

MORAL & ETHICAL LEADERSHIP FOR THOSE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY IN THE SOUTHEASTERN CALIFORNIA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

THE PURPOSE OF THESE GUIDELINES

These ethical guidelines for ministerial conduct shall serve as a guide to what is expected morally and professionally of those who minister in the Southeastern California Conference. It is assumed that a pastor will be honest and practice integrity in his or her personal and private life. The minister shall be guided by Scripture and personal conscience. It is further understood that the minister will know and will follow the Policies of the Southeastern California Conference, and the principles of the Working Policy of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, as they have been incorporated into these ethical guidelines. These guidelines are to be considered as minimum expectations.

MORAL INTEGRITY OF MINISTERS

Ministers occupy important positions within the faith and secular community. Therefore, they are expected to practice wisdom, restraint, and integrity in their practice of ministry. There are specific matters of professional conduct where particular care must be exercised. These include, but are not limited to, personal and corporate financial practices, sexual behavior, confidentiality, job accountability, and relationships to previous parishes.

SOME BASIC EXPECTATIONS

1. Ministers will maintain a personal relationship with Jesus. Their lives are to give glory to God. They will nurture and protect the flock entrusted to their care, and will advance the goals of the church.
2. Ministers will live in such a manner as to uphold the honor, integrity, morality, and dignity of their profession.
3. Ministers will maintain professional competency throughout their careers.
4. Ministers will recognize their loyalty and accountability to:
 - a. God, who has gifted them and called them to this sacred work.
 - b. Their congregation for leadership in carrying out the church's objectives, providing spiritual nurture for its members, and representing the church to the community it serves..
 - c. The Southeastern California Conference as their employing organization.
 - d. The world church by rightly representing and upholding the principles and theological teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist.
5. Ministers will avoid conflicts of interest.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Ministers are responsible to provide and care for their families. This includes but is not limited to providing spiritual, emotional, and financial support.

Abuse, whether physical or emotional is not permitted. The minister who abuses a spouse or any other family member may be referred to professional treatment, or, under certain conditions may be terminated.

THE MINISTER AS A PROFESSIONAL

PREACHER AND WRITER

Proper attribution shall be given when ministers use ideas, illustrations, or stories from other authors or speakers.

SPEAKER OF TRUTH

Ministers shall practice standard principles of biblical interpretation.

The minister shall not knowingly repeat rumors, gossip, or hearsay, which may cause harm to people or the church.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a sacred trust. Information shared in confidence, whether in a counseling situation, personnel item or other matters of a confidential nature, are not to be shared with anyone, not even a spouse.

COUNSELOR

Ministers who do not hold current counseling degrees or credentials shall limit counseling to spiritual matters.

POWER/AUTHORITY FIGURE

Ministers, because of their position, are considered power, and authority figures.

The pastor always has more power in relationships than parishioners and is the one responsible for maintaining boundaries. Ministers are to protect those under their care.

LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR

Ministers hold a position of trust. When pastors visit, counsel, or have other contacts with people, care shall be taken to maintain this trust. Ministers are not to treat persons arbitrarily based on their gender, race, nationality, age, physical, emotional or mental condition, sexual orientation, or economic condition.

All people are part of God's family and are to be treated with respect and care.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Ministers shall recognize the importance of being a faithful steward with their own finances.

Faithfulness in tithes and offerings is expected by all who are employed in this conference.

Ministers shall not solicit gifts and loans from those under their care.

Ministers shall not use the ministry office to promote personal economic benefit or gain.

Ministers shall not allow sidelines, businesses, or other activities to diminish their influence or efficiency in the work which they are employed to do. No one can serve two masters.

Ministers are to manage their family finances so as to live within their income. Financial obligations are to be fulfilled in a timely manner.

Ministers who are unable or unwilling to live within their income will be advised to resign or take up another line of work or business outside of denominational employment.

Ministers should never consider bankruptcy without first consulting with Conference Administration.

CORPORATE FINANCE

Ministers are to be honest and judicious in the use and protection of church funds. They will be held accountable should they misuse church funds or direct church funds to personal use.

LEAVING A PARISH

The transition of a pastoral family from one parish to another, or moving into retirement, can be delicate and difficult. However, the old must be set aside before the new can be accepted. The congregation can express its appreciation and verbalize its loss through a well-planned farewell for the outgoing pastor.

Pastoral families are to sever ties in the old pastorate, no matter how painful this experience may be.

MINISTERS AND CIVIL LAW

Ministers shall obey all civil laws, and shall insist that any and all church entities do the same. This includes but is not limited to the payment for any services to any person not eligible to be employed, matters related to state and federal taxes, copyrights, insurance, marriages, and the accurate keeping of church records.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Reports of child abuse, whether from a child or adult, is not privileged communication and by law must be reported to the Children's Services Division.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

Sexual harassment, as defined by the laws of the land, is not allowed. The minister who violates these principles forfeits the rights of ministry and is subject to termination.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND CHILD ABUSE POLICY

A gospel minister's moral fall brings devastating consequences. The minister, the home and family, the victims, and the church all suffer. The devastation continues in ever-widening circles of pain long after the indiscretion has occurred.

Sexual misconduct includes a sexual relationship with someone other than one's spouse, involvement with pornography, incest, molestation, child abuse, homosexual relationship, and any other sexual behavior that is incompatible with Christian ministry. Such indiscretions are determined not by the degree or amount, but by the fact of such action.

Sexual contact in any form between a minister and a child is immoral and illegal. A minister who engages in such activity will be immediately reported to Child Protective Services and subject to termination.

*The policies and procedures that the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will follow when charges of Sexual Misconduct or Child Abuse have been brought against a minister will be found in the CONFERENCE POLICY BOOK, in the section titled **SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND CHILD ABUSE**, under the sub-heading "Consequences of a Moral Fall."*

(For the Policy Book)

CONSEQUENCES OF A MORAL FALL

If a minister employed in the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists experiences a moral fall in violation of the seventh commandment, or other sexual sins as indicated above, and in the Southeastern California Conference Policy Book, it is understood the minister has, by that transgression made void his or her calling. It is incumbent on such minister to contact the Conference President and submit his or her resignation immediately.

Such action shall result in the following:

- 1) Immediate suspension from his or her place of ministry.**
- 2) If after the confession, or after the appropriate executive officers and the Sexual Ethics Committee have examined the charges brought by the injured party(s), it is determined that the minister has experienced a moral fall, such minister shall immediately be terminated from conference employment, in harmony with denominational policy.**
- 3) Withdrawal of the License/Credential issued to the individual.**
- 4) If ordained or commissioned, such ordination or commissioning shall be nullified by the appropriate committee.**
- 5) Such minister shall have disqualified himself or herself from any further employment in pastoral ministry, teaching ministry, or other denominational leadership.**

(Also for Policy Book under)

THE MINISTER AS A PROFESSIONAL

OFFICE HOURS

The minister shall establish and publish regular office hours when people know he or she is available. The minister must also make arrangements for the care of children or other personal matters to ensure that these activities do not interfere with such office hours and other ministerial duties. Ministers are expected to put in a day's work for a day's pay.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

To enhance the church's ministry impact, wherever possible, the minister will participate in the Community Ministerial Association, and or other activities where the church can contribute to the community.

**Minister's Commitment to
Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Ministerial Code of Ethics**

I acknowledge that I have received and have read the Southeastern California Conference Ministerial Code of Ethics.

It is my intention and pledge of sincere faith to abide with both the spirit and the letter of the Ministerial Code of Ethics.

Affirmed on:

Month _____ Date _____ Year _____

Signature _____

Print Name _____

[for office use only]

This form has been received at the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Human Resources Office:

By _____ Position _____

Date _____