

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT OF THE CLERGY

(Approved by General Synod 2005)

The primary aims of these Guidelines are:

- to ensure the welfare and the protection of individuals and groups with whom the clergy work;
- to ensure the welfare and the protection of the clergy and of their families;
- to encourage the clergy to aspire to the highest possible standard of conduct;
- to provide safe and effective boundaries for clerical ministry;
- to encourage personal and corporate ministerial development.

All personal and professional conduct is bounded by law and legal sanction. For the clergy this will include The Code of Canons and The Digest of Resolutions. However, response to a vocation to serve as a deacon or presbyter signifies the voluntary undertaking of obligations of sacrificial self-discipline above and beyond the requirements of secular and canon law. *The Scottish Ordinal 1984*, both in the questions asked of candidates by the Bishop and in other parts of the ordination liturgies, outlines these undertakings and thus guides conduct, so the Ordinal has been used to provide the inspiration and the framework for these Guidelines. References to “clergy” are intended to include bishops, priests and deacons unless the context otherwise requires.

CALLING

1. Do you trust that you are truly called by God to the office and work of a deacon or presbyter in the church of God?

1.1 The clergy are entrusted with the privilege and responsibility of being servants and leaders in the ministry of the Church. As pastors, spiritual guides and representatives of the Christian faith, they are in a position of trust in their relationships with those for whom they have pastoral care. These Guidelines seek to provide an agreed framework of professional conduct for all clergy as both an encouragement and an affirmation of good practice.

1.2 The clergy will often find themselves in the powerful position of meeting people at the limits of their vulnerability. The Guidelines seek to safeguard and reassure such people, so engendering trust, without which ministry cannot take place.

PREACHING AND TEACHING

2. Will you be a diligent minister of the Word of God, proclaiming the Gospel, teaching the Christian faith and upholding catholic doctrine founded on the scriptures?

2.1 Preaching and teaching is central to the clerical role. Part of that vocation is a prayerful openness to being prophetic and challenging as well as encouraging and illuminating.

2.2 Great care should be taken that illustrative material from personal experience does not involve any breach of confidentiality.

2.3 The clergy should ensure that well-led and accessible courses and discussion groups on all aspects of the Christian faith are available at regular intervals to church members and others seeking to explore, deepen or renew their faith.

2.4 Suitable preparation for Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage is a primary responsibility for the clergy.

THE BISHOP

3. Will you respect the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop and be guided by him?

3.1 The clergy promise canonical obedience to the Bishop. The clergy should participate fully in the life and work of areas, regions, diocese and province, giving support and respect to those given the responsibility of leadership and oversight.

3.2 The clergy should know how the Code of Canons shapes their exercise of office and ministry, and should respect the regulations of the Church.

3.3 The authority of lay people elected or appointed to office in the local church is to be respected and affirmed.

3.4 Clergy with charge should take seriously the fact that their charge is shared with the Bishop – “receive this charge which is both mine and yours”. In particular they should always consult with the Bishop when considering a move and preparing for retirement, especially if they may wish to continue residing in the district.

WORSHIP AND LEADERSHIP IN MISSION

4. Will you, as priest and pastor, faithfully administer the sacraments of the new covenant and lead God’s people in mission?

Leadership and encouragement of ministry and discipleship

4.1 The clergy are called to leadership within the Church and the wider community (for ministry in the community see section 9 below).

4.2 They should develop this gift of leadership within their own ministry through prayer and training, being aware of their own natural leadership style.

4.3 The clergy should promote collaborative ministry across the whole range of church life and activity. It is important to recognise and affirm lay ministry that already exists and to encourage new ministries, both lay and ordained. The clergy should be ready to assist others in discerning and fulfilling their vocation and to acknowledge and respect the range of experience amongst the church membership.

4.4 The clergy should encourage and support the discipleship of lay people in the community (see also 4.15)

Worship

4.5 The clergy should be aware of the contents of Canon 22, *Of Divine Worship*

4.6 The clergy should ensure that services are thoughtfully prepared, matching the need and culture of the charge or institution and respecting the traditions of the Scottish Episcopal Church.

4.7 Where appropriate, the clergy should involve others in leadership of worship, providing training and preparation as necessary to support them.

4.8 The clergy should be aware of the needs of their congregation and take any practical steps necessary to ensure that worship is truly inclusive and that no one is excluded through disability or disadvantage. The requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 should be implemented.

4.9 In leadership, teaching, preaching and presiding at worship, the clergy should resist all temptation to exercise power inappropriately.

Ecumenism

4.10 The clergy should encourage good ecumenical relationships.

Resignation and Retirement

4.11 Upon resignation or retirement, the clergy should immediately lay down their leadership and sever all professional relationships with those formerly under their pastoral cure. Any exception to this guideline should be formally negotiated with the bishop.

4.12 Having resigned or retired, the clergy should only minister in a former church, or institution if invited by the clergy with pastoral oversight or with their permission.

Mission

4.13 Mission is a primary clerical calling. It belongs to the whole church and the clergy have a leading share of responsibility in its promotion.

4.14 The clergy have the privilege of leading their congregations in proclaiming afresh the Good News of Jesus Christ and promoting mission, including evangelism.

4.15 The clergy should recognise, affirm and encourage the ministry and witness of lay people in their workplaces and communities.

PASTORAL CARE

5. Will you be ready to help and serve those in need, seeing in them the Lord Jesus Christ?

Fundamentals

5.1 The clergy should ensure that they are reasonably available and accessible to those for whom they have pastoral care. A prompt and gracious response to all requests for help demonstrates care.

5.2 Pastoral care will seek to bring about Christ-like wholeness, both personal and corporate. The development of trust is of primary importance for honest relationships within ministry.

Power

5.3 In pastoral relationships, with lay colleagues, and sometimes with other clergy, power needs to be used to sustain others and harness their strengths, not to bully, manipulate or denigrate.

5.4 In pastoral and caring relationships the clergy should be open to God and to the needs of the other person. It is important for clergy to be sensitive to the situations in which they are placed, especially with regard to the pastoral care of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

5.5 The clergy should be aware that those for whom they care may be distressed and vulnerable. The power conferred on a minister in such situations should be acknowledged, used positively, and never abused.

5.6 It is always wrong to exploit or manipulate. Improper questioning or physical contact can be emotionally or sexually abusive (see 5.17).

5.7 Spiritual authority must be exercised with gentleness and sensitivity, and the minister should be aware of the possibility of spiritual abuse.

5.8 Pastoral care should never seek to remove the autonomy given to the individual to make decisions that may be mistaken.

Care

5.9 Caring for one another is the responsibility of the whole Church and is an extension of the justice and love of the Incarnate God disclosed in Jesus Christ. Compassion is essential to pastoral care. The clergy should enable other members of the worshipping community to share in this pastoral care.

5.10 The clergy have a particular responsibility to minister sensitively and effectively to the sick, the dying and the bereaved.

5.11 In their ministry, pastoral care and working relationships, the clergy must endeavour to offer equal respect and opportunity to all.

Limitations, boundaries and risks

5.12 The clergy minister through their own broken humanity, being aware of their own need to receive ministry.

5.13 The clergy should discern and make clear their own limitations of time, competence and skill. At times they will need to seek support, help and appropriate training.

5.14 The difference between pastoral care and formal counselling is always to be recognised.

5.15 The clergy should be aware of the help available from accredited agencies so that it can be recommended where appropriate.

5.16 There is risk in all pastoral work. The place of the meeting, the arrangement of furniture and lighting, and the dress of the minister are important considerations in pastoral care. The appropriateness of visiting and being visited alone, especially at night, needs to be assessed with care. The clergy should recognise the importance of knowing themselves and their own emotional needs.

5.17 The clergy should thankfully acknowledge their own God-given sexuality. They should be aware of the danger of seeking sexual advantage, emotionally or physically, in the exercise of their ministry.

5.18 It is essential in pastoral care to acknowledge appropriate physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries. Inappropriate touching or gestures of affection are to be avoided.

5.19 The clergy should be aware of the dangers of dependency in pastoral relationships. Manipulation, competitiveness or collusion on either side of the pastoral encounter should be avoided. Self-awareness should be part of the relationship.

5.20 The clergy should be aware of the potential for abusing their privileged relationships.

Note-taking

5.21 When help or advice is being sought, any note-taking should be mutually agreed and is subject to data protection legislation.

Child Protection

5.22 Every ordained person should have appropriate training in child protection. The Child Protection Policy of the General Synod should be known and observed.

5.23 The clergy should be aware of the circumstances in which confidential information can or should be disclosed to third parties, particularly where the safety of children is concerned. (For further guidelines on confidentiality see 5.24-29 below). In these circumstances, the clergy should refer to the guidance in the General Synod's Child Protection Policy. Children or vulnerable adults who disclose evidence of significant harm will need to know that their concerns will be taken seriously and referred to the appropriate statutory agency so that a proper investigation can take place and practical help be obtained. In such cases the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult should be regarded as of paramount importance. Referral should be handled in accordance with the advice of the Provincial Child Protection Officer. Special considerations apply where information is disclosed in the context of formal confession (see paragraphs 8.4 and 8.5).

Confidentiality

5.24 A person seeking pastoral guidance and counsel from the clergy has the right to expect that the clergy person concerned will not pass on to a third party confidential information so obtained, without their consent or other lawful authority.

5.25 Unless otherwise agreed, the clergy are accordingly not at liberty to share confidential information with their spouses, family or friends.

5.26 The content and process of a pastoral relationship may need to be shared with certain other people, such as a supervisor or supervisory group, consultant or other involved colleagues. Such sharing needs to be carefully restricted so that it does not involve any breach of confidence. Should it be desirable to discuss the relationship in such a way as to involve a breach of confidentiality, the consent of the person seeking pastoral guidance must first be obtained.

5.27 It is important to safeguard the right of church members to share personal information with one minister and not another (but see the important exception in the case of assistant clergy in training posts). In a team situation, it may be advisable to create a policy to avoid the danger to ministers within a team of being manipulated and divided by the sharing of personal information with one and not another. Assistant clergy in training posts should make it clear that information given to them will normally be shared with their training incumbent.

5.28 Any information about a living individual, whether held on computer or in a paper-based filing system, will be governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. The clergy should therefore familiarise themselves with the requirements of that legislation and act in accordance with them, seeking advice from appropriate provincial or diocesan officers when necessary. Compliance with the legislation may

require, amongst other things, formal notification to the Information Commissioner where information about a living individual is held on computer.

5.29 Those compiling records should be prepared to be accountable for their content.

CLERGY LIFE

6. Will you devote yourself to prayer, to reading the Holy Scriptures and to all studies that will increase your faith and deepen your understanding of the truth?

Expectations

6.1 Clergy should familiarise themselves with the contents of Canon 17, *Of Clerical Studies and Manner of Life* which set out the Church's basic expectations.

Learning

6.2 Continued theological learning is an essential discipline for preaching and teaching, as well as for personal growth.

6.3 The clergy should set aside time for continuing ministerial education, including the consideration of contemporary issues and theological developments, so that their faith engages with the perceptions and concerns of this generation.

6.4 Keeping abreast of a whole variety of communicating skills is crucial to the effective and ongoing proclamation of the gospel.

Spiritual Life

6.5 In exercising their ministry, the clergy respond to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ. The development of their discipleship is in the discipline of prayer, worship, Bible study and the discernment of the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The clergy should make sure that time and resources are available for their own personal and spiritual life and take responsibility for their own ongoing training and development.

6.6 Spiritual discernment can be facilitated by sharing the journey of faith with another person. A minister should have someone outside the work situation to whom to turn for help. (See also 10.5 below)

Appraisal and Review

6.7 The clergy should participate fully in continuing ministerial education and in appraisal, knowing that accountability involves regular review personally and with others.

6.9 Time given to family life, friendship, recreation, renewal and personal health should be included in any review. This reflection will be the more useful if conducted both as part of a formal review and also in discussion with a spiritual director.

EXAMPLE

7. Will you, in all your dealings with others, in the life of the Church and in your home, seek to show an example of obedience to the way of Christ?

Standards

7.1 The clergy are called to a high standard of moral behaviour.

7.2 In their personal life the clergy should set an example of integrity in relationships and faithfulness in marriage.

7.3 Those who are called to marriage should never forget that this is also a vocation. It should not be thought to be of secondary importance to their vocation to ministry. Similarly, those who are not married, including those with a vocation to celibacy, should take the necessary steps to nurture their lives, their friendships and their family relationships. All should guard themselves and their family against becoming victims of stress.

7.4 Non-stipendiary and other part-time clergy should observe the highest professional standards in their secular employment.

Administration

7.5 As part of their general competence clergy in stipendiary posts should familiarise themselves with the contents of the *Personnel Handbook for Stipendiary Clergy (November 2004)*.

7.6 Good administration enables good pastoral care. Dealing with correspondence and enquiries with efficiency and courtesy is essential.

7.7 The keeping of registers and records to a high standard is required by the Code of Canons as well as being part of proper administration and pastoral care.

Money

7.8 The clergy need to ensure that all their financial activities, whether personal or corporate, meet the highest ethical standards. There must be strict boundaries between church finance and personal monies in order to avoid the possibility of suspicion or impropriety.

7.9 The clergy should never seek any personal advantage or gain by virtue of their clerical position.

Physical well-being

7.10 The clergy should take care of their physical well-being. They should not undertake any professional duties when medically advised against it, nor under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Language

7.11 Blasphemous and offensive language is unacceptable as well as inappropriate comment denigrating the personality of another.

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

8. Grant him/her authority to loose the bonds of sin, that what is wounded may be healed, what is divided, reconciled, and what is lost, restored.

Fundamentals

8.1 The clergy have a particular role and calling as a catalyst of healing and as an agent of reconciliation for those in their charge.

8.2 The ministry of reconciliation, as an extension of Jesus' own ministry, lies at the heart of this vocation. It is to be exercised gently, patiently and undergirded by mutual trust.

Sacramental Confession

8.3 Clergy should familiarise themselves with the contents of Canon 29, *Of the Administration of Sacramental Confession and Absolution*. They should in particular note that no presbyter may refuse to hear a confession unless able to direct the penitent to some other competent presbyter.

8.4 There can be no disclosure of what is confessed to a priest. This principle holds even after the death of the penitent (see Canon 29 section 2). The priest may not refer to what has been learnt in confession, even to the penitent, unless explicitly permitted. Some appropriate action of contrition and reparation may be required before absolution is given. A priest may withhold absolution.

8.5 Where abuse of children or vulnerable adults is admitted in the context of confession, the priest should urge the person to report his or her behaviour to the police or social services, and should also make this a condition of absolution, or withhold absolution until this evidence of repentance has been demonstrated.

8.6 If a penitent's behaviour gravely threatens his or her well-being or that of others, the priest, while advising action on the penitent's part, must still keep the confidence.

MINISTRY IN THE COMMUNITY

9. In the name of the Church, he/she is to care for those in need, serving God and his creation after the pattern of Christ our Master

9.1 Clergy should be encouraged by the lay officers and the Vestry to exercise ministry in the community as well as the congregation (see 10.2 below)

9.2 The reputation of the Church in the community depends to a great extent on the example of its clergy, who should recognise their role as public representatives of the Church. Their lives should enhance and embody the communication of the gospel.

9.3 The call of the clergy to be servants to the community should include their prophetic ministry to those in spiritual and moral danger.

9.4 The clergy are privileged to be involved in the rites of passage, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears of the community. They should be particularly aware of both the opportunity this gives and the responsibility it carries.

CARE OF THE CLERGY

10. Do you the people of God in this place, trust that N. is truly called by God to serve as a deacon/presbyter in his Church?

Fundamentals

10.1 'Care for the carers' is fundamental. The clergy need to be supported and the laity have a particular and significant role in the pastoral care of the clergy. The laity of the Church are encouraged to do all in their power to ensure that the clergy are as effective in their ministry as possible – even as the clergy must support them in theirs.

Responsibilities of lay leaders

10.2 The lay officers of the church and the Vestry should ensure that their clergy have:

- a safe environment in which to live and work;

- sufficient time off for rest, recreation and proper holidays;
- an annual opportunity to make a retreat;
- adequate administrative assistance;
- reimbursement in full of ministerial expenses;
- appropriate opportunity for ministry in the wider church;
- encouragement for ministry to the whole community and not just to the congregation;
- encouragement for ongoing learning and education.

Responsibilities of the Bishop

10.3 The bishop takes responsibility for the welfare of the clergy when he or she receives the promise of canonical obedience. He or she shares this responsibility with the Dean of the Diocese and others whom he or she may appoint.

10.4 The bishop and those exercising pastoral care of the clergy should both by word and example actively encourage the clergy to adopt a healthy life-style. This should include adequate time for leisure, through taking days off and their full holiday entitlement, developing interests outside their main area of ministry, and maintaining a commitment to the care and development of themselves and their personal relationships. Helping the clergy understand and overcome unrealistic expectations within themselves and from the outside world is a priority. Specific needs of married and single clergy should be identified and addressed.

Responsibilities of the clergy

10.5 The clergy should be encouraged to develop opportunities for mutual support and pastoral care within area or regional chapters, ecumenical meetings, cell groups, or other peer-groupings.

10.6 All clergy should be encouraged to have a spiritual director, soul friend or confessor to support their spiritual life and help to develop their self-understanding. They should receive any help they may need in finding such a person.

10.7 Non-stipendiary clergy should have a working agreement clearly setting out agreed boundaries of time and responsibility.

Responsibilities of the diocese

10.8 A directory or list of Pastoral Care and Counselling resources should be drawn up and made available in the diocese to the clergy and to their families, so that they can make their own arrangements to find help and support as they wish. Financial resources should be made available in the diocese to assist the clergy in paying for appropriate help if necessary. Confidentiality should be assured at every level. The boundaries between different persons involved in such care should therefore be recognised by all in the diocesan structures, not least where issues of financial assistance are involved. Advisers in pastoral care need to be especially careful to maintain these boundaries when making referrals or making reports to their diocesan colleagues.

10.9 The bishop or his or her trained representatives should undertake a regular review of each minister's work that should be clearly linked to the development of the individual's ministry, in the context of the needs of the Church.

10.10 Each diocese has a duty to provide continuing ministerial education throughout a person's ministry. This should include adequate and suitable training in financial, administrative and managerial matters.

10.11 Support and advice on the practical, psychological and emotional issues involved should be readily available to clergy approaching retirement and their families.

Dual ministries

10.12 In dual ministries, where clergy have both a sector and a charge responsibility, there should be a clear understanding between diocese, charge and the minister concerned about where the boundaries lie.

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