

## **Code of Ethics**

for Clergy

in the Diocese of Central Florida

Revised: 10/18/93

As clergy we have promised to do our best to pattern our lives and that of our family or household in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that we may be a wholesome example to all people (Book of Common Prayer, pages 532 & 544). We are to love and serve the people entrusted to our care, not neglecting to love and care for ourselves. The following guidelines and expectations are part of the framework in which we exercise our ministries seeking the grace of God to sustain and empower us.

### ***Sexual Conduct***

The expectations of this diocese regarding the sexual conduct of all its ministers are grounded in the understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God. As in every aspect of human life, gifts can be misused. This diocese, therefore, has the following expectations of its ministers:

1. Above all, clergy are to be honest with God, with themselves and with others. They should be aware of their personal needs and care for themselves and their families if they are married. Regularly they need to review their own spiritual, psychological and emotional growth. Clergy are to:
  - be aware of the potential for abuse of the trust, power and authority in their pastoral positions.
  - seek the advice and counsel of other professionals -- clergy, counselors or therapists -- when issues of sexual ethics arise in their ministries.
  - abide by diocesan disciplines and policies in facing the consequences of their actions in any instance of sexual misconduct.
2. Clergy are to honor the sexual integrity of every individual and be trustworthy in their pastoral relationships. They are to:

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- avoid places and circumstances where temptations are great by exercising common sense. **All** clergy can find themselves in situations where temptation is great.
  - normally have others present in the office area when counseling, especially when counseling members of the opposite sex.
  - exercise good judgment in pastoral counseling, recognizing limitations in counseling skills and referring those in their pastoral care to reputable health care professionals when warranted, not exceeding 6 sessions without such referral or supervision.
  - respect confidentiality, especially in regard to the contents of counseling sessions. The seal of Sacramental Confession is absolute. With respect to sexual conduct, negotiations with a penitent or confidant should be encouraged, leading to reporting the misconduct to appropriate diocesan and state officials, mindful of the specific state statutes dealing with child sexual abuse.
  - proscribe fees or donations for pastoral care.
3. Clergy are to avoid and reject sexual promiscuity, the manipulation of others for purposes of sexual gratification, all attempts at sexual seduction and sexual harassment, including physical or emotional violence toward another person. Under **no** circumstances are clergy to engage in sexual activity with someone currently or previously in their pastoral care. Such behavior includes:
- inappropriate kissing, the touching of the other's breasts or genitals, or sexual intercourse.
  - verbal or physical behavior which is sexually arousing or demeaning.
  - clandestine meetings which are secretive and in intimate settings.
  - excessive self disclosure.
4. Clergy who are single are to live lives of celibacy. Married clergy are to live in fidelity to their spouse, giving expression to sexual intimacy only within a marriage relationship that is mutual, chaste, and faithful (I Cor. 7:1-7). They are to keep their marriage inviolate until death, to cultivate love and respect to their

spouse, to seek marital counseling when it is needed, and to seek the counsel and guidance of their superior if separation or divorce is considered.

- Single clergy should exercise good sense and discretion in dating, continuing to model healthy relationships within the parish family. A single clergy person who dates someone with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship must keep a superior advised of that fact.
  - When a clergy person is divorced, it is advisable, and the bishop may require, that the clergy person offer his/her resignation from parish responsibilities. Vestries, in consultation with the Bishop, are then given the freedom to respond as they feel appropriate. During this time, advice should be sought from the bishop and other counselors in order to understand what went wrong and what choices are open for future ministry.
5. Clergy are to affirm marriage as the only appropriate setting for sexual intimacy, and to model this affirmation in their own lives.

### ***Counseling Guidelines***

By virtue of the Canons of the Episcopal Church and their Baptismal and Ordination vows, clergy are charged to love, serve and nourish others and to be models for Christian living. Thus clergy are to treat members of their congregations, others staff members, and all in need who come to them, in such a manner that they may experience the healing ministry of Christ and be received with the same care and dignity our Lord showed to those who came to him.

We need to acknowledge that in recent years the Church has sponsored intense, self-revelatory occasions of intimacy in both educational and pastoral settings, i.e. workshops, conferences, retreats. Such occasions often foster and encourage a degree of intimacy between clergy and their parishioners which blur appropriate physical and emotional boundaries.

When boundaries are unclear in a clergy-parishioner counseling session, feelings may cross the thresholds established in baptismal, ordination, or marriage vows which can be crippling and destructive to the authenticity and effectiveness of ministry.

Clergy then are responsible for knowing and complying with the following standards:

1. Clergy are to be aware of the power differential that exists between them and their parishioners and are not to exploit the trust and dependency of these persons.
2. The secrecy of a sacramental confession is morally absolute for the confessor and must never be broken. BCP page 446, Canon IV I, 1,3,6.
3. Clergy should maintain the confidentiality of information gained in pastoral counseling, spiritual direction and supervision unless
  - a. they are required by law to disclose, or
  - b. a careful examination of the consequences of disclosure upon the counselee, other persons, and the community, leads to the conclusion that it is ethically more responsible to disclose the information only to an appropriate person(s). If disclosure is indicated, it should be as limited in scope as possible consistent with the reasons for disclosure.
4. Clergy should refrain from disclosing to others information regarding private matters with which they are entrusted by parishioners or clergy.
5. Clergy are to be aware of the danger signs of sexual boundary breakdown: excessive self-disclosure by the pastor, excessive availability, including or receiving inappropriate gifts; excessive touch however innocent; undue anticipation of future visits, including rearrangement of one's schedule; fretting about clothing or appearance; meeting in unusual location, continual fantasy about the person; and keeping of secrets which go beyond the requirements of professional confidentiality.
6. Clergy must be aware that there are sexually aggressive, even predatory, persons among parishioners and others who seek them out in the parish, at conferences and in public. Until there is clarity about a person's motives for seeking a relationship with a clergy person, prudence is advised regarding times and places of meetings. Clergy must, however, remember that the responsibility of maintaining appropriate boundaries remain with the clergy person.

7. Clergy are responsible for seeking the counsel and pastoral guidance of a person of spiritual wisdom should they find themselves at risk of acting on sexual or romantic attraction to a parishioner, client, or counselee.
8. Clergy are to be aware of the 6-session limit per counselee in order to determine how referrals are to be negotiated if more than 6 sessions are indicated. Clergy need to recognize that they are caregivers and not trained psychological counselors.
9. The setting for one-on-one-sessions needs to be carefully assessed. It is highly encouraged that no one is secluded behind closed doors. A windowed door or door ajar will help establish boundaries for both parties. The Altar rail also provides a suitable setting for prayer/caregiving.
10. Clergy are responsible for seeking the pastoral supervision and guidance they may need in order to stay on task as caregivers. Ongoing continuing education, supervision, and training will assist in achieving appropriate skill levels and healthy pastoral relationships.

### ***Finances***

How we all handle money has a direct impact on our relationship with Christ. If we are unfaithful with money, our relationship with the Lord will suffer. Clergy who practice poor stewardship of their personal and family finances will fail in an important aspect of their leadership in their faith community. We are to model effective stewardship for ourselves, our families and as a wholesome example to our congregation. As clergy we are to:

- Adopt the tithe as the minimum standard of our giving in gratitude and obedience and commit ourselves to give at least 10% of our personal income to God's work.
- Exercise care in the use of credit and indebtedness.
- Refrain from being individually responsible for handling church offerings, counting offerings, etc.
- Live within the confines of the compensation negotiated with our churches and other personal income. Solicitation of personal gifts from parishioners

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directly or indirectly is inappropriate and may be an abuse of power and an ethical violation. Churches need to insure adequate remuneration for clergy (based on diocesan guidelines) so that there is no unnecessary pressure on the clergy to look elsewhere for support.

- Encourage Vestries and other leadership to responsible financial management of parish funds to include loss prevention policies, audits and other reviews.
- Adhere to the Diocesan policy on Discretionary Funds.

### *Time*

The use of time often has more to do with attitude than with work. When the job also becomes the hobby of the clergy person, we are often asking for burnout and other foreseeable problems. Clergy are expected to take:

#### **Time for Self:**

Time should be set aside for

- Prayer - set aside daily
- Study - regularly to suit individual interest
- Rest - with at least 1 1/2 days off weekly
- Vacation - 4 weeks, not counting time away for "mission" activities
- Attending to personal needs including everything from haircuts to doctors' appointments to movies
- Time with family and friends
- Exercise, recreation, hobbies, play

#### **Time for Professional Study:**

- Preparation for teaching and preaching - weekly
- Workshops on homiletics every few years
- Preparation time for liturgy/music
- Counseling training
- Community issue awareness
- Acquaintance with mission opportunities including occasional travel

**Time for Ministry:**

- Consider frequency of hospital visits: is a daily visit by clergy necessary or should a lay pastoral care team assist in visits after the initial visit of a regular hospital stay; should clergy using the same hospital create a network so that all parishioners are seen frequently without so many visits by a single clergyperson.
- Set aside specific times for administrative duties so that they will neither be abandoned nor be the overwhelming feature of one's ministry.
- Set aside time for community activities for the sake of mission and evangelism as well as fulfillment.
- Set aside time for collegial gatherings recognizing our need for one another for support and encouragement as well as recognizing the guilt often felt in the time required when this needs to be a high priority.
- Set aside specific times for staff meetings, wardens meetings, committee meetings, and vestry meetings (one should not be expected to be out more than 2-3 nights per week).
- Know limits for areas of counseling and be prepared to refer parishioners to professionals for help.
- Be realistic about the number of people one can carry as a spiritual director.
- Deacons should review letter of agreement annually as to job description and time involved in ministry.

**Time for Continuing Education:**

- Set aside time for a spiritual retreat one or twice a year (this should be differentiated from the normal continuing education time as it is as much professional preparation as a personal, spiritual need).

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- Set aside at least two weeks per year for continuing education for full-time parochial clergy.
- Deacons should set aside two/three days each year for continuing education perhaps through ICS and, hopefully, paid for by their parish.

### *Staff Relations*

Our congregations are blessed with wonderful staffs, both paid and voluntary. As faithful stewards of this resource we affirm the following:

- Parishes should be informed that all staff serve at the pleasure of the Rector/Vicar and are expected to tender their resignation when a new Rector is called or a new Vicar is appointed. (Title III, Canon 14(b) of National Church Canons and Canon XVI, Section 1 & 2 of Diocesan Canons)
- It is strongly recommended that Personnel Committees be established by Vestries to review compensation, reimbursement, and mutual expectations for all clergy (priests and deacons) and lay employees.
- Annual evaluations by an immediate supervisor should be conducted for all employees.
- Personnel files should be maintained for all employees, including documentation that a background inquiry has been conducted.
- Mutual support, encouragement, and respect for confidentiality are to be maintained within church staffs.