

QUEENSLAND BAPTISTS

CODE OF ETHICS

AND

MINISTRY PRACTICE

FOR

QUEENSLAND BAPTIST MINISTERS



Revised June 2021

INTRODUCTION

Ethics are absolutely the bedrock of ministry. The need for integrity is magnified in the present culture of intense scrutiny of the behaviour of people with a public profile.

The purpose of this Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice is to encourage ethical reflection and behaviour by all ministers serving Christ within the framework of Queensland Baptists. The term “minister” in this document applies to all persons recognised by Ministerial Services.

Compliance with this Code of Ethics is mandatory for all recognised ministers. Non-compliance can lead to disciplinary proceedings.

The minister ought to consult with the Director of Pastoral Services if any issue of doubt arises with the implementation of any aspect of this code.

1. PERSONAL CONDUCT

1.1 Personal Life Of The Minister

The pastorate is not merely a profession, but a calling from God which pervades every part of a minister’s life. 1 Timothy 4:16 says, *Watch your life and doctrine closely.*

Ministers will take responsibility for:

- a) the maintenance and development of their own spiritual life;
- b) the maintenance of their physical, mental and emotional health;
- c) establishing and maintaining the priority of their relationship with their spouse and family; and
- d) establishing and maintaining responsible, law-abiding, ethical citizenship.
- e) taking appropriate and regular leave, and time off from work for personal health and wellbeing

In the event of a significant personal event or change in circumstance that has the potential to impact present or future ministry, please notify the Director of Pastoral Services or the Director of Services in order that support can be provided to the pastor and the church leadership in processing the impact of this event or circumstance for the pastor and church.

1.2 Commitment To Continuing Education And Equipping

Ministers are encouraged to continue education and equipping, through formal study programs and/or relevant seminars, books and journals to promote growth in their faith, knowledge, character and ministry skills.

Ministers are required to have a Personal Ministry Development Plan which document the minister’s plans and a ministry mentor to assist and direct their ongoing development and growth. These are requirements of registration.

1.3 Relationships With Colleagues

- a) Ministers will respect the call and placement of other ministers, whether colleagues of a local pastoral team, ministers in other Baptist churches, the wider denomination or other denominations.
- b) Ministers who have authority in relation to other ministers and/or lay staff will exercise their authority justly, with respect and with clear accountability.

- c) Ministers in conflict with a colleague will seek to resolve the issue in a timely, respectful and agreeable process by all parties. When unable to reach resolution, mediation from an outside party would be sought.
- d) Ministers will refrain from any communication that may needlessly damage the reputation of colleagues. Therefore, they will refrain from gossip, slander, and other communication (both written and spoken) that is false, degrading, defamatory or harmful to another's character or reputation.
- e) After resigning or retiring from a pastorate it is advisable that a pastor neither remains in nor returns to a congregation where they have pastored in the recent past. In establishing healthy relationships with a former pastorate pastors will:
 - not normally involve themselves in their successors nomination / call committee, nor the selection of a successor
 - give their successors support and not meddle in the affairs of any previous church pastorate
 - not participate formally in weddings, funerals, pastoral conversations without the consent of the current pastor/s leaders
 - take great care that continuing relationships are not used to influence the former congregation either by conversation, correspondence or other actions
- f) Should they desire to remain in a former congregation they must first seek the approval of the current pastor/s / leaders. In this instance they should covenant with the current pastor in regard to acceptable behaviour, roles and practices by the former pastor.
- g) Pastors called in an interim capacity or serving in a supply capacity shall look to prepare the congregation for the calling and installation of a new pastor and not seek to change the status of their call or function to secure their own position or future in the church.
- h) Retired ministers or ministers serving outside the local church continue to bring wisdom and experience to our QB movement. Because of their ministry history, they can have an inherent perceived power to influence their local church congregations and wider groups. It is therefore the expectation of Qld Baptists that they uphold the agreed Code of Ethics of all ministers. In relationships with other ministers, particularly the minister/s of their local church, all aspects of 1.3 apply.

1.4 Relationship With The Denomination

The minister's primary loyalty is always to the Lord Jesus who is the Head of the Church. Ministers called to serve within the Baptist denomination, will express their loyalty to the wider work of Queensland Baptists by prayerful interest, support and participation as they are able in the corporate endeavours of the denomination.

1.5 Relationship With The Wider Community

- a) As followers of Christ, ministers are called to live as "salt" and "light" (Matthew 5:13&14) in the world.
- b) Ministers' involvement in the wider community will display a Christ-likeness that includes concern for social justice and the moral and spiritual needs of their community.
- c) Where a minister speaks out on community or political issues they must ensure any statement is factually correct and comments and/or actions are based on moral and spiritual principles and expressed with humility.

2. PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

2.1 Working Relationships

- a) Ministers will ensure that all colleagues in ministry, whether pastoral, administrative or ancillary staff are treated with respect, consideration, fairness and in good faith.
- b) In the interests of effective ministry together, ministers will recognise and respect the abilities, expertise, areas of responsibility, skills, talents, time commitments and views of colleagues in ministry.
- c) Ministers will refrain from offering or agreeing to undertake and/or engage in work beyond their role, training or professional competence and refer to other suitably qualified persons where necessary.
- d) Where conflict arises between ministry colleagues the principles of Matthew 18 must first be applied. In the event the conflict is not resolved and relationships restored, ministers will seek the assistance of a suitable mediator.

2.2 Pastoral Care

- a) Ministers will not use the power inherent in their role in an abusive or unprofessional manner.
- b) Pastoral care will be offered without bias to all within their charge. Where a minister has a significant relationship with an individual within the fellowship (e.g. a close personal friendship, a close family relationship, a marriage or in the case of a single minister, a relationship which is becoming romantic) the minister will ensure that pastoral care is made available from another suitably qualified person.
- c) When a pastoral relationship is not beneficial for the person receiving care a minister will:
 - (i) refer the person to another suitably qualified pastoral carer,
 - (ii) renegotiate the relationship to one which is beneficial or,
 - (iii) terminate the present pastoral relationship.
- d) It is highly recommended ministers obtain supervision from a respected counsellor with appropriate skills.
- e) Ministers will ensure that they treat members of their congregation and members of the public with respect, consideration, fairness and in good faith.

2.3 Professional Integrity

Whilst people enter into a pastoral ministry in response to a call from God and the Church, this call requires that they carry out ministry in a professional and accountable manner. An integral part of any call is a clear delineation and acceptance of the appropriate lines of accountability.

- a) Ministers must keep appropriate pastoral records including such things as details of appointments and referrals and a journal of critical incidents.
- b) Ministers will have a moral and spiritual commitment to truthfulness and refrain from plagiarising both in their preaching and presentation of written material. Other sources should be appropriately acknowledged.
- c) Ministers must openly declare any potential conflict of interest (perceived or actual) to their church leadership and where appropriate to the Director of Pastoral Services.

- d) Ministers will not seek financial gain for themselves or their families from a pastoral relationship beyond their recognized stipends and entitlements.
- e) Ministers who receive gifts resulting from the pastoral relationship must use discretion concerning the acceptance or return of those gifts by considering the intent and affordability of the gift, and whether the gift places the minister at risk of being compromised or losing objectivity.
- f) Ministers will not use their ministry to recruit clients for private practice or commercial interests.
- g) Ministers will not engage in inappropriate sexual behaviour.

2.4 Confidentiality

Information received in the context of a pastoral relationship shall remain confidential *unless*:

- a) the person gives permission for the particulars to be disclosed; or
- b) retaining such information could potentially result in significant harm to another person or property;
or
- c) as required by law; or
- d) information is received that discloses that a criminal offence may have occurred or is likely to occur, then that information should be passed onto the Director of Pastoral Services; or
- e) disclosure is necessary to prevent financial loss to some other person due to fraud or other dishonesty or where undue hardship might result (as stated in the *Privacy Act 1988*).

For the above reasons, in a pastoral relationship ministers must take care to discuss the nature and limits of their confidentiality with the other person.

2.5 Sexual Misconduct of Ministers

Inappropriate sexual behaviour contravenes God's Word and is unethical and unacceptable. Inappropriate sexual behaviour covers a range of welcomed and unwelcomed behaviours as defined in Section 9 of the Ethical Issues Response Guidelines.

- a) Where cases of inappropriate sexual behaviour are suspected amongst ministers, they must be thoroughly investigated by Queensland Baptists Ministerial Services. In the case of offending ministers this information must be promptly passed on to the Director of Pastoral Services for reference to the Professional Standards Officer of Queensland Baptists.
- b) Where cases of child sexual abuse by ministers are reported or suspected the Director of Pastoral Services and the Queensland Police Service or the Department of Child Safety must be notified.
- c) Ministers will guard against viewing or accessing inappropriate explicit sexual material.

2.6 Reporting Risk of Harm to Children

- a) Notification must be made when a minister believes, based on disclosure by the child or upon reasonable grounds that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.
- b) Where the abuse or harm suffered arises from physical or sexual assault, the matter is to be reported to the police for further investigation. In all other situations, a report may be made to the Department of Child Safety. It is important to also liaise with the Professional Standards Officer in dealing with the matter.

3. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LAW

- a) A minister will seek, as far as reasonable and practicable, to uphold and encourage others to uphold the law. This responsibility includes ensuring as far as reasonable and practicable that the church where they serve is also complying with its lawful obligations including those related to child safety and protection.
- b) Should a minister, in the conduct of their ministry, become aware of any unlawful or fraudulent activity, corrupt conduct or other criminal activity that may have occurred or is likely to occur, they must immediately notify the Director of Pastoral Services of Queensland Baptists.

4. WORKING WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND PROFESSIONS

- a) Ministers must familiarise themselves with the Code of Ethics or similar guidelines in other institutions where they may minister (e.g. hospitals, schools and Correctional Centres).
- b) Where the demands of another organization conflict with this Code of Ethics, ministers will seek to clarify the nature of the conflict between those demands and the principles of this Code, inform all parties concerned of any perceived conflicts and seek to resolve them.

5. BREACH OF CODE OF ETHICS

- a) Breach of the Code of Ethics refers to any violation of the requirements or principles of the Code by Ministers. It includes any instance where ministers have deliberately encouraged another to breach the terms of the Code.
- b) When a minister becomes aware of another minister breaching this Code they should, in private, attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the matter of concern to the attention of that minister in a constructive manner. If this is not practical, or does not address the issue of concern or does not resolve the issue, the (offending) minister ought to be advised of the other minister's intention to report the facts to the Director of Pastoral Services.
- c) Ministers are required to inform the Director of Pastoral Services if the behaviour of any minister, lay employee or lay appointee could be considered as inappropriate sexual behaviour (as defined in section 2.5).

6. COMPLIANCE

- a) Ministers will familiarise themselves and comply with policy documents adopted by Queensland Baptists.
- b) Policy documents include:
 - Privacy Statement
 - Code of Ethics & Ministry Practice
 - Registration & Ordination Guidelines
 - Position Statement on Sexuality & Marriage
 - Ethical Issues Response Guidelines (EIRG)
 - Constitution and By-Laws of Queensland Baptists
- c) Ministers will obtain and hold a current Blue Card

7. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Throughout this document there are a number of circumstances that require the Director of Pastoral Services to be notified. However in cases where the Director of Pastoral Services is unavailable or it is deemed inappropriate to notify him, the Director of QB Services or the chair of the Ministerial Services Committee is to be notified.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

By signing the Registration Compliance Form you indicate you understand and agree to abide by this document.

We are grateful to the following documents for input into the formulation of our Code of Ethics:

Anglican Church of Australia, Guidelines for Conduct of clergy and church officials in the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane, 2000.

Churches of Christ in Australia, Code of Ethics applicable to Ministers of the Churches of Christ, 1999.

John Mark Ministries, www.pastornet.net.au/jmm.

The Baptist Union of Queensland, A Guide to Professional Ethics for Ministers of the Baptist Union of Queensland, 1994.

Uniting Church in Australia, Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, 2000.