

THE JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY ETHICS STATEMENT

- I. Statement on Ethical Behavior for the ordered ministry of Teaching Elder
- A. Standards for ethical behavior are grounded in scripture, in the Book of Confessions, and in our Form of Government. (Refer particularly to the Brief Statement of Faith--Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)) The teaching elder is reminded of the import and requirements of the ordination vows contained in Book of Order (W4.4003).
- B. Our condition:
1. In the beginning God created everything and declared it to be very good. This is our first foundation for hope for maintaining ethical and moral standards (Genesis 1 and 2).
 2. Given the freedom to choose, we rebel against our Creator (Genesis 3).
 3. Refusing to love God and neighbor, corrupting ourselves, exploiting others, and threatening death to the planet entrusted to our care, we deserve God's condemnation (Brief Statement of Faith--Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)).
 4. Yet God chose a covenant people for the blessing of the nations, and remains faithful still. "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) This is our second foundation for hope.
- C. Our calling is in response to this Good News:
1. We are forgiven, now set free to proclaim the Gospel and to work for reconciliation, for good, and for justice.
 2. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are called to refrain from doing harm. We are called to witness for Christ by responding to Christ's love in positive and constructive endeavors. We are called to bring Good News in word and in deed.
- D. Our standards for behavior in ministry:
1. Basic Principles
 - a. We are accountable for our behavior as Teaching Elders to Presbytery and we have the obligation to accept Presbytery's discipline.

The candidate for the ordered ministry of Teaching Elder, in making her or his vows before the ordaining body, the Presbytery, enters into a covenant of exemplary behavior and obedience to Jesus Christ. The candidate comes under the authority of Scriptures and the guidance of the Confessions and accepts the governance of the Church. This includes the furthering of the peace, purity, and unity of the Church and participating actively in the Church's government. (Vows of Ordination, Book of Order, W-4.4003)

In spite of our fallen nature (rebellious against and hiding from our Creator [Brief Statement of Faith, line 33]), we are called by the Holy Spirit to proclaim Good News. We accept the discipline and support of our sisters and brothers in Christ. Fundamental to the Reformed and Presbyterian branch of Christ's Church is subjecting oneself to the discipline and nurture of the governing body which ordains by the "laying on of hands" and in prayer.

- b. We seek the purity of God's truth in the church reformed and always reforming according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit.

Persons, including those ordained to the ordered ministry of Teaching Elder, are constantly subject to error and desire to exercise power and exploitation over others. We are "infected by self-interest and hostility" and under God's judgment (The Confession of 1967 9.13). Yet God in Christ is the Reconciler. God accepts us in spite of what we are (The Confession of 1967 9.22). This reconciliation does not call for complacency and lethargy, but acknowledges that our "old nature" still persists. This requires a constant and continuous reforming, seeking purity in the Church.

The Reformers admitted "that all synods and councils may err, through their frailty inseparable from humanity" (Book of Order, F-3.0107); therefore we are "'the church reformed, always reforming,' according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit" (Book of Order, F-2.02).

- c. We work for shalom which emanates from God's righteousness.

We work not just for "human peace," which tends to be both a transient illusion of tranquility and a maintenance of the status quo, but we seek the peace which is beyond human understanding--God's shalom. Shalom comes from God to us (Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2). It is the fruit of God's righteousness, not ours; it emanates from God's restoring the relationship (Romans 3:19-25). Being justified, we have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1) and manifest such peace in our behaviors. The salutation of Jesus, "Peace be with you," calls for "doing peace" as well as "receiving peace," with our being illumined and charged by the Holy Spirit to make this peace possible (John 20:19-23).

- d. We affirm the sacredness of confidences and we honor covenants.

Being prideful creatures, we search for attention through boasting; we are tempted to divulge information. Yet if we boast, let our boasting be for the Good News of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:31). That which has been divulged to the minister is guarded and protected because it is in context of a covenant relationship.

The sixth ordination question asks, "Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for reconciliation of the world?" (Book of Order, W-4.4003f) Such a vow includes holding to confidences and honoring covenants.

Although marriage is recognized in the secular world as a contract, we affirm the covenantal nature of marriage. The marriage vows are taken before the witnessing community of the faithful in the presence of our Creator. The couple seeks the Creator's blessing and prays to be bound for life. No minister of the Gospel dare intrude or be an instrument for shattering that relationship. If in the course of counseling of participants in a troubled marriage the relationship appears to be separating, the participants should make their own appropriate decisions. May the minister not be "caught in the moral confusion of our time" (Confession of 1967 9.47) by taking lightly that which is God's ordering of relationships.

We recognize that all teaching elders do not marry and some who were once married are no more and some become widows or widowers. Regardless of one's marital status, the Gospel of Jesus Christ calls all of us to exhibit behavior that respects the dignity of each individual and exhibits a care for all persons.

2. Treatment of Self

a. We maintain a healthy balance between work, recreation, and rest.

As Christ's spirit abides in us (The Second Helvetic Confession 5.020), we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives (Brief Statement of Faith, lines 73-4). In both play and rest we renew ourselves to be better able to serve God in every aspect of human life.

We find ourselves occupied with the functions of leading worship, conducting classes, and engaging in pastoral care on the Lord's Day. Therefore we seek and maintain at least one day each week free from functions of leading public worship and engaging in pastoral care. The Presbytery expects its ministers to find restful diversion.

b. We are servants of God and do not use our offices for personal gain or self-aggrandizement.

As church leaders we strive to be without fault (Titus 1); be faithful in stewardship (Luke 12:41-48); be concerned with the interests of others (I Cor. 10:24); and not be boastful of our own merits (Scots Confession 3:15). The Book of Order, (G-2.0104) calls us to be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world.

c. We accept the continuing education requirements for on-going preparation for all aspects of ministry.

Presbytery expects us to be diligent in pursuing continuing education, considering in our choosing the needs of the church we are serving as well as evaluating our own areas in need of growth. The Presbytery's mandate to pursue continuing education is supported by the fifth ordination question which asks, "Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline?" (Book of Order, W-4.4003e)

3. Interpersonal Relationships

- a. We honor our covenants to our calling bodies, as well as to our families, to our friends and to our communities, and we encourage each other's ministries through prayer and active support.

The fifth ordination set of questions ("Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?") requires an affirmation of covenants and a subjection to the ordering of God's Word.

We must heed the words of the author of Hebrews (13:4); "Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled." Our responsibilities do not end with this admonition. We treat both adults and children in a manner consistent with the preaching and teaching about Christian love and concern. "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and seen in me, and the God of peace be with you." (Philippians 4:8-9)

The relationship of the teaching elder in marriage with spouse and children is that the teaching elder shall honor the persons in the family in positive behavior, behavior that is not destructive in any manner--verbal, physical, or spiritual.

- b. We reject any pastoral activities which invade another minister's arena or calling without a specific invitation by that minister, including returning to former calling bodies for pastoral services.

"After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of the session." (Book of Order, G-2.0905) We affirm that this applies to all members of The John Knox Presbytery.

We oppose any fostering of informal relationships in parishes in which we have served which in turn harm the ministry of the current pastor or pastors.

- c. We refrain from remarks and behaviors that manifest discrimination.

Teaching Elders are still viewed as role models for the congregation and in the community, and therefore should refrain from any action or words that cast people of race, nationality, sexual orientation, or faith in a negative manner. This statement applies to gender, handicap, and age. "In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community." (Brief Statement of Faith, lines 29-32)

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

4. Pastoral Work

- a. We refrain from spiritual, social and sexual intimacies that compromise pastoral care.

As ordained Teaching Elders, our *"manner of life should be a demonstration of Christian gospel in the church and in the world."* (Book of Order, G-2.0104)

Our mission is to proclaim God's love as revealed in Jesus Christ and made known and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This requires a ministry of conciliation and reconciliation, not of division. In social interaction, we are tempted to seek companionship with those for whom we have a fondness over against those who may not be as attractive socially or theologically. The Good News contained in scriptures, which we preach and teach, is for all persons. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the member of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (I Cor. 12:12-13)

In our role of leadership, we will "not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14); and ... "in all things and at all times be watchful, and by purity of life to let one's light to shine before all." (The Second Helvetic Confession 5.164)

5. Financial Work

- a. We maintain financial integrity and engage in responsible stewardship.

"All faithful ministers, as good workers, are also worthy of their reward, and do not sin when they receive a stipend, and all things that be necessary for themselves and their family." (The Second Helvetic Confession 5.168)

The John Knox Presbytery has recognized this need of teaching elders to receive an adequate monetary income by adopting a Minimum Compensation Plan. We maintain a balance between our income and spending that will prevent undue stress in our congregations and families.

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you.'" (Hebrews 13:5)

- b. We maintain a complete distance from the church's receiving and disbursing of funds, which is a responsibility of the Session.

The collection of money has been an activity of the church since earliest times. We strive to follow the example of Paul, who, when asking for contributions from the Corinthian Christians, rejected any responsibility for collecting and transporting these funds himself, indicating that he knew that to do otherwise would leave himself open to criticism and suspicion. (I Cor. 16:3; II Cor. 8:16-21)

The Book of Order addresses this problem directly by assigning a church's financial responsibility to the Session and its elected treasurer (Book of Order, G-3.0205).

6. Conclusion

- a. We affirm an ethical standard which reflects the Gospel and transcends that which is legal.

Christians find themselves in tension because of their obedience to Jesus Christ over against the demands of the culture and of those in power, who define what is legal. "Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death." (Barmen Declaration 8:11)

"We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords--areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him." (Barmen Declaration 8:15)

"In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace." (Brief Statement of Faith, lines 65-71)

"In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. (II Cor. 5:19) Jesus Christ is God with us. He is the eternal Son of the Creator, who became human "and lived among us to fulfill the work of reconciliation. He is present in the church by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue and complete his mission."...(T)he church calls us to be reconciled to God and to one another." (The Confession of 1967 9.07)

"Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to one's own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:3-11)

References:

Scripture

The Scots Confession, 1560

The Second Helvetic Confession, 1566

The Theological Declaration of Barmen, 1934

The Confession of 1967

The John Knox Presbytery Manual of Operations

Form of Government, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Brief Statement of Faith--Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1991

II. Process for Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct

A. Introduction

Allegations of misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded and allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the accuser, the accused, and the church.

Because a Presbytery or entity cannot control to whom the accuser will speak first, it is important that members of Presbytery understand how reports of incidents should be channeled.

At any time that a written statement of alleged offense is received, it shall be forwarded immediately to the Stated Clerk (D-10.0100).

Reports of misconduct may occur in a variety of ways and may be reported to any church officer or member.

The first person to learn of an incident of misconduct should not undertake an inquiry alone or question either the accuser or the accused.

The person receiving the initial allegation of misconduct, whether written or not, shall inform the Executive Presbyter, Stated Clerk, or Committee on Ministry Chairperson of the alleged incident. The person contacted shall convene the Coordination Team which consists of the Executive Presbyter, the Stated Clerk, the Committee on Ministry Chairperson and another member of the Committee on Ministry, to be selected by those named.

- B. The Coordination Team shall coordinate presbytery's response to allegations of misconduct
1. Functions where appropriate
 - a. Clarify and explain the procedures for dealing with the allegation(s) to the accuser and help the accuser determine the role he or she wants to take, if necessary.
 - b. Determine the process for further action and reporting as quickly as possible.
 - c. Whether there is a written statement of alleged offense or not, assist the accuser in finding access to other resources, such as pastoral care.
 - d. Coordinate the case or complaint through the appropriate processes to give advice and support to each other, to insure better communication and coordination from the Presbytery during the process.
 2. Roles of member of Coordination Team when a written statement of alleged offense is received
 - a. Stated Clerk
 1. Initiates the procedures for the establishment of an Investigating Committee
 - (a) the Moderator, along with members of the Coordination Team shall appoint an Investigating Committee (D-10.0201b)
 - (b) When the Investigating Committee has been appointed, the Stated Clerk shall notify the presbytery of its appointment before the Committee begins its work.
 2. If applicable, confirms that appropriate civil authorities have been notified.
 - b. Executive Presbyter
 1. Informs the Presbytery's insurance carrier and the Presbytery's attorney.
 - c. Committee on Ministry Chairperson
 1. In consultation with the Coordination Team and the accused and accuser, appoints care givers for the accused and the accuser.
 2. In consultation with the Coordination Team, notifies the Committee on Ministry on need-to-know basis.

- C. Committee on Ministry
1. Should the accused acknowledge the essential truth of the accuser's allegations or there be such overwhelming evidence or chaos to make such actions prudent, the Committee on Ministry may recommend any of the following measures:
 - a. The immediate restriction of the pastoral activities of the accused;
 - b. The immediate imposition of supervision of the accused;
 - c. The immediate temporary suspension of the accused from his/her pastoral duties with pay and without prejudice in which case the Session of the particular church, administrative agency or ecumenical agency shall be advised that presbytery will provide adequate services during the time of the temporary suspension.
 2. In the case of the accused being in position other than a church setting:
 - a. The notification of the accused's employer of the fact and nature of the allegations brought and that an investigation is in process;
 - b. The transfer of the accused to member-at-large status until there is resolution of the matter.

D. Media Contact
All inquiries from the media regarding an allegation of misconduct must be directed to the Stated Clerk or the Executive Presbyter.

E. Disciplinary Process
When the Stated Clerk receives a written statement of alleged offense, the Disciplinary Process under the provisions of Chapter DB10.000 THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE of The Book of Order shall commence.

III. Preventative Measures

- A. All teaching elder members of the John Knox Presbytery, all commissioned ruling elders, and student pastors serving within the bounds of the John Knox Presbytery are required to sign a written acknowledgment indicating that they have received a copy and understand the Statement of Ethics and Misconduct Policy. Such acknowledgment will be kept in the person's personnel file.
- B. The employing body is responsible for contacting references for prospective teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, and student pastors.
- C. A criminal background, credit and Motor Vehicle Division check shall be a part of the Presbytery's reference check.
- D. The John Knox Presbytery and all its agencies, committees, and affiliates will adhere to this policy, including its standards, procedures, and practices.
- E. This policy shall be distributed to all teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, and student pastors of the John Knox Presbytery. The policy shall be made available to all persons who accuse others of misconduct as well as those accused of misconduct.

- F. The Committee on Ministry will provide training for each teaching elder who is new in John Knox Presbytery, commissioned ruling elder, and student pastor. Failure to complete such training will result in a dissolution of the relationship.
- G. Each church in John Knox Presbytery is required to adopt a policy for child protection, harassment and sexual misconduct by September 30, 2006.

IV. Glossary of Terms

- A. Accused - The person against whom a claim or charge of misconduct is made.
- B. Accuser - The person or persons claiming knowledge of misconduct by a person covered by this policy. If the accuser is not the victim, that person must be an adult advocate making the charge on behalf of the victim.
- C. Allegation - A verbal or written statement of an alleged offense.
- D. Caregivers - Persons appointed by Committee on Ministry who act on behalf and with accuser or accused as listener and friend.
- E. Child Sexual Abuse - Any contact or interaction between an adult and a child (as defined by State Law) or children involving sexual stimulation. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered non-consensual.
- F. Church - When spelled with capital letters it refers to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). When spelled in lower case refers to local churches.
- G. Complaint - A written statement alleging an irregularity in a particular decision or action, or alleging a delinquency. (D-6.0102)
- H. Co-ordination Team - The group of persons in the Presbytery that are co-ordinating and facilitating the complaint process.
- I. Entity - Any program or office managed by a board, council, committee, or other body whose membership is elected or appointed by a governing body.
- J. Inquiry - The procedures used in the Rules of Discipline to determine whether charges should be filed based upon allegations of an offense received by a governing body. (See Rules of Discipline-10.0200.) This is comparable to finding "probable cause."
- K. Misconduct - A violation of statements set forth in the Ethics Statement.
- L. Persons Covered - by this policy include officers, employees, all continuing members of The John Knox Presbytery, and volunteers under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery.

- M. Sexual Abuse - Any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without mental capacity to consent, or any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, or intimidation, or misuse of office or position (D-10.0401a).
- N. Sexual Harassment - Within a work setting: any unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:
1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a condition of the individual's employment or advancement
 2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual, or
 3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.
- O. Sexual Malfeasance - as defined for this policy is the broken trust resulting from genital contact (contact with breasts, penis, buttocks, or pubic area) within a ministerial or professional relationship, (where one party has power or perceived power over another).
- P. Sexual Misconduct - is the comprehensive term used in this policy to include:
1. Child sexual abuse as defined above.
 2. Sexual harassment as defined above.
 3. Rape/criminal sexual misconduct or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
 4. Sexual malfeasance as described above.
- Q. Volunteer - Anyone who performs work for governing bodies or entities, but receives no remuneration.