

Professional and Ethical Expectations for Clergy

General Assembly of the
Church of God in Michigan

Theological and Biblical Foundations

- We believe in the triune God who desires to rejoice in our worship and in our love for God and others. God's general call is extended to all humans in every time and place. We confess that sin mars the relationship with God and with one another. Yet, in Jesus Christ, through the continuing power of the Holy Spirit, we are saved to new life as whole persons in relationship with God, and with all others in the body of Christ.
- We as ministers acknowledge both God's specific call on our lives extended to us in Jesus Christ and the church's call affirming God's anointing on our lives. We are "shepherds of God's flock" (1 Peter 5:2-4) and are committed to the unity of all believers (John 17:20-23). We exist to serve as Jesus served: giving his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:42-45). While we know that God through the Holy Spirit gifts and empowers us to be the best for God, we also realize our obligation to proclaim good news, to teach, and to help God's people live faithful lives as those who are in the presence of, and anticipate the soon-to-come, glorious return of Christ.
- We, therefore, understand that no minister can do the work of the kingdom alone, without the community of others, and without the accountability to others. We further acknowledge the necessity of being in relationship particularly with our colleagues in ministry, knowing that what one does to promote God's kingdom encourages all of us, and what one does to dishonor the body of Christ harms all of us.
- Hence, we seek to surrender our lives daily to the authority of God. Through him we also will seek to honor others in service to God's kingdom by how we live our lives consistent with the journey of faith to which God has called us all.

Practical Foundation

This document establishes professional and ethical standards of behavior expected from all persons commissioned, licensed, or credentialed by the General Assembly of the Church of God in Michigan (Anderson, Indiana).

This document applies primarily to pastors and ministers serving in congregations. Professionally trained pastoral counselors, family and marriage counselors, chaplains of the Armed Forces, and other institutional chaplains should conform to the codes of ethics appropriate to these specialized ministries.

Although it is generally assumed that ministers will behave ethically, church groups often assume everyone will agree on what constitutes ethical behavior. Reality indicates that such assumptions are occasionally incorrect.

Therefore, this document attempts to establish our expectations for professional conduct for all persons who engage in ministry as credentialed ministers of the General Assembly of the Church of God in Michigan.

However, while these expectations provide a perspective on ministry for those accountable to the General Assembly of the Church of God in Michigan, they will not form the basis for any disciplinary action. Disciplinary action is based on a violation of the Credentials Manual. Should the State Pastor or the Credentials Ministry of the General Assembly of the Church of God in Michigan receive a written allegation of a violation of the Credentials Manual, then an investigation will occur. If a violation is confirmed then disciplinary action may be taken, including the possible suspension or revocation of credentials.

Professional Conduct

1. I will maintain practices that give glory to Christ; advance the goals of the church; and nurture, challenge, and protect the welfare of parishioners, fellow clergy, and the public.
2. I will act in ways that uphold and enhance the honor, integrity, morality, and dignity of the profession.
3. I will limit my activities to positions and responsibilities for which I am qualified.
4. I will maintain confidentiality in all my relationships, recognizing, however, the limitations placed on confidentiality with regard to the safety and well-being of all persons.
5. I will maintain honesty in all communication and refrain from gossip.
6. I will keep myself informed about current religious thought and practices.
7. I will reserve time for study and preparation.
8. I will carefully prepare sermons, teaching materials, and other preparations giving due credit when I use materials created by another.
9. I will maintain professional competency throughout my career, seeking continuing education opportunities as often as possible.
10. I will give accurate information regarding my education, credentials, and/or qualifications for service.
11. I will regard all persons with equal respect and care and undertake to serve all with impartiality.
12. I will avoid seeking personal favors, advantages, or discounts based on my professional status.
13. If serving in ministry outside a local church, I will serve as an active member in a congregation while respecting and supporting the pastor.

Relationship with Self

1. I will demonstrate my personal love for God as revealed in Jesus Christ in my life and ministry.
2. I will commit myself to biblical standards of holiness [as understood by the Church of God].
3. I will cultivate a consistent devotional life, practicing spiritual disciplines of study, prayer, spiritual direction, and meditation.
4. I will maintain stewardship of my time and my body, allowing sufficient time for exercise, relaxation, and recreation.
5. I will seek to maintain good health and refrain from abuse of medications and other substances.
6. I will strive to be exemplary in both conduct and personal appearance.
7. I will maintain good financial stewardship, exercising restraint in my expenditures and my accumulation of material wealth, accepting responsibility for all debts, and adhering to the biblical model of generosity.
8. I will maintain high moral standards in sexual behavior and will not engage in sexual misconduct, whether in person, by reading material, telephone, computer, or any other means.
9. If unmarried, I will exercise wisdom in dating or forming a romantic relationship with a congregant.
10. I will maintain appropriate boundaries in all relationships.
11. I will avoid exploiting others for my benefit.
12. I will seek appropriate professional help for any personal or interpersonal problems that may impair my ministry or judgment.

Relationship with Family

1. I will honor my family in all ways, maintaining biblical standards of chastity in singleness and fidelity in marriage.
2. I will hold heterosexual marriage as a sacred and holy union ordained by God. I recognize that divorce would require reevaluation of my credentials.
3. I believe that my spouse and children are gifts from God and will treat them with respect.
4. I will discipline my children in the spirit of Christ.
5. I will strive to live a balanced life that honors my commitments to my family, providing for sufficient privacy and quality time together.
6. I will take regular days off and vacation time.
7. I will endeavor to avoid workaholicism and burnout in both my marriage and my ministry.
8. I will maintain confidentiality within my family and will ask permission before sharing their personal information with others.

Relationship with Congregation or Other Ministry Context

1. I will enter into the pastoral relationship to benefit those I serve, not myself.
2. I will accept the pastoral call to the church as a sacred trust and faithfully perform all tasks of my ministry position.
3. I will recognize my responsibility as a minister and a servant of God to protect the vulnerable who are entrusted to my care.
4. I will refrain from manipulating, coercing, shaming, or otherwise disrespecting or misusing those whom I serve.

5. I will preach and teach the gospel without fear or favoritism.
6. I will call forth and nurture the gifts of others to perfect the body of Christ.
7. I will offer pastoral care to all people regardless of race, gender, creed, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation.
8. I will be respectful towards predecessors and successors.
9. I will maintain confidentiality with the exception of reporting known or suspected physical or sexual abuse and neglect, or when life-threatening or substantial harm to self or others may be imminent.
10. I will see that all official records of the church are kept current.
11. I will not administer the corporate finances of the church.
12. I will conduct my financial affairs responsibly and avoid conflicts of interest, never involving or seeking to involve parishioners in business endeavors for my financial benefit.
13. I will not take financial advantage of those I serve; I will exercise caution in accepting gifts from members and acknowledge the possible tax consequences of honoraria and gifts.
14. I will perform weddings and funerals for parishioners at no charge if that is the church policy.
15. I will seek and be open to the counsel of the State Pastor, should divisive tensions develop that threaten my relationship with those I serve.
16. I will not engage in sexual harassment.
17. I will maintain appropriate boundaries between myself and parishioners, recognizing the danger inherent in dual personal and vocational relationships.

18. I will avoid any impropriety in pastoral counseling relationships.
19. I affirm the value of pastoral counseling; however, realizing that I am a spiritual counselor and not a trained therapist, I will refer parishioners to an appropriately trained counselor in cases beyond my expertise.
20. I will refrain from participating in inter-personal conflicts within the congregation. I will encourage persons to resolve their conflicts constructively, following the Matthew 18 pattern, and will help to facilitate the process to the extent I am able.

Relationship with Colleagues

1. I will speak respectfully about all colleagues in ministry.
2. I will promote the ministry of colleagues, rejoicing with them in their victories and weeping with them in their challenges.
3. I will abstain from interfering directly or indirectly with the work and ministry of another.
4. I will support colleagues in ministry and their families, refusing to exploit any problems or crises they may experience.
5. I will openly support a colleague who experiences discrimination of any kind (age, gender, marital status, race, national origin, physical impairment or disability).
6. Except in emergencies, I will not render ministerial services to the members of another congregation without the knowledge of their minister.
7. In multiple staff ministries, I will earnestly seek clear understanding about my responsibilities and maintain open channels of communication.

8. I will maintain appropriate sexual and interpersonal boundaries with colleagues in ministry and will not engage in sexual harassment or other inappropriate behavior.
9. I will resist all enticements to meddle in the affairs of a church where I formerly served.
10. I will show courtesy to and respect for predecessors.
11. If asked to perform a wedding, funeral, or other service in a congregation I formerly served, I will seek the approval of the current pastor.
12. I will seek to maintain peer relationships through faithful participation in local, area, and state ministerial gatherings.
13. I will establish peer accountability and covenantal relationships with other colleagues that will nurture, challenge, discipline, and give spiritual direction to my personal life and ministry.
14. I will seek to practice Matthew 18, Galatians 6, and other biblical mandates if I experience a problem with a colleague. If such an attempt fails I will then discuss the problem with the State Pastor.
15. I will not proselytize from other churches.
16. I will protect the integrity of staff relationships. Whether I am in a leadership or supportive role, I will guard diligently against any behavior that might undermine those relationships. If I have personal differences with another staff member, I will absolutely refrain from discussing those relationships with anyone other than that person. I will actively pursue resolving those differences peacefully *only* with the person involved.

Relationship with the Community

1. I will endeavor to be a moral and spiritual example in the community.
2. I will seek a faithful balance between my pastoral/ ministerial duties toward the local congregation I serve and the obligation to extend Christ's witness into the broader community.
3. I will seek to serve the community in ways that preserve life-giving values and resist life-denying ones.
4. I will share in maintaining with others the proper stewardship of all of God's creation.
5. I will seek to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people within the community.
6. I will participate responsibly in the life and work of my community, working toward a just and morally responsible society by being a living witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
7. I will respond appropriately to community calls for service or render help to people in crisis or disaster.

Statement Of Affirmation

As a commissioned, licensed, or ordained minister of the Church of God, I will partner with the General Assembly of the Church of God in Michigan and the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) to lead and to serve with integrity and humility. I have read the Professional and Ethical Expectations for Clergy and affirm that I will conduct myself in accordance with its standards.

Disciplinary action is based solely on a violation of the Credentials Manual. Should the State Pastor or the Credentials Ministry of the General Assembly of the Church of God in Michigan receive a written allegation of a violation of the Credentials Manual, then an investigation will occur. If a violation is confirmed then disciplinary action may be taken, including the possible suspension or revocation of credentials.

I affirm that I understand the importance of embracing these guidelines for professional conduct.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

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(content credited to the Indiana Ministries of the Church of God)

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