

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ANGLICAN CLERGY AND LICENSED LAITY

Preamble

This Code is intended to provide a set of boundaries to protect both clergy and certain licensed lay persons and those who seek their services. In conjunction with a Code of Ethics it is intended to offer support, encouragement, and to empower clergy and others in the church in the day-to-day performance of their ministry.

The Code is intended to cover the conduct of persons who are licenced to practice as clergy (bishops, priests and deacons): also those who are qualified as priests but not currently licenced: and all lay persons who are engaged in any formal duties recognised by members of the public as pertaining to church function (e.g. deacons, members of vestry, etc.) The term “Minister” is used to refer to all the above categories.

The Code

1. The relationship between the minister and any person seeking his or her pastoral services (the person) is one of confidence and trust which must never be abused.
2. A minister as a licensed representative of the church must be available to the public, and must not, without good cause, refuse to respond to requests for priestly and pastoral services within the scope of his/her competence, from any particular person.
3. A minister must not enter into a priestly or pastoral relationship with a client where there is, or is likely to arise, any conflict between his/her own personal interests and the best interests of the person.

Potential areas where conflict of interest may rise include, but are not limited to the following:

- i. opportunity or invitation to exert power or control over the client’s life;
- ii. sexual attraction towards a client;
- iii. opportunity or invitation to act as a mediator/counsellor between two clients where partiality exists for or against one of the clients,

Consent should not be made an issue for the client. Perception by the minister that a conflict exists, or is likely to arise, is sufficient cause to act in the best interests of the client.

In the event of a conflict or likely conflict of interest between a minister and a client the minister shall:

- (a) advise the client that conflict exists and seek to resolve the issue. If resolution is impossible or impractical the priest should recommend the client seek priestly or pastoral services elsewhere
- (b) arrange such alternative services, and decline to personally provide further services;

(c) advise the alternative service-provider of the existence of a conflict of interest.

4. A minister should establish a work environment which in a practical way minimises the possibility of suspicion or misunderstanding (eg. glass walls in offices and the presence of others nearby). Seeking an agreed time limit to sessions.

A minister must be aware of the meaning and impact of his/her own ethnic and cultural background, gender, class and sexual orientation and must actively attempt to learn about and respect others' cultural and experiential differences

5. A minister must acknowledge the inherent power differential between him - or herself - as agent for the church, and the client, who will often approach the priest for guidance in matters about which they are especially vulnerable. In exercising judgement in the interests of the client and in the service of God, the priest must not usurp clients autonomy or attempt to coerce their free will.

6. A minister is actively involved in his or her community. In this regard he or she is especially sensitive about confidentiality and is under an obligation to monitor their public and private statements and comments.

7. A minister recognises his or her personal and professional needs and utilises ongoing self-evaluation, peer support, consultation, supervision, continuing education and/or personal counselling to evaluate, maintain and improve his or her work with clients, and in the areas of competencies and emotional and spiritual well-being.

8. A minister actively questions other ministry practices in the church community that appear harmful or abusive to clients or other priests, and when possible, intervenes as early as appropriate or feasible, or assists clients in intervening when it is clearly to their benefit to do so. In exercising this tenet, the priest seeks ethical advice and is careful to establish safeguards to protect the rights and dignity of the persons involved.

9. The minister should be proactive in safeguarding his or her own personal integrity when dealing with clients, including:

- i. keeping discussions relevant to the issue at hand
- ii. honouring confidentiality - state limitations eg. if client may harm self or others
- iii. maintaining proper appointment systems
- iv. offering and encouraging the presence of support persons (eg. personal friend/relative of client, or church Contact Person) during private pastoral counselling sessions.
- v. never using sexually demeaning words or actions, or jokes in doubtful taste
- vi. refraining from undue familiarity
- vii. not involving clients in own personal problems

- viii. consulting with colleagues about difficult situations and being transparent about own dilemmas
- ix. employing strong support systems and self-monitoring
- x. avoiding physical closeness or inappropriate touch
- xi. avoid asking inappropriate questions (fishing).

Sources

1. Medical Council of NZ Trust in the Doctor/ Patient Relationship June 1994.
2. New Zealand Law Society Rules of Professional Conduct 2nd Ed. February 1993.
3. Ethical Guidelines for Feminist Therapists; The Feminist Therapy Institute, Denver CO, 1987.
4. Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, 1991.