **Dismissal.** The minister may be dismissed from or lose credentialed status. Dismissal may occur in any of the above cases. This action is mandated where a repeated occurrence of the same violations or multiple violations, particularly if legal, financial, or sexual indiscretions are an issue. Dismissal may occur when a minister is found guilty of a misdemeanor or a felony in a court of law.
7. **Appeals.** In any of the above actions the person being disciplined can appeal the decision. They will be given the right to present new information or to clarify known information. This must be done in writing within thirty days of the initial decision. The NCCChurch leadership team member or members may call upon other members or the board of directors to evaluate an appeal.
8. **Confidentiality.** The results of an investigation and any disciplinary action taken by the NCCChurch will not be held as confidential. The NCCChurch has the right to act in its best interest or in the best interests of the public. Other ministries may be notified of the investigation and outcome including disciplinary action if there is a compelling reason for them to be notified.

Agreement and acknowledgment.

The code of ethics may be updated periodically. In such cases the updated information will be made available. If any part of this agreement is found to be unlawful or unenforceable it does not nullify the rest of the agreement. The rest of the agreement shall stand and shall be enforced.

I, _____ agree to abide by the NCCChurch Code of Ethical Standards. I further agree to conduct my life and ministry in such a way as to be pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Signature of Minister

Date