



**Churches of Christ
in South Australia and Northern Territory Inc.**

ABN 72 700 201 397

**The Practice of Ministry
Code of Ethics**

**Professional and Ethical Standards
Applicable to People in Ministry
in Churches of Christ**

*Adopted by the State Board of Churches of Christ
in South Australia and Northern Territory
7th December 2018*

Evaluation, Review and Update

The Practice of Ministry Code of Ethics will be reviewed regularly. This document is clearly marked with the date of adoption by the State Board of Churches of Christ in South Australia and Northern Territory Inc.

Evaluation of The Practice of Ministry Code of Ethics will take place regularly with a view to making revisions or a decision about their usefulness on a five year cycle. More regular revision may take place if required. The State Board will provide opportunity for ministers or members of Affiliated churches to contribute to the review of this Code.

Contents

The Practice of Ministry: An Introduction 4

The Priestly Role
The Prophetic Role
The Servant Role
The Mutual Role

The Practice of Ministry

Code of Ethics: Professional and Ethical Standards Applicable to People in Ministry 5

The Purpose of the Document
The Scope of this Document
In General
Guiding Principles
Minimum Standard

Code of Ethics

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | People in Ministry and Personal Life | 6 |
| 2 | People in Ministry and Those to Whom They Minister | 6 |
| 3 | People in Ministry and the Church | 7 |
| 4 | People in Ministry and Colleagues in Ministry | 8 |
| 5 | People in Ministry and Society | 8 |

Appendices

| | |
|---|----|
| Guidelines regarding Confidentiality | 9 |
| Guidelines regarding Boundaries and Sexuality | 10 |
| Definition of Spiritual Abuse | 13 |
| Guidelines regarding Counseling | 14 |
| Ministering within Competency | 15 |
| Guidelines regarding Romantic Relationships in Ministry | 16 |
| Guidelines regarding Internet Usage | 17 |

Contact Persons:

Mark Riessen

Mission & Ministry Director
Churches of Christ in SA & NT
PO Box 743, Torrensville Plaza SA 5031
08 8443 7572
0422 115 259
mriessen@churchesofchrist-sa.org.au

Jim Keatch

Chair, Ministry Professional
Standards Committee
Churches of Christ SA & NT
0412 343 917
jimkeatch@adam.com.au

Mrs Di Forrester

Member, Ministry Professional Standards Committee
Churches of Christ in SA & NT
0415 578 926

The Practice of Ministry: An Introduction

The nature of ministry requires people in ministry to be wholesome examples to others. It is the responsibility of a person in ministry to be respectful of, and act responsibly towards the people who are within their duty of care. This Code of Ethics is intended to describe an ethical practice of ministry for the benefit of both those who minister and those who are recipients of ministry, in everyday life.

These guidelines provide basic guidance, although they cannot address every ethical question that will arise for those appointed to ministry positions. The four basic principles on which people in ministry are called to pattern their practice of ministry, come from the example of Jesus Christ:

The Priestly Role

Human beings are created in the image of God with a clear recognition in Scripture that each person is of unique value. People in ministry have a particular responsibility to respect and enable all people to fulfill their calling as children of God.

People in ministry are called to encourage, lead and guide those who seek their ministry, recognising the personal autonomy of all made in the image of God.

The Prophetic Role

Those who minister in the name of Jesus Christ's love will act with respect, consideration and truthfulness towards all people.

People in ministry are called to seek justice where there is oppression and truth where there is deceit.

The Servant Role

People in ministry are called to a ministry of service carried out in humility and marked by deep spiritual love. The abuse of power and privilege has no place in ministry and the exercise of a Christ-like ministry means that people in ministry will be aware of their relationship with all with whom they come into contact, and will seek to avoid harm, whilst actively seeking to do good.

The Mutual Role

Those who minister within the life of the church share in the ministry of Christ. Within that ministry all exercise particular responsibility, and are accountable to each other and to Christ for the exercising of such ministry.

The Practice of Ministry

Code of Ethics: Professional and Ethical Standards Applicable to People in Ministry in Churches of Christ

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the professional and ethical standards of people in ministry

within Churches of Christ in South Australia and Northern Territory Inc (C of C SA/NT).

Scope

These principles apply to Ministers, Chaplains and employees of the Churches, Partner Departments and Agencies of C of C SA/NT (**whether ordained, endorsed, trained, student or lay**) **who have formally recognised ministry positions** within C of C SA/NT, its mission agencies, associated interchurch ministries and the like, as defined or listed within the C of C SA/NT Directory.

In General

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to the view that all people should be able to live and work in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind. Our commitment to cultivating an environment where a diversity of health and growing churches can thrive includes a commitment to churches being safe places for all people.

The ethical practice of ministry has, amongst other things, significant legal implications for both the church and paid ministry staff. To that end, a separate *Procedure for Investigating Complaints that Breach the Code of Ethics* document has been prepared for the investigation of complaints.

Guiding Principles

This Code of Ethics seeks to apply to the ministerial or pastoral relationship, those standards that God expects of all people. People in various forms of recognised ministry are therefore expected to be examples and models of Christian faith and practice.

It is the unambiguous duty of any person in a ministry position not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, whether that gain is financial or in terms of power or sexual gratification, or otherwise. This includes any action, verbal, written or electronic, physical or emotional that could be interpreted as emotional or spiritual abuse.

The adoption of this Code of Ethics and the related Procedure document for investigating breaches of the Code reflects a deep desire to ensure an environment for an open, accountable process that seeks to express justice and compassion to all parties.

Minimum Standard

The ethical standards derived from each general principle provide the minimum expectations with regards to the professional conduct of those in **formally recognised ministry positions**. Professional conduct that does not meet these standards is seen to be unethical and is subject to review in accordance with the *Procedure for Investigating Complaints that Breach the Code of Ethics*. Where specific conduct is not identified by the standards, the general principles will apply.

The Code of Ethics

This code has been written in recognition of the power differential between people in ministry roles and the people they serve. The potential for this power imbalance to impact detrimentally on relationships is high. These guidelines have been established to help inform the proper conduct in all aspects of personal relationships between people in ministry and those they serve.

1 People in Ministry and Personal Life

A person in ministry will in accordance with the Churches of Christ Renewable Accreditation Programme:

- 1.1 Use continuing education, or personal development courses (not necessarily formal courses of education) to learn and improve strategies of self-care.
- 1.2 Strive to keep public and private life above reproach.
- 1.3 Ensure that in ministry there is a clear awareness of the risk of over commitment and avoidance of responsibility.
- 1.4 Be accountable, through appropriate, recognised and affirmed external supervision, for their own emotional, mental, physical and spiritual health, and value its effect upon their professional engagements and pastoral care.
- 1.5 Acknowledge the duty of care they have for their own families and friends.
- 1.6 Avoid entering into situations or relationships with colleagues, individuals or organisations, which may diminish the ability of a person in ministry to maintain professional integrity and independence.

2 People in Ministry and Those to Whom they Minister

A person in ministry will:

- 2.1 Practice or exercise ministry within the limits of their expertise and to the best of their ability.¹
- 2.2 Use continuing education and/or professional development (not necessarily formal education) to improve professional standards of care.
- 2.3 Ensure that they do not exploit those in their care for any reason, e.g. sexual, emotional, personal power, spiritual or financial purposes.
- 2.4 Treat those to whom they minister, and all with whom they come into contact, with compassion and respect for the human person.
- 2.5 Respect the dignity of the human person, regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference.
- 2.6 Respect the right of all people to make their own decisions and choices in life.
- 2.7 Respect the right of all to whom they minister to a relationship of mutual trust, privacy and confidentiality². Accordingly, information divulged in confidence by people will not be discussed with others unless consent is given, except in exceptional cases, involving legislation (e.g. Childsafe) or a serious risk to life or wellbeing or where the health or welfare of the church is at serious risk. This includes the passing on of information to those in a ministry team. Where possible, the permission of the person concerned should be obtained in writing before passing on any information given confidentially, except in the case where there is serious risk to life or wellbeing, when the person in ministry may be required to pass on that information to an appropriate person.
- 2.8 Ensure that where limits of confidentiality apply, they will seek to inform people of

¹ For a more detailed discussion of competence boundaries see Appendix 5

² For a more detailed discussion of issues relating to confidentiality see Appendix 1

those limits, for example, where there is clear danger to the safety of a person. In such exceptional circumstances, they will seek to consult with those who have provided the information prior to breaking such confidentiality.

- 2.9 Recommend the seeking of additional opinions and services where the ministry required is not within their counselling competence or where there is a conflict of interest³.
- 2.10 Refer people to another competent colleague, ensuring continuity of care, where there is a conflict of interest.
- 2.11 Ensure that where fees are charged for any service, those to whom they minister are aware of all fees beforehand, and are aware that an individual's pastoral needs take precedence over capacity to pay.
- 2.12 Refrain from sexual exploitation or sexual harassment⁴. This involves the recognition that those exercising ministry are in a position of power relative to those receiving ministry. This power means that sexual relations within any relationship involving the discharge of ministry can never be between equals and breaches the obligations of a person in ministry. Sexual harassment covers a wide range of behaviours. These may include such unwelcome actions as gestures or the display of offensive pictures through to explicit demands, suggestions of sexual activity, patting, pinching and rape.
- 2.13 Refrain from sexual activity with any individual for whom there is a pastoral responsibility. [See Appendix 6 Guidelines regarding Romantic Relationships in Ministry.]
- 2.14 Be aware that while "touch" is an essential component of human compassion, what we intend with a touch, hug or a kiss, is open to interpretation by the recipient. Great care must be taken in using touch during ministry encounters.
- 2.15 Refrain from using emotional and spiritual abuse, recognising that both are difficult to identify from one person to another⁵.
- 2.16 Encourage those to whom they minister to move towards self-determination under God, recognising the responsibility for their own lives.

3 People in Ministry and the Church

A person in ministry will:

- 3.1 Recognise that membership of the Body of Christ implies a partnership in ministry, and that they will follow the proper counsel of those to whom they are accountable (for example: Church Board, Elders, Leaders, Ministry Work Group or State Board).
- 3.2 Contribute professional expertise and experience to the development of ministry, policy and practice within Churches of Christ.
- 3.3 Uphold professional standards of practice in ministry, and work through engagement with the Churches of Christ Renewable Accreditation Programme.
- 3.4 Ensure that in pastoral situations these two commitments are maintained - Ministry that is offered will be of the highest quality.
People in ministry are accountable to those receiving that ministry for its quality and impact.
- 3.5 Affirm all people within the life of the Church, and seek to provide ministry regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference.

³ For a more detailed discussion of issues relating to counselling see Appendix 4

⁴ For a more detailed discussion of issues relating to boundaries and sexuality see Appendix 3

⁵ For a more detailed definition of spiritual abuse see Appendix 2

- 3.6 Consult with the church's governance group, before accepting remuneration other than that agreed in his/her employment agreement. In ministry roles a guiding principle would be that external employment should never impede or adversely affect the ability of a person in ministry to minister within the agreed vocational ministry time, as assessed together with the church's governance group.
- 3.7 Communicate with the church's governance group immediately the person in ministry begins to doubt their capability to fulfill their appointed role.

4 People in Ministry and Colleagues in Ministry

A person in ministry will:

- 4.1 Ensure that all colleagues in ministry are treated with respect, consideration, fairness, and in good faith.
- 4.2 Recognise and respect the abilities, expertise, areas of responsibility, skills, talents, time commitments and views of colleagues in ministry.
- 4.3 Actively share professional knowledge, skills and experience with colleagues.
- 4.4 Be aware that personal conduct affects their own reputation and that of the profession.
- 4.5 Refrain from making comments that may damage the reputation of colleagues, cause anxiety to a person receiving ministry, or damage the wider profession and Church.
- 4.6 Seek mediation in the face of conflict with colleagues.

5 People in Ministry and Society

A person in ministry will:

- 5.1 Strive to improve the standard and quality of ministry, within the Church and wider community.
- 5.2 Acknowledge that people in ministry have a role in society that carries positive expectations and ensure that they act responsibly and with integrity, so as to maintain such a position of positive expectations and trust.
- 5.4 Seek to be an example of upright behaviour to the members of both the Church and the community, and seek in his/her example to display Christ-likeness in demeanour and actions.
- 5.5 Encourage those to whom ministry is given to live a life centred on faith in Christ and expressed in Christian values.
- 5.6 Recognise the proper concern by the Church for all aspects of society, including political and justice issues. In doing so, people in ministry will encourage robust and authentic debate and dialogue around issues of religion and society. They will respect the right of others to hold and articulate divergent views on such matters.

Appendix 1 Guidelines regarding Confidentiality

Duty of Confidentiality

- 1.1 The establishment and maintenance of confidentiality between a person in ministry and a recipient of ministry is a fundamental aspect of ethical ministry practice, and is considered an essential of ministry. Confidentiality refers to the obligation of those in ministry to protect the privacy of the recipient's personal information. The assurance of confidentiality helps to establish a relationship of trust.
- 1.2 To avoid unintentionally revealing confidential information, a person in ministry should give a consistent ambiguous response to all queries. An appropriate response may be, "I cannot comment either way."
A benign consistently given response avoids a breach of confidentiality by removing the expectation of an informative answer, and inadvertent disclosure from the lack of an answer.
- 1.3 Those in ministry are reminded that the Commonwealth Privacy Act (1988, and subsequent amendments) contains legally binding provisions regarding confidentiality of people's personal information.

Informed Consent

- 2.1 The process of informed consent includes clarifying for the recipient the nature of the provision of (counselling) ministry and the extent of potential disclosure of recipient's information.
- 2.2 As part of the informed consent process, those in ministry explain to recipients the limits of confidentiality. It is preferable to obtain written consent from a recipient that indicates what personal information may be released, under what circumstances and to whom it may be disclosed.
- 2.3 When working with recipients who are young people, those in ministry determine the capacity of the recipient to provide informed consent. A young person is considered capable of giving informed consent when he or she:
 - Can understand the nature of the ministry relationship
 - Has the capacity to make an informed choice
 - Can understand the limits of confidentiality

3. Limits to Confidentiality

- 3.1 Confidentiality is not absolute. There may be occasions when the provision of ministry requires that information is shared among relevant others including health professionals and family members. Such arrangements shall be conveyed and explained to recipients.
- 3.2 At the outset of working with young people as recipients, those in ministry shall clarify the limits of confidentiality with all relevant parties including parents when they are involved in the consent process.
- 3.3 When those in ministry are legally allowed to disclose recipient information but not compelled, this judgement frequently involves the determination of risk, harm or danger to the recipient, which is sometimes referred to as the duty to warn or the duty to protect or care for the recipient or others.
- 3.4 If a person in leadership makes an assessment that a situation is likely to result in a negative spiritual, physical, emotional or mental health impact / damage on the church community, and the disclosure of information will mitigate the risk, then it may be

deemed responsible to share confidential information with appropriate church leadership who are signatory to an appropriate confidentiality agreement.

3.5 Where safety permits, those in ministry should inform recipients:

- If their information is to be disclosed
- About what information is to be disclosed
- Of the circumstances and reasons for the intended disclosure
- To whom and when the disclosure will be made

3.6 When those in ministry choose to disclose recipient information, a decision needs to be made about who will be informed. For example, with suicidal individuals, options might include: GP, Crisis Assessment Team, or police and, for personal support, parents, partner or close friend.

4. Confidentiality of Record

4.1 Those in ministry must ensure record-keeping including diaries, appointment books, and information and communication systems are adequate to maintain recipient confidentiality.

Appendix 2 Definition of Spiritual Abuse

Definitions

"Abuse" is usually defined as treating in a harmful, injurious, or offensive way; to speak insultingly, harshly, and unjustly to or about; revile; malign. The dictionary definition is targeted toward the mental attitude of anger, the behaviours associated with anger, and the cause of anger.

"Spiritual Abuse" is usually defined as verbal, emotional, spiritual, and/or physical harm done to recipients of ministry by the person in ministry or those in leadership. These leaders use their position of authority to coerce, manipulate, and control the recipient of ministry. This type of abuse can be subtle, complex, and hard to discern, and is sometimes not detected until the damage has already been done. However, sometimes it is more obvious, especially when the coercion, manipulation, and control are laced with anger and/or wrath.

In churches this can often take the form of someone claiming a superior spiritual mantle or authority and using that to manipulate/groom others. Spiritual abuse is the abuse of power in the context of Christian community or fellowship. What is devastating about spiritual abuse when compared with other forms of abuse, is that the perpetrators are seen to be representing God; they are people recipients of ministry go to for help, counsel, guidance, direction, support, and love. When people in ministry who represent God are abusive, it can have a great impact on a recipient of ministry's view and perception of God and His church, and on the community's perception of God and His church.

Behaviours that can be defined as Spiritual Abuse:

Rejecting - experiences in which a recipient of ministry's presence, value, or worth is not acknowledged or recognised by the person in ministry; communication to a recipient of ministry that they are worthless and/or inferior to others; devaluing their thoughts, feelings, experiences, etc.

Isolating - this can result in various forms of isolation, including limiting the recipient of ministry's freedom within their environment and/or restricting normal contact with others.

Degrading - identified as behaviour that negatively influences the identity, self-worth, and dignity of a recipient of ministry; this may involve name-calling, ridicule, insults, intimidation, and condescending commentary. **Exploiting/Corrupting** - exploitation of a recipient of ministry for one's own advantage or profit; socialising a recipient of ministry to accept ideas, behaviour, etc. that opposes legal standards and/or crosses personal boundaries.

Terrorising - ongoing threatening behaviour or commentary towards a recipient of ministry such that intense terror or fear is induced; may involve elements of coercion by intimidation.

Neglect - occurs when a person in ministry fails to provide care and concern in a sensitive and responsive manner to a recipient of ministry, when reasonably requested to do so; this may occur when a person in ministry interacts inappropriately, is uninvolved and detached, and/or ignores a recipient of ministry's emotional and/or physical needs.

Appendix 3 Guidelines regarding Boundaries and Sexuality

Spiritual abuse always precedes sexual abuse.

Definitions:

"Multiple relationships" occur when a person in ministry also is or has been:

- a) in a non-ministry relationship with the same individual e.g. sporting team, same small/cell group;
- b) in a non-ministry relationship with an associated party e.g. mechanic, financial advisor, hairdresser;
- c) a recipient of a service provided by the person for whom there is a pastoral responsibility e.g. as in (b) above.

"Sexual relationships" are defined as those involving sexual intercourse and any other behaviours that sexualise the ministry/recipient relationship. Those in ministry must be aware of this definition in their relationships with those to whom they offer and have previously offered ministry.

"Recipients" are any individual for whom a person in ministry would be deemed to have a pastoral responsibility.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 People in ministry operate in a range of settings. These guidelines apply across that full range of settings.
- 1.2 Multiple relationships are often unavoidable in ministry setting and it is the responsibility of the person in ministry to manage such relationships in an ethical manner.
- 1.3 The Practice of Ministry - Code of Ethics (2011) includes standards that prevent sexual relationships with individuals for whom there is a current or previous pastoral responsibility.
- 1.4 People in ministry are reminded that sexual harassment is illegal (Sex Discrimination Act 1984).

2. Welfare of those to whom ministry is offered

Refer to the Code Principle 2 People in Ministry and Those to Whom they Minister

- 2.1 Boundary issues may occur in all areas of ministry and it is the responsibility of the person in ministry to establish a clear framework for working with recipients. People in ministry are to manage ministry situations with the highest regard for the welfare of recipients and be alert to risk factors in ministry practice where appropriate boundaries can be difficult to maintain.
- 2.2 A distinction is frequently made between boundary crossings and boundary violations. Crossings are departures from commonly accepted practice that some in ministry may see as appropriate which in some cases could be attending a recipient's special event e.g. birthday or wedding. People in ministry and recipients may view such behaviours differently depending on their cultural background, and their understanding and experience of ministry. Nevertheless, given that such blurring of boundaries is often a precursor to later major transgressions, it is important for people in ministry to examine the implications of such actions no matter how innocuous they seem at the time.
- 2.3 In practice, major boundary violations are frequently preceded by lack of attention to minor boundary crossings. The process of boundaries gradually eroding is sometimes referred to as the "slippery slope". In circumstances where a person in ministry significantly alters their standard practice to accommodate the 'needs' of recipients, he/she needs to consider the following questions to help clarify whether there are potential boundary crossings emerging:
 - Am I competent to handle this situation?

- Am I displaying any uncharacteristic behaviours?
 - Do I have discomfort with boundaries?
 - Am I self-disclosing more than usual?
 - Am I taking into account any personal difficulties/conflicts?
 - Am I avoiding any topics?
- 2.4 The standards of the Code are relevant when considering the issue of sexualising the pastoral/ministry relationship. These standards make it clear that the person in ministry's relationship with an individual for whom there is a pastoral/ministry responsibility is never exploitative and that a minister's self-interest should never take precedence over the welfare of the individuals seeking ministry. Sexual relationships between people in ministry and recipients may result in a wide range of harmful outcomes for recipients including depression, anger and feelings of being exploited.
- 2.5 In order to manage pastoral/ministry relationships professionally and ethically, it is essential to recognise the possible existence of intense emotions between recipients and people who minister. It is the responsibility of the person in ministry as the professional to recognise and maintain appropriate boundaries. It is not uncommon for a person in ministry to be sexually attracted to a recipient. Recipients sometimes develop intense feelings of affection for the person in ministry. If those in ministry find they are sexually attracted to a recipient, it is advisable to explore this matter with a supervisor. If such sexual attraction occurs repeatedly (with the same or different recipients), it is recommended that the person in ministry deal with this issue in personal therapy.
- 2.6 People in ministry need to be mindful of actions that can shift the ministry-recipient relationship from the professional to the social. For example avoid changing appointment times to allow for social interaction after the appointment, avoid working in isolation and have regular supervision.
- 2.7 People in ministry need to be mindful of situations where they may be more at risk of sexualising the ministry-recipient relationship. The situations can include when a person in ministry has relationship difficulties of their own, when they work alone, and when a relationship develops gradually in an inappropriate way. It is important that people in ministry seek regular supervision.
- 2.8 Due to the potential for harm to a recipient, a person in ministry who is found to have engaged in a sexual relationship with a recipient or former recipient may be liable for a range of sanctions including the removal of endorsement as a person in ministry of Churches of Christ.

3. Prohibitions on sexualising the relationship with ministry recipients

- 3.1 People in ministry do not engage in solicitation, physical advances, verbal or non verbal conduct that sexualises the relationship with recipients. In all ministry contexts, people in ministry do not engage in behaviour that is unwelcome or offensive, or that negatively impacts on the workplace or ministry environment.
- 3.2 When a person in ministry seeks to establish a sexual relationship with a recipient of ministry, it is **always** the responsibility of the person in ministry to establish that engaging in a sexual relationship will not be exploitative or harmful to the recipient in any way.
- 3.3 Refrain from sexual activity with any individual for whom there is a pastoral responsibility. [See Appendix 6 Guidelines regarding Romantic Relationships in Ministry.]
- 3.4 Some examples of behaviours and actions that sexualize a relationship are:
- Ministers suggesting 1:1 coffee or dinner meetings or catch ups in ways more normally associated with dates.
 - Minister touching certain people in ways normally reserved for intimate relationships.

- In counselling situations, the conversation shifts to the needs of the Minister and does not stay with the needs of the person being counselled.
- There is a normalising of intimate sexualised conversation.
- There is a gradual shifting of personal boundaries.
- Ministers only ever visiting certain individuals whenever their spouse / significant other is not at home.
- Sexual harassment may take the form of marginalising someone because of their gender ie always interrupting them or dismissing their input when that is not the Minister's normal method of relating.

4. Risk Factors for boundary violations

- 4.1 Most serious boundary violations occur when an office is isolated and where a person in ministry works alone. It is therefore necessary to be aware of duration and scheduling of pastoral counselling sessions and the location of sessions. Seeking regular professional supervision is a good way to reduce the risk of boundary violation.
- 4.2 Ministry in a small community such as a rural or ethnic community poses particular challenges. Some multiple relationships cannot be avoided when a person in ministry potentially socialises, shops and takes part in community activities with recipients and their families and friends. The person in ministry is especially mindful of confidentiality issues and other ethical issues inherent in such situations.
- 4.3 In supervision the supervisor/supervisee relationship poses unique challenges. There is the potential for supervisors to misuse their power and exploit the vulnerability of supervisees who are often being formally evaluated by the supervisor. People in ministry should avoid intimate relationships and business relationships with supervisees.

5. Other Factors to consider

- 5.1 Physical contact may also constitute a boundary violation. Factors to consider are that any contact should be culturally appropriate and that there may be differences in interpretations between men and women regarding touch. Motivational factors underlying decisions to engage in physical touch should be considered. A reassuring touch may be considered an appropriate response with certain recipients in certain situations. However, the potential for misinterpretation of any physical contact by recipients should be considered.
- 5.2 The goal of self-disclosure should always be for the welfare of the recipient and the self-disclosure should never be made for the needs of the person in ministry. It is extremely important that people in ministry examine their motivation for self-disclosure.

Appendix 4 Guidelines regarding Counselling

Pastoral Care Support/Pastoral Counselling

The topic of pastoral counselling is a vexed one, in terms of protecting the counselee and the counsellor, especially when the issue of the individual's right to confidentiality is taken into consideration.

There are recognised difficulties in the 'private' nature of the counselling relationship. It is an issue which faces health professionals every day. The question of whether or not to counsel a member of the opposite sex, whether or not to counsel alone, or only to counsel where someone else is able to see what is transpiring in the session, etc, are very complicated. Those requiring counselling are often in a vulnerable state, and may be very sensitive to the thought that they cannot speak with someone else privately. There are also clearly occasions when anonymity is vital to the disclosing of information (such as sexual abuse of a child). Counsellors should determine in conjunction with the church leadership what the church's internal policy with respect to counselling ought to be.

Best practice would suggest that, at the very least, anyone who undertakes a counselling role should keep a written record of the session, including the name of the counselee, the date and place of meeting, and some brief indication of the nature of the interaction. It is not appropriate that any personal opinions of the counsellor be recorded, nor should any diagnosed label be attached, unless the counsellor is professionally qualified to make such diagnosis. All such information should then be kept in a secure place where confidentiality will not be compromised.

If, in a counselling session, there is a felt need to involve a third person in the session, it must be clearly understood that whether that occurs, and if it does, the choice of whom that third person might be, should be the right of the counselee in the first instance, or should be determined at the very least by mutual agreement. If such agreement cannot be attained, then it may be more appropriate for someone else to undertake the role of the counsellor.

Counselling Code of Ethics

Anyone who undertakes a pastoral care or counselling role should normally desist from engaging in intensive personal and long term involvement with any counselee, and should guard against spending unnecessary or overly long periods of time, being alone with another person. Such counsellors should also be extremely cautious about any level of self disclosure in the counselling relationship, especially given that the most reliable predictor of crossing sexual and emotional boundaries is inappropriate self disclosure by the counsellor. The counsellor must ensure the counselee has an understanding of the purpose, process and boundaries of the counselling relationship.

Pastoral counsellors also need to be very wary of purporting to be what they are not with respect to counselling. Unless formal counselling training has been undertaken, those who offer pastoral care and counsel would be unwise to call themselves counsellors and certainly unwise to presume that they are able to operate with the training and expertise of a professional counsellor. From a Duty of Care perspective, it needs to be understood that anyone who claims to be a counsellor would be judged according to professional industry standards of a qualified counsellor should any investigation be undertaken. In any event, any person who undertakes any counselling or pastoral care support role should be very aware of their own limitations and expertise and be very conscientious about referring counselees on as soon as it is indicated.

Any relationships between a minister, counsellor or pastoral carer and a counselee must be conducted in accordance with Appendix 6 **Guidelines regarding Romantic Relationships in Ministry**.

Appendix 5 Ministering Within Competency

People in ministry must ensure that they are competent to deliver the pastoral care and/or counselling they seek to provide. They provide pastoral care and/or counselling to benefit and not to harm. People in ministry seek to protect the interests of the people with whom they work, i.e. the recipients of their ministry. The welfare of the recipient of ministry and the public, and the standing of ministry, takes precedence over the self-interest of the person in ministry.

People in ministry:

1. Practise within the limits of their competence and know and understand the legal, professional, ethical and where applicable, organisational rules that regulate the ministry they provide
2. Undertake continuing professional development and take steps to ensure that they remain competent to minister
3. Strive to be aware of the possible effect of their own physical, mental and spiritual health on their ability to practise competently
4. Anticipate the foreseeable consequences of their ministry decisions, and provide services that are beneficial to recipients of ministry and do not harm them.
5. Take responsibility for their professional decisions.
6. Develop effective referral skills and are aware of appropriate points of referral within their context of ministry.

In short, people in ministry strive to ensure high standards of competence in their work. They recognise the boundaries of their particular competencies and the limitations of their expertise. They provide only those services and use only those techniques that they are qualified for through education, training or experience.

Appendix 6 Guidelines regarding Romantic Relationships in Ministry

It is acknowledged that sexual relationships between a person in ministry and a recipient of ministry are generally prohibited by all codes of ethics. However, most churches recognise that single people in ministry sometimes face a situation in which they wish to pursue the development of a relationship with someone in the congregation for whom they have had pastoral responsibilities. This is an occasional circumstance and requires considerable care and diligence to maintain an open and healthy relationship with appropriate boundaries.

Should this situation occur, the person in ministry who wishes to engage in a romantic relationship and/or sexual activity with anybody for whom there has been a pastoral responsibility should first explore with a supervisor/senior minister the possibility that this person may be vulnerable and at risk of exploitation, and encourage that person to seek independent counseling on the matter.

The person in ministry will then ensure the following:

1. That the local congregation governing group be made aware of the relationship.
2. Any direct one to one pastoral relationship between the person in ministry and the recipient of ministry will be terminated and referred to another person in ministry or professional.
3. The person in ministry will maintain a high level of supervision, mentoring or spiritual direction which will provide an opportunity for facilitated reflection on the power and attractional dynamics of the relationship.
4. That consideration be given to the advisability of temporarily discontinuing any situations which place the two in dual roles with each other. (E.g. key leadership/staff/team or ministry positions, positions in which one is accountable to the other, situations of significant imbalances of power).
5. Where there has been a pastoral responsibility that has ended in the manner described above, any developing romantic relationship should be conducted openly, recognising that balance of power issues from the former pastoral relationship will impact on the developing romantic relationship.

Appendix 7 Guidelines regarding Phone and Internet Use

These Guidelines are included as a result of the ease of access to a range of material, including that of a pornographic nature, inappropriate internet based relationships, and the capacity to store, disseminate and produce inappropriate content.

People in ministry:

1. Are not to view, store, produce or distribute explicit printed or digital material of a sexual nature generally considered restricted or inappropriate by Christian communities. This includes nudity of a sexual nature, depictions of sexual acts, sexual violence or inappropriate sexual humour.
2. Are not to enter into text, audio or video based interactions, webcam liaisons, simulations or fantasy computer games of an explicit sexual nature.
3. Are to use thoughtful propriety when engaged in personal, premarital and marriage counseling in areas of human sexuality. The use of educational materials, especially web based material, should be appropriate and honouring of the God given gift of sexual expression in marriage.

As a general rule, Internet connected and networked church offices will have a content filter system operational at the modem / router / internet server point.