

NEW CITY CHURCH CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEADERS

Adopted by the Board of New City Church.

Effective Date: 24/2/24

This document was adapted, with thanks, from the Uniting Church of Australia's Code of Conduct for Leaders

In this Code, "Leader" refers to anyone in a leadership position at NCC, including (but not limited to) Pastors, Community Leaders, and Board Members.

This Code is to be applied in the context of the Constitution of NCC which broadly states the Church's requirements in relation to the conduct and accountability of its Leaders.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Christian community is called into being by God through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Its life and fellowship is derived from the fact that the Church is the Body of Christ, the presence of Christ in the world. We are united in a fellowship of love, service, suffering and joy through our shared faith in Christ. We worship, pray, give our witness, study the Bible and other sources of faith, offer pastoral care to each other, develop deep friendships, and seek to be mutually accountable. We are, for this reason, a deeply intimate community.

1.2 Leaders have a particular place within that community. They touch people's lives at many points of joy, pain, celebration, grief and vulnerability. They are responsible for providing leadership in the community's task of worshipping, offering the good news of Jesus, providing pastoral care, standing with those who suffer, and working for justice and peace. They lead within a pastoral relationship in which they seek to enable other people to focus on God as the source of healing, restoration and wholeness.

1.3 The pastoral relationship occurs within a faith community whose life and relationships are established by Jesus Christ. The pastoral relationship has its meaning, and is established and maintained, as the church enables others to meet Jesus who nourishes our lives. The pastoral relationship is part of the way the church is nourished and built up as the Body of Christ, and nurtures life in the world. As a result of this context, Leaders also have relationships and responsibilities within the broader community which are based on their responsibilities within the faith community.

1.4 It is the seriousness of the pastoral relationship, and the vulnerability of people in that relationship, which make it necessary for Leaders to appreciate their unique position and the way they touch people's lives. They exercise considerable influence and power. It is essential that each individual Leader recognises the power they have and understands the boundaries that the church requires to be observed within their ministry.

1.5 Because the pastoral relationship occurs in a deeply intimate community, friendships will develop. These will, at times, challenge the capacity of Leaders to provide the pastoral care that belongs to their role as Leader. Leaders have responsibility to distinguish times when objective pastoral care is required. They have the responsibility to discern the boundaries of the pastoral relationship, to offer pastoral care when it is required, and to discern when their relationships overstep the appropriate level of friendship and intimacy, or when they are exercising power inappropriately in relation to others in the pastoral relationship.

1.6 NCC understands that as Leaders live out God's call to ministry, all relationships shall be characterised by the love, care and compassion that was embodied in Jesus Christ. The requirement is that Leaders will exhibit a mature Christian faith in all their relationships and in particular embody integrity, trust and compassion.

1.7 People enter ministry as a response to a call from God and the Church. It is this call that requires that all Leaders carry out their ministry in a professional and accountable manner.

1.8 NCC is a diverse church and as such is made up of people from across many different cultural, denominational, and traditional backgrounds. Each culture and tradition has its own unique expression of community and relationships, which need to be borne in mind when overseeing the behaviour of Leaders. In ministry with people from diverse cultural backgrounds these unique expressions form an important part of the intimate community which is formed and inform how Leaders express their ministry.

2. THE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

(N.B. Leaders should note the relationship between this section and Section 4: Particular relationships)

2.1 Recognising that all relationships in the Christian community are intended to nurture the church and people's relationship with Christ, in the context of this Code of Ethics, the pastoral relationship means the relationship between a Leader and another person:

- (a) "in which the Leader is providing spiritual care for the person; or
- (b) where the person has looked to the Leader for guidance, protection or care; or
- (c) where the person has made contact with the Leader in their responsibility or function as Leader"

Leaders are in a pastoral relationship with all members and adherents of NCC through the commitments they make at their induction, commissioning or other service of recognition. Leaders may form pastoral relationships in a variety of contexts. Where Leaders form relationships through

the internet and other technology any pastoral relationships they form are to be conducted in a manner consistent with this Code.

2.2 The pastoral relationship is concerned for maturity in Christian life, and for fullness of life for all people, regardless of their age, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, economic circumstances or other personal characteristics. It is a relationship in which Leaders seek to express an ethic of care, which includes nurturing the other person's power over their own life as they relate to others and to God.

2.3 The pastoral relationship is nurtured and guided through the commitments Leaders make when being commissioned. These commitments reflect the intention of Leaders to exercise their ministry:

- (a) through faith in Jesus Christ and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit;
- (c) by being nourished and guided by the study of the Bible;
- (d) through embodying the Good News in Christ to all;
- (e) through faithful affirmation of, and celebration of sacraments;
- (f) in a mutual manner, offering pastoral care and nurturing people in faith, recognising and valuing other people's gifts, training them for ministry and working cooperatively with their ministry;
- (g) through working for justice and peace;
- (h) by striving for peace and unity among all Christian people;
- (i) by engaging in ongoing study;
- (k) within the discipline of the church.

2.4 Leaders shall exercise their ministry in a manner that expresses:

- (a) commitment to God;
- (b) inclusiveness of the Gospel;
- (c) accountability;
- (d) commitment to the call of the church to ministry;
- (e) the professional nature of the relationship, and ensures:
 - (i) that Leaders do not seek to meet their personal needs through the pastoral relationship;
 - (ii) that clear boundaries are recognised and observed (ie. the relationship and behaviour are appropriate to the pastoral relationship);
 - (iii) respect, sensitivity and reverence for others;
 - (iv) confidentiality;
 - (vi) non-abusive use of power;
 - (vii) commitment to justice.

3. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

3.1 Relationships with Colleagues

- (a) Leaders shall work within the polity of NCC, respecting the rights and responsibilities of those who share leadership in NCC, both lay and ordained.
- (b) Leaders shall respect the call and placement of other Leaders. They shall recognise those people who are colleagues, or those with whom they are in team ministry, as equals in standing and responsibility in the fulfillment of their duties as a Leader in that placement
- (c) Leaders have particular authority in relation to other Leaders and lay staff shall:

- (i) Be guided by the principles of collegiate ministry
 - (ii) Exercise their power justly and in a clearly accountable manner;
- (d) Leaders who are under the particular authority of other Leaders or lay staff shall accept the guidance and direction of those who have been tasked with leadership.
- (e) Leaders shall:
- (i) be willing to work with and support any recognised person as colleagues in ministries; and
 - (ii) be willing to encourage, equip and support any person in all forms of ministry in the Church and to foster the Church's position in this regard
- (f) Leaders shall respect the professional expertise of members of other disciplines/professions with whom they work in the Church or other institutions.
- (g) Retired Leaders shall recognise the inherent power they have in the congregations in which they are members. In seeking to express the principles of collegiality they:
- (i) shall respect the call and placement of those in ministry;
 - (ii) may support and encourage those in ministry if asked to do so;
 - (iii) shall not encourage discontent about or seek to interfere with the ministry of a Leader (whether in their own congregation or elsewhere);
 - (iv) may express leadership within the congregation of which they are a member when invited to do so by the Leader in placement.

3.2 Teaching

Leaders have a responsibility to represent accurately the teachings of the Bible and of the Church in its diversity. When teaching, preaching or leading worship, Leaders have an obligation to present the gospel of Jesus Christ, guided by the witness to Christ in the Bible, to take seriously the tradition of faith and worship of the church; and to share that faith in the language and forms of that are culturally appreciated by NCC.

In particular, Leaders shall:

- (a) faithfully represent the diverse meanings of biblical passages;
- (b) accurately represent the degree to which experts in a discipline support their views;
- (c) accurately represent opposing views;
- (d) be open to challenge and correction from colleagues.

3.3 Competence

- (a) Leaders have a responsibility to maintain high standards of knowledge and skills in all the areas of ministry relevant to their placement. This responsibility requires that Leaders undertake continuing education appropriate to this ministry.
- (b) Leaders shall not misrepresent their competence, qualifications, training or experience.
- (c) Leaders shall refrain from offering to undertake and / or engage in work beyond their level of competence; and shall make appropriate referrals. Referrals are appropriate when a person does not have the required:
 - (i) professional competence or expertise;
 - (ii) pastoral competence;
 - (iii) cultural competence or experience;
- (d) Where Leaders are forced by circumstances to provide care beyond their normal level of competence they shall:

- (i) discuss this with their supervisor;
 - (ii) seek guidance from a person with appropriate competence;
 - (iii) where warranted, seek opportunities to develop the appropriate skills.
- (e) Leaders shall end a pastoral relationship when it is not beneficial for the other person or where the help needed is outside their pastoral competence.

3.4 Professionalism

- (a) Leaders shall exercise their ministry to the other person in the pastoral relationship in a professional manner. This includes, but is not limited to:
- (i) offering the best quality care, leadership of worship and preaching of which they are capable;
 - (ii) offering appropriate Christian teaching;
 - (iii) appropriately dealing with emotional and spiritual needs;
 - (iv) being sensitive to people's different social contexts;
 - (v) following recognised and acknowledged modes of working in specialist areas such as bereavement, trauma and suicide;
 - (vi) being sensitive to the needs and vulnerability of the children and young people with whom they work, ensuring that the professional nature of the relationship is made clear in an appropriate way;
 - (vii) being sensitive to the needs of, and ways of relating to, people from any different cultures with whom they have contact including being aware of one's own inherent cultural bias.
- (b) Leaders shall not engage in sexual relationships with people in their professional pastoral care.
- (c) Leaders have a responsibility to provide unbiased pastoral care to those with whom they disagree, and to consult their supervisor in relation to the situation.
- (d) Where there is an actual or potential conflict of interest in matters affecting Leaders, their family or their financial interests, the Leaders shall absent themselves from discussion and decision-making.
- (e) Reflecting the values and vision of NCC on social media

3.5 Power

- (a) Leaders shall recognise the power that is inherent in their role and shall not use this power in a manner which is abusive or unprofessional. In particular, they shall not use their power to:
- (i) gain personal or financial advantage for themselves or family members;
 - (ii) harass or intimidate other people including other Leaders;
 - (iii) exploit or abuse other people physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually or financially.
- (b) Leaders shall assist people to understand the power they have and to use it in appropriate ways.
- (c) Leaders shall not engage in bullying. Bullying is considered repeated unwelcome and unsolicited behaviour towards a person who considers it offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening; and which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would consider to be offensive, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.
- (d) Leaders who believe they are the subject of an abuse of power or bullying should seek to resolve the issue consistent with section 8 of this Code.

3.6 Confidentiality

- (a) Leaders shall not breach confidentiality. Confidentiality is not about secrecy. In the context of a pastoral relationship, it is an assurance that Leaders will not share written or spoken information about an individual with other people [except as indicated in (d) below], or use it for a purpose other than for which it was collected.
- (b) In the processes of the church, there are also times when, because of its personal nature or its potential for misuse or harm, some information may be designated confidential
- (c) In a pastoral relationship Leaders shall take care to discuss the nature and limits of their confidentiality with the other person.
- (d) Information received in the context of a pastoral relationship shall remain confidential unless:
 - (i) the person gives permission for the particular disclosure; or
 - (ii) retaining such information would result in significant physical, emotional or sexual harm to another person or persons; or
 - (iii) required by law; or
 - (iv) 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); or
 - (v) disclosure is required in accordance with the terms of placement/employment applicable in a particular appointment.
- (e) Leaders should ensure the integrity of any records, particularly electronic records, by putting in place appropriate security procedures.
- (e) Confidentiality also requires that Leaders shall not seek to gain sensitive or confidential information to which they are not entitled or which would require another person to breach a confidence.

3.7 Self Care

Leaders shall take responsibility to:

- (a) address their physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health needs and, where appropriate, seek assistance from a qualified professional;
- (b) participate in supervision;
- (c) give adequate priority to their relationship with their family and friends;
- (d) nurture personal relationships which assist them in their wholeness;
- (e) take appropriate and regular leave, and time off from work for recreational activity.

3.8 Supervision

- (a) Leaders have a responsibility to recognise that they are also vulnerable, requiring them to maintain their professionalism in difficult circumstances.
- (b) Leaders shall keep appropriate pastoral records (eg. details of appointments and referrals and a journal of critical incidents).
- (c) Professional supervision means the relationship Leaders have with another professional whereby the Leader is assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry including competencies, time management, priorities and any difficulties arising in ministry.
- (d) Leaders have a responsibility to ensure that they receive regular professional supervision. Such supervision is intended to assist Leaders to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationships and quality of ministry.
- (e) Leaders shall discuss with their supervisor any ongoing situations of conflict in which they are involved in the course of their work.

(f) Where applicable, Leaders shall maintain membership requirements of any relevant professional association (eg, psychologists or counsellors.)

4. PARTICULAR RELATIONSHIPS

4.1 A particular relationship refers to a close personal relationship between a Leader and another person such as:

- (a) a very close personal friendship; or
- (b) a close family relationship; or
- (c) a marriage; or
- (d) a relationship which is becoming romanticised.

4.2 Some particular relationships may exist within the pastoral community. In such circumstances the Leader should not be the sole provider of pastoral care, but steps should be taken to ensure professional pastoral care is available to the other person (eg. the spouse of the Leader, a close friend).

4.3 Leaders shall recognise those situations in which it is inappropriate for them to enter into, or continue in, a pastoral relationship. In such situations Leaders shall ensure that appropriate care is arranged for the other persons involved.

4.4 In some circumstances it will be appropriate for a Leader to cease a pastoral relationship in order to enter a particular relationship. In the event that a Leader and a person with whom they have been in a pastoral relationship identify a potential particular relationship, the Leader shall:

- (a) disengage from the pastoral relationship and arrange alternative pastoral care for the other person;
- (b) seek advice on the appropriateness of such a particular relationship, preferably through supervision;
- (c) encourage the other person to talk with someone else about the relationship;
- (d) disclose the relationship to an appropriate officer of the Church (eg. chairperson of the Board).

5. GIFTS AND FEES

5.1 Leaders shall not seek financial gain for themselves or their families from a pastoral relationship beyond recognised fees, stipends and entitlements.

5.2 Where Leaders receive gifts resulting from the pastoral relationship the Leader shall use discretion concerning the acceptance or return of gifts by considering the intent, value and affordability of the gift and whether there is a risk of the Leader being compromised or losing objectivity. Advice shall be sought from the appropriate Board member if the Leader is uncertain or others have expressed uncertainty about the appropriateness of a gift.

5.3 Leaders accepting a gift to satisfy cultural traditions should be sensitive and gracious while still considering the appropriateness of gift. Where Leaders do accept the gift they should then look at the appropriate use of the gift to benefit the community of faith. Leaders should not seek to use “cultural traditions” as a basis for accepting an otherwise inappropriate gift.

5.4 Leaders shall not use their ministry to recruit clients for private practice or commercial interests. Leaders in full time ministry shall not use their ministry skills as a basis for significant commercial benefit while in ministry with the Church.

6. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LAW

6.1 Leaders shall inform the Board of any matter which may lead to legal action against the Leader and/or the Church.

6.2 It is unethical for Leaders deliberately to break the law or encourage another to do so. The only exception would be in instances of political resistance or civil disobedience.

7. WORKING WITHIN INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS, THE WIDER CHURCH OR WITH OTHER PROFESSIONS

(For example hospital, prison or ecumenical organisations)

7.1 Leaders shall be aware of those Codes of Ethics or similar guidelines in institutions or ministry locations where they may work (eg. hospitals, prisons). Leaders in such ministry locations have a responsibility to abide by those Code of Ethics also.

7.2 Leaders shall acknowledge situations when their ministry takes place in a particular structured work environment. Leaders shall comply with all the relevant standards, policies, procedures, practices, guidelines, governance arrangements and performance management practices that apply to employees, workers and those in ministry within that organisation. Notwithstanding, for Leaders in placement the Regulations governing placements will always apply.

7.3 Where the demands of institutions or other organisations conflict with this Code of Ethics, Leaders shall clarify the nature of the conflict between those demands and the principles of this Code. Leaders shall inform all parties of any conflict and seek to resolve it.

7.4 Leaders who exercise ministry in organisations with their own policies and procedures for matters also covered under the Code shall normally seek to resolve issues following the procedures of that organisation.

8. BREACH OF CODE OF ETHICS

8.1 Breach of this Code of Ethics refers to any violation of the requirements or principles of the Code by Leaders. It includes any instance where Leaders have deliberately encouraged another to breach the terms of the Code. It also includes any breach which occurs via the internet or through other technology even in circumstances where those who have been affected cannot be identified.

8.2 When Leaders know of a Code violation by another Leader, and it seems appropriate, they shall informally attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the matter of concern to the attention of that Leader in a constructive manner. If this is not practical, or does not address the issue of concern, the facts shall be reported to the Board.

8.3 Leaders are required to inform the Chairperson of the Board if the behaviour of any Leader, lay employee or lay appointee could be considered as misconduct.

8.4 It is the responsibility of the Board for Counselling in the first instance to deal with an allegation of a breach of this Code and where appropriate refer to other bodies. An allegation of a sexual

misconduct which could amount to a breach of the Code should be forwarded immediately to the Chairperson of the Board.

8.5 Where breaches of the Code lead to civil or criminal action, prior to the conclusion of dealing with the breach Board should consider the need to suspend action under the Code until the outcome of any action. Nevertheless, all complaints of a breach of the Code should be fully dealt with in as timely a manner as possible.