

## **ST ANDREWS UNITING CHURCH LEADERS CODE OF CONDUCT**

This Leaders Code of Conduct outlines ministry-appropriate boundaries. It applies to all elders and program leaders in our church.

Ministers in the Uniting Church (including Candidates, Community Ministers, Deacons, Deaconesses, Interns, Lay Pastors, Ministers of the Word, Pastors, Youth Workers) are required to abide by the Uniting Church Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice.

We acknowledge that everyone who attends our church needs to be confident that they will be cared for, nurtured and encouraged as they grow and at the same time, protected from spiritual, physical, and emotional harm. We therefore commit to the following ministry standards.

### **a. We minister out of a relationship with God by:**

- joining regularly in the life and ministry of the church.
- studying the Scriptures in private and in groups.
- praying regularly in private and in fellowship with and for the people and ministry of the church.
- giving of our time and finances to the work of the church, as an expression of our gratitude to God.

### **b. We serve others in the context of healthy relationships by:**

- loving and caring for our families; paying attention to the effect of ministry on them.
- treating others with respect; teaching and exercising authority respectfully.
- upholding confidentiality; not disclosing to anyone any confidential information without the consent of the person providing the information. (There is an exception where there is a legal obligation or a duty of care issue.)
- being a team player; cooperating with others in ministry and being receptive to feedback.
- using words that build up; not ridiculing or embarrassing people.
- avoiding ongoing counselling of people with whom we have pastoral (ministry) relationships.
- making alternative arrangements for pastoral ministry for any person with whom we develop an romantic relationship.

### **c. As Christian leaders we will:**

- be accountable to our team, watch out for each other and protect each other's integrity, e.g. never alone with one child or vulnerable adult.
- treat every program participant equally, 'no favourites'.
- communicate with integrity, including accountable and wise use of electronic communication, commit to following our team guidelines for electronic communication.
- acknowledge when we are out of our depth and/or do not possess the required skills in difficult pastoral situations, such as helping a victim of abuse, or a person who needs professional counselling, and seek help from a supervisor or denominational leader.
- not take property belonging to others, including intellectual property (copyright).
- not knowingly making false, misleading, deceptive or defamatory statements.

- not engage in bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, sexual grooming or spiritual abuse of any person.
- not act violently or intentionally provoke violence when engaged in civil disobedience.
- be responsible in our use of addictive substances and services (e.g. prescriptions, alcohol).
- not use any prohibited substance.
- act with sexual purity. Sexuality is a gift from God. We will express our sexuality in healthy and God-directed ways.
- act with financial integrity, including having accountable and transparent systems in place for financial matters.
- not seek personal advantage or financial gain from our positions, other than in wages, recognised allowances and deductions.
- disclose to the church council if we are or have been investigated for any criminal offences or have any knowledge of serious criminal activity.

#### **When the Leaders Code of Conduct is breached**

- i) Minor breach: Everyone is capable of sin but can repent and be forgiven (1 John 1:8-9). When this code is breached in an area that is not a breach of civil or criminal law, steps will be taken to ensure that the breach does not occur again. In some cases it may be necessary to step a person aside from their duties whilst this takes place.
- ii) Repeated breach: There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law, but still unacceptable behaviour in a ministry context. Where a leader has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:
  - a) the minister will meet with the person for behaviour review meetings (no more than 3 meetings).
  - b) If behaviour continues, a small group of elders will arrange a meeting to address the behaviour. Stepping aside of the person is appropriate at this point.
  - c) If the behaviour continues beyond this meeting, then respectfully, and upholding confidentiality, the person will be stood down for a set period. They will be offered help in changing their behaviour via counselling if they are willing.

Written notes of all meetings to be carefully taken and a copy given to all parties.

- iii) Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse: Such breaches will be referred to the appropriate government authorities, in line with Uniting Church in Australia Synod of NSW & ACT processes. Contact will be made with the Synod Associate Secretary on 02 8267 4323.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

Elders: share with the minister in spiritual oversight of the congregation. They are responsible for building up the congregation in faith and love, sustaining its members in hope, and leading them into a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world. At St Andrews, all elders comprise the church council, which is the body with oversight of the total life and mission of the congregation.

Program leaders: Are people responsible for a ministry program or set of programs.