

MINISTERIAL CODE OF ETHICS – INDIANA MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

Theological and Biblical Foundations

- We believe in the triune God who creates all that lives and who passionately 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 communion with the triune 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” (1Peter 5:2-4) and are committed to the unity of all believers (John 17:20-23). We do not exist simply for ourselves but as Jesus taught his disciples, that they are to serve as he 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 kingdom of God.
- We, therefore, understand that no minister can do the work of the kingdom alone, without the community of others. We further acknowledge the necessity of being in communion with all our brothers and sisters, but particularly with our colleagues in ministry, knowing that what one does to promote God’s kingdom encourages all of us, and what one does that brings dishonor to the body of Christ harms all of us.
- Hence, we seek to surrender our lives daily to the authority of the triune God, and 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.

PREAMBLE

This Ministerial Code of Ethics establishes expectations of moral and ethical standards of behavior to be adhered to by all persons commissioned, licensed, or credentialed by Indiana Ministries of the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). This code 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 – in addition to appropriate sections of this Code – to the covenants and codes of ethics appropriate to these specialized ministries. Although it is generally assumed that ministers will behave ethically, church groups often also assume that all persons will agree on what constitutes ethical behavior. However, reality indicates that such assumptions are occasionally incorrect. Therefore, although the following is not a legal document and cannot alone create an ethical person, we attempt here to establish in writing our expectations for professional conduct for all persons who engage in ministry on behalf of Indiana Ministries of the Church of God.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

1. I will act in ways that uphold and enhance the honor, integrity, morality, and dignity of the profession.
2. I will limit my activities to positions and responsibilities for which I am qualified.
3. 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.
4. I will maintain honesty in all communication and refrain from gossip. I will “speak the truth in love.”
5. I will give due credit when I utilize materials created by another.
6. I will maintain professional competency throughout my career, availing myself of continuing education opportunities as often as possible.
7. I will give accurate information regarding my education, credentials, and/or qualifications for service.
8. I will regard all persons with equal respect and care and undertake to serve all with impartiality.
9. I will avoid seeking personal favors, advantages, or discounts based on my professional status.
10. If serving in ministry outside a local church, I will serve as an active member in a congregation while respecting the position of the pastor.
11. I will respect and work cooperatively with all members of Indiana Ministries of the Church of God.

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 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.
8. If unmarried, I will exercise wisdom in dating or forming a romantic relationship with a congregant.
9. I will manage my personal finances wisely and honestly, accepting responsibility for all debts I incur, and will adhere to the biblical model of generosity.
10. I will maintain appropriate boundaries in all relationships.
11. I will not exploit others for my benefit.
12. I will seek appropriate professional help for any personal or interpersonal problems that may impair my ministry or judgment.
13. If for any reason my level of functioning is impaired because of declining emotional or spiritual well being, I will seek the counsel of a trusted colleague or support group, or obtain professional help. After such counsel, if I (come to) believe my ministerial effectiveness is severely compromised; I will seek guidance from the state minister.

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 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 workaholism 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 accept the pastoral call to the church as a sacred trust and faithfully perform all tasks of my ministry position.
2. I will recognize my responsibility as a minister and a servant of God to protect the vulnerable who are entrusted to my care.
3. I will not use my position of power to manipulate, coerce, shame, or otherwise disrespect or abuse those whom I serve.
4. I will preach and teach the gospel without fear or favoritism, expressing the truth in love.
5. I will work cooperatively and caringly with those whom I serve.
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 avoid administering the corporate finances of the church, but if required to do so, I will do it with openness and personal integrity; and I will submit the accounts to audit or other independent review.
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 discretion in accepting gifts from members and acknowledge the possible tax consequences of honoraria and gifts.
14. I will seek and be open to the counsel of the state minister, should divisive tensions develop that threaten my relationship with those I serve.
15. I will not engage in sexual harassment and will be careful to keep the local congregation free of such violation of persons.

16. I will maintain appropriate boundaries between myself and parishioners, recognizing the danger inherent in dual personal and vocational relationships.
17. I will take care to avoid any impropriety in pastoral counseling relationships.
18. 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.
19. 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 kindly and respectfully about all colleagues in ministry.
2. I will promote the ministry of colleagues, rejoicing with them in their victories and weeping with them through 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 show courtesy to and respect for predecessors. I will support successors by resisting all efforts to meddle in the affairs of a church or pastorate where I formerly served.
10. 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.
11. I will seek to maintain peer relationships through faithful participation in local, area, and state ministerial gatherings.
12. 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.
13. 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 minister.
14. I will not proselytize from other churches; I will cooperate with colleagues in neighboring churches.
15. 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, and I will actively pursue resolving those differences peacefully *only* with the person involved, again following the Matthew 18 pattern.

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 broader 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, contributing wholesomely to the lives of all.
5. I will be a responsible representative of the body of Christ and participate in community activities that strengthen unity and enhance the mission of God.
6. I will seek to know, understand, and respect the diversity of opinions and people within the community.
7. 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.
8. I will respond appropriately to community calls for service or render help to people in crisis or disaster—as the Lord leads.

STATEMENT OF CONCURRENCE

As a commissioned, licensed, or credentialed minister of the Church of God, I will partner with Indiana Ministries and the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) to lead and serve with integrity and humility. I have read the Ministerial Code of Ethics and affirm that I will conduct myself in accordance with it in its entirety.

Signature

Date

Printed Name