

Ethical Principles for those serving in Vocational Ministry in the ECC

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INTRODUCTION

As individuals called to ministry within the Evangelical Covenant Church we are:

- committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ,
- the authority of Scripture,
- and the joint tasks of evangelism and mission.

When the Evangelical Covenant Church endorses women and men for vocational ministry through licensure, commissioning, consecration and ordination, the church has discerned the following:

- *Apostolic*. They know, believe and live the faith delivered to us by the apostles and prophets. They can teach it and translate it into a ministry setting.
- *Called*. This multi-voiced call comes from God and is confirmed by the local church, the regional conference, and the denominational board of the Ordered Ministry. It is also discerned personally in the life and faith of the individual.
- *Competent*. They are reasonably competent in the pastoral arts of preaching, teaching, leading and caring. These arts will have different shapes and form in various vocational ministries. The practice of the pastoral arts requires life-long formation and learning.

- *Character.* Persons called to vocational ministry must have a deep and growing self-awareness. They must have a sustaining interior life that allows them to transform the wounds and sorrows of ministry. They must maintain healthy boundaries assuring the larger church they are a safe person and the care of the vulnerable can be entrusted.

Understanding that ministry belongs to the whole church, we nonetheless recognize that we have been called and gifted through the Holy Spirit to devote ourselves to be servants of the following:

- the Word,
- the Sacraments,
- the congregation,
- the church at large,
- and the world in which we live.
- We are dedicated to maintaining high standards of conduct and competence.

The Evangelical Covenant Church affirms the Bible as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. We are a non-creedal church, believing in the sufficiency of the Scriptures themselves. Creeds and codes beyond the Bible have at times been detrimental rather than helpful in the development of living faith and moral character.

The church takes seriously its teaching office and has from time to time published affirmations and principles concerning doctrine and conduct. We are a non-hierarchical church. Therefore, we honor the freedom of the pulpit by exercising jurisdiction only over ministerial standing. While it is the responsibility of the local church or ministry to call, supervise, or dismiss the clergy, in cases where ministers may be guilty of serious misconduct, the denomination actively pursues an investigation after a complaint has been made. Following the investigation, if warranted, appropriate discipline is exercised.

These Ethical Principles shall be distinguished from the Rules for the Ordered Ministry which list offenses that are the bases for discipline:

- indiscretion,
- immorality,
- doctrinal error,
- unethical behavior,
- and disloyalty to the Covenant.

The Board of the Ordered Ministry determines misconduct based upon the Rules for the Ordered Ministry and the application of biblical principles of morality on a case by case basis.

These Ethical Principles are a **teaching document which is meant to alert us to an ethical code** that ought to inform us how an individual serving in ministry leadership in an Evangelical Covenant Church or Ministry shall behave.

Since these Ethical Principles are **ultimately based upon the teaching of Holy Scripture**, they must be interpreted in the church in accordance with the principles of Scripture.

These Ethical Principles shall be **seen as an ethical code for individuals called to ministry leadership** credentialed in the Evangelical Covenant Church that delineates how we live out the behavior described in the Rules for the Ordered Ministry. It is the expectation of the Covenant ministerium that any associate members (those not credentialed, but serving Covenant churches and institutions in a ministerial role) would live by this code.

Nothing in this document is intended to create legal obligations or legal standards or define legal relationships. This document shall not be used or interpreted by government or secular authorities for secular or legal purposes. Neither is this document intended to suggest impossible expectations for those serving in ministry. It seeks to express the high value and importance that those serving in ministry have in the life of the Evangelical Covenant Church. These Ethical Principles are affirmed by the Covenant Ministerium Annual Meeting upon review by the Board of the Ordered Ministry of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

FOUNDATIONAL PREMISES

We affirm the following theological and biblical truths as the foundational premises upon which the principles in this document are established:

- a) This world is created, sustained, and loved by the everlasting God who has overcome darkness by the victory of Christ in the Incarnation-Crucifixion-Resurrection event.
- b) We are called by God, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, to be servants of the Word and Sacraments, and to give leadership to the church as the body of Christ with the authority and grace of Christ the Servant.
- c) We hold true to and give instruction in the Bible, the Old and New Testaments, as the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct.
- d) Aware that we fall short of the glory of God and only by grace are we saved, we nevertheless recognize the dignity and worth of each individual, grounded in the image of God.
- e) We understand the need for self care and soul care for nurturing our physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Failure to live out the methods of self care and soul care by maintaining a healthy life style and balance in our vocation, personal lives, family and financial obligations can result in misconduct. We are responsible for seeking out accountability partners who are “truth tellers” that encourage, challenge and walk

alongside us. Ephesians 4:14, “...*Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him, who is the head, that is Christ.*”

f) We commit to fully develop wholistic formational lives through disciplines such as exercise, study, meditation, prayer, Sabbath-keeping, spiritual direction, mentoring relationships, collegial companionship and life-long learning. Our calling is the reflection and expression of God’s redemptive work in making himself known in Christ through the Holy Spirit, which is attested to in scripture and given narrative in the Church’s tradition.

g) We seek to minister to those under our care. We acknowledge that by virtue of our licensing, commissioning, consecration, ordination, and call to ministry, we take on a responsibility to be trustworthy stewards of the mysteries of God. (I Corinthians 4:1-2) “*This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*” (TNIV). This means that we view those to whom we minister as part of a sacred trust from God. It is our responsibility to seek their well being, safeguard their interests, and protect them, as we are able, from danger and harm, even to the point of sacrificing our own interests. Hence, we act in the best interests of those under our care, even when this action does not serve our needs or interests.

h) We understand that as ministers we bring certain essential resources into our ministerial relationships for the purpose of helping the people we serve to know Jesus. These particular resources include seminary education, other supervised ministry training, credentials, and continuing access to the wisdom of mentors, teachers and colleagues. The church has authorized us to carry out ministry with its authority. Therefore, we hold authority and influence in relationship to those under our care.

i) We are called to be “shepherds of God’s flock” and to uphold the biblical standards of leadership in accordance with the following scriptures: (1 Peter 5:2-4), “*Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be ; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*” (Ezekiel 34:2), “*Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not Shepherds take care of the flock?*” (TNIV)

j) We recognize as ministers that all of us are at risk to inappropriately cross boundaries in our ministerial relationships. We never assume we are immune from temptation, but always seek God’s requirement “*to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.*” (Micah 6:8).

k) We are committed to the biblical standard of chastity in singleness and fidelity in marriage, (Exodus 20:14), “*You shall not commit adultery.*” (Ephesians 5:3), “*But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.*” We define marriage as a

monogamous, heterosexual relationship. A minister will never engage in sexual activity outside of marriage.

l) The report of the Task Force on Sexual Harassment was received by the Covenant Annual Meeting in June of 1996 and defines sexual misbehavior as: Sexual insensitivity, sexual indiscretion, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation by a person in authority, child sexual abuse and sexual molestation and rape.

We will not commit acts of sexual misbehavior. We uphold biblical standards of holiness as stated in I Thessalonians 4:3-8, *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: That you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. There fore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.”*

We are responsible to safeguard sexual integrity by maintaining appropriate ethical boundaries with those under our care and outside the ministry settings we serve. People under our care, regardless of their role, need to know we have boundaries. We do not seek out personal (dating) relationships, regardless if those under our care are in favor of or resistant to these personal relationships. We will not engage in activities that blur these boundaries. As those serving in vocational ministry, we uphold the biblical standards of power and authority. Colossians 2:10, *“..and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the Head over every power and authority.”*

m) We will not use pornographic material whether video-based, printed, the telephone or electronics including pornographic web sites, web groups and chat rooms. We expect those in vocational ministry to effectively use electronic media and act with integrity and discretion so as not to misrepresent themselves or the institution they serve.

n) We are diligent stewards of the finances and resources the Church entrusts to the care of its leaders.

o) The Evangelical Covenant Church licenses, commissions, consecrates and ordains women and men in all ministry and leadership positions within the church, both lay and clergy, regardless of gender, race and economic class. It is an injustice, if this is not supported by Covenant pastors, churches, and/or those under our care. We recognize that the body of Christ shall not be conformed to the world, which is characterized by discrimination, prejudice, exclusion, and segregation. We are respectful and courteous, and maintain collaborative, collegial, mutually supportive, and cooperative relationships.

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Principle 1 – Ministerial Competence and Excellence

In all matters relating to the ministry, members of the Covenant Ministerium affirm high standards of competence and excellence. It is critical that the lead pastor, partners in ministry, interns, lay ministers, youth workers, chaplains, missionaries, church staff and leadership understand the “Foundational premises and Ethical principles” and how it effects them personally and vocationally. Each person is accountable for learning about the standards and responsibly fulfilling their role in ministry by applying the ethical standards and living them out personally and vocationally.

- a) In good faith we do our best in fulfilling the terms of our call to the church or ministry we serve.
- b) We abide by the Rules for the Ordered Ministry and cooperate with the Board of the Ordered Ministry in matters of discipline, and pastoral care.
- c) We present accurate information and commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in leadership, scholarship, and pastoral care.
- d) We participate in appropriate continuing educational activities which include awareness workshops, seminars, conferences, classes, and independent readings in the areas of spirituality, pastoral care, church leadership, biblical, ethical and theological studies.
- e) We use our power and influence wisely, especially in making public statements.
- f) We are responsible stewards of our personal finances—wisely and honestly managing our expenditures, debts, and investments, and keeping accurate, timely records. We also follow biblical models of giving.
- g) We do not use any illegal substance nor do we abuse alcohol, drugs or any other substance.
- h) We refrain from sexual misbehavior.
- i) We are aware of our personal limits and seek appropriate professional help for any personal or interpersonal problems that may impair our ministry or judgment.

Principle 2 – The Integrity of the Ministerial Relationship

In all matters pertaining to their ministerial relationships, those serving in vocational ministry faithfully act in the best interests of those they serve and empower them for ministry. It is critical that the lead pastor, partners in ministry, interns, lay ministers,

youth workers, chaplains, missionaries, church staff and leadership avoid **any** situation that will compromise the integrity of the ministerial relationship and those under our care.

- a) We do not withhold pastoral care on the basis of race, gender, creed, ethnic origin, socio-economic status, or sexual orientation.
- b) We recognize ministry frequently places us in relationships that place multiple expectations on us as pastors, family members, confidants, friends, etc. and we strive to maintain clarity about each relationship.
- c) We enter into the pastoral relationship to benefit those we serve, not ourselves.
- d) We respect the right of those we serve to make decisions and assist them in understanding the consequences of their decisions. We will not, however, condone activities which are contrary to Biblical teaching.
- e) We advise those we serve to obtain other professional services when they need help that is not within the limits of our competence and training.
- f) We seek additional consultation when it is in the best interest of those we serve and with their permission.
- g) We do not take financial advantage of those we are called to serve, and we exercise caution in accepting gifts from those under our care.

Principle 3 – Preserving Boundaries in the Ministerial Relationship

Those serving in vocational ministry recognize that it is primarily their responsibility to maintain boundaries in the ministerial relationship. Boundaries are limits and we set limits on what we do for people. We set limits on what we will allow people to do for us. The people we serve need to know we have boundaries and we will not engage in activities that blur the boundaries.

- a) We maintain appropriate boundaries by being clear about our role. We affirm the central importance of pastoral counseling; we are spiritual counselors not therapists. We give pastoral care, not therapy. Our counsel is both broader and narrower than the health care professions. It is broader in that we give guidance to the Christian community in all of life concerning faith, doctrine, and conduct. It is also narrower in that it does not claim the expertise of the psychotherapeutic disciplines. We value the insights of these disciplines and seek to work cooperatively with therapists. Ministers who are licensed counselors or therapists are subject to state regulations.
- b) We recognize the limits of pastoral counseling. We do not attempt to do extended counseling or in-depth therapy without proper training. In cases that are beyond our expertise and training, such as suicidal individuals, survivors of sexual abuse and sexual abusers, we consult with and make referrals to professional therapists who are specially

trained in these areas. We also refrain from “counseling” in any setting that might suggest dating or other social interaction.

c) We do not sexualize any ministerial relationship. We carefully monitor any sexual feelings towards those under our care and staff. When we have these feelings, we acknowledge them to ourselves, to a supervisor or in a consultation – not to the individual who is the object of these feelings, or to anyone under our care or staff member. If anyone under our care or staff member engages in sexualized behavior towards us, we do not respond in kind. We maintain our role, reaffirm the ministerial relationship, and consult with a colleague, consultant, or supervisor.

d) Good ethical behavior is a result of our own initiative in self care and soul care. We provide for our own physical care, psychological care, self care and soul care, recreational activities, and we schedule time off to care for our families, the nurturing of personal friendships, attendance at retreats and educational leave.

e) We are diligent stewards of our time and effort in carrying out our call. We avoid burnout and being a workaholic. We are clear about our job descriptions and the accompanying expectations. If our work load seems unreasonable or unmanageable, we discuss this with a supervisor, the pastoral relations committee, or a consultant and *take action on* what can be done.

f) We are cautious when entering into relationships in which there may be conflicts between our role as ministers and other roles. If such relationships are unavoidable, we seek counsel from a mentor or colleague and then discuss the inherent problems and possible consequences with the individual(s) involved, and establish whatever boundaries we can to limit such conflicts.

g) We take the initiative and ask a supervisor or the pastoral relations committee to review our performance periodically and work with us if our supervisor or the pastoral relations committee does not approach us first.

h) In order to avoid isolation, we maintain contacts with colleagues and consult with them regularly recognizing that our perspective and judgment can be compromised by isolation.

Principle 4 – Relationship to the Community and the Wider Church

In all matters relating to the vocation of ministry, we maintain integrity in the practice of the ministerial role.

a) We do not disparage the work of other ministers and members of the helping professions. When we find ourselves in disagreement, we follow the Biblical mandate to speak the truth in love.

- b) We respect the ministry setting of another minister. We guard against all interference with the work of another minister and render service in another ministry setting only in an emergency and at the invitation or with the consent of the minister concerned.
- c) We respect ministry in a former church. We may return to assist in pastoral functions on special occasions at the request or consent of the minister currently serving that church. At all times, we exercise extreme caution against interference in the ministry of our former churches.
- d) We respect the ministry of other churches in our area, and shall not intrude upon those communities by seeking to persuade members of other churches to attend or become members where we serve. Rather, we participate in ecumenical activities to manifest the “unity of the spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). Should visitors from another local church attend regularly, efforts are made to understand the situation, and, if possible, enable them to return to their former ministry setting, striving at all times to build up the whole body of Christ.
- e) We respond to community calls for service or render help to individuals in crisis. We are careful that such service relates to the total context of our ministry, yet does not interfere with responsibilities to one’s own ministry setting.
- f) We strive to keep all official records of the church current.
- g) We seek to have the financial affairs of our ministry settings administered with due regard to recognized business, legal, and accounting procedure.
- h) We do not engage in ongoing remunerative activities outside the ministry setting without knowledge of the institution’s leadership.
- i) We are diligent stewards of our time and effort in carrying out our call. We avoid burn out and being a workaholic.
- j) We seek to understand the laws of the jurisdiction in which we minister which pertain to clergy.

Principle 5 – Confidentiality in Relationships

In all matters pertaining to our pastoral relationships, we support the policy of the Evangelical Covenant Church that their pastors shall not divulge any information disclosed to them in confidence during counseling or while giving any person advice, comfort, or guidance in their capacity as minister; and...that the Evangelical Covenant Church shall support its clergy in this position. (See Appendix)

- a) We recognize that the right to confidentiality resides with those whom we serve. The overarching purpose of confidentiality is to protect those under our care. We must keep

this end in view as we apply the principle to confidentiality in real life situations of pastoral care.

b) Confidentiality simply means to hold information in trust and not to divulge it. Confidential information may be shared with others in the best interests of the person involved. This shall be done only with his or her permission; for instance, in order to seek consultation with a professional counselor or in order to protect the individual involved or others from future harm.

c) The privilege of confidentiality applies to those under our care and communications with the minister. In cases where those under our care profess wrongdoing, it is our obligation to exhort them to work through the process of repentance, confession, restitution, forgiveness and restoration, especially when the person may be in danger of harming someone again.

d) We acquaint ourselves with the laws of our respective states and provinces to be made aware of the legal setting under which we minister.

e) When issues of mandatory reporting arise, we consult with the conference superintendent and the Executive Minister of the Ordered Ministry when taking appropriate action.

Principle 6 – Relationship to Colleagues

In all matters pertaining to their relationship with their partners in ministry, the staff, colleagues and professionals in their community, ministry leaders are respectful and courteous, and maintain collaborative, collegial, mutually supportive, and cooperative relationships regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic origin and socio-economic status.

a) We strive to maintain mutual accountability with other members of the pastoral community as a safeguard for personal life and ministry. We also seek to maintain peer relationships through faithful participation in district, conference, denominational and ministerial gatherings.

b) We recognize our loving responsibility to confront each other according to the teaching of Christ in Matthew 18, when we have concern that our colleagues are in serious error.

c) We respect the conference superintendent as the consultant to pastoral search committees. When approached by a search committee for a recommendation for a pastor or pastoral staff position, it is appropriate to make our recommendations through the office of the superintendent. If we receive a request for a reference regarding a candidate under consideration, we exercise prudence in responding so as not to subvert the search process.

Principle 7 – Relationship to the place of Ministry I serve

In all matters pertaining to pastoral placement and pastoral relations within the ministry setting, those serving in vocational ministry are honest and conscientious in all representations of self.

- a) We accept the pastoral call as a sacred trust and faithfully perform all tasks until our ministry is completed. We recognize our role as pastor to all who participate in our ministry setting as well as to those who are part of the community.
- b) We acknowledge inquiries from other churches in a timely manner. If we are not interested, we indicate this as soon as our lack of interest is clear to us.
- c) We accurately present our experience, training, and skills when we are candidating.
- d) In making public statements about our ministry, we provide truthful information that will be helpful to persons making informed choices.
- e) We make accurate statements about our qualifications, functions, and affiliations.
- f) We clarify, whenever possible, inaccurate, misleading, or false statements made by others about our qualifications or services.
- g) When entering a ministry setting, we are respectful toward our predecessors.
- h) We make clear our role within the ministry setting and the particular contract we have with them.
- i) We acknowledge conflict is normative and will arise even in the most healthy ministry setting. Those in ministry leadership will guide and assist those they serve not to avoid conflict, but to face it fairly, preserving the rights of all involved. When the ministry leaders are the focus of the conflict, they will always remain aware of the power of the office and their responsibility to move all toward redemptive actions (Galatians 6:1-6).
- j) We recognize that those serving in vocational ministry are servants of God and have power and influence by virtue of his or her ministerial role. We are responsible to use our authority and influence to benefit the people who call upon us for service.
- k) We are aware of our influential positions in relationship to interns, staff, students and ministry volunteers under our care and seek to nurture and empower them in accordance with other appropriate sections of these principles.
- l) We do not prolong our relationship with our ministry setting when it becomes reasonably clear that our relationship is not benefiting the ministry setting.

m) Should we decide, for appropriate reasons, to terminate our relationship with a ministry setting, we communicate this decision to them and to our conference superintendent, and assist the leadership of our ministry setting in making reasonable arrangements for the continuation of the ministry. We shall not make recommendations for a successor, nor are we present at a service at which a candidate is involved.

n) We are respectful toward our successors and sensitive to their pastoral ministry with our former ministry setting, either by correspondence or by direct conversation. We leave a ministry setting with courteous finality for the sake of both our successor and our former place of ministry. When we retire, we recognize that it is in the best interest of our successor and the church that we do not return to a former church.

CONSEQUENCES

The benefits of maintaining the integrity of the ministerial role are profoundly positive. When boundaries are maintained, the result will be wholeness and well being for ministers themselves, those under their care and the ministry setting.

Violating the integrity of the ministerial role has profound consequences. For those under our care the consequences may be anger at the minister, mistrust of the ministry, depression and anxiety, alienation from the church, and a sense of having been betrayed by God. For ministers, the consequences of misconduct may be discipline by the Board of the Ordered Ministry, the discrediting of his or her calling and office, damage to his or her reputation, violation of the sacred trust of the ministerial role, loss of livelihood, and impact on his or her family. For the people in that ministry setting, the consequences may be divisiveness and discord, confusion and doubt, and a sense of violation. Galatians 6:1, *“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.”*

CONCLUSION

When we rightly discern our ministerial role, we are to take to heart the foundational premises and ethical principles set forth in this document. For the sake of living godly lives, which bear witness to the integrity of the Gospel, let us guard what has been entrusted to our care and faithfully discharge the duties of our ministries, according to the following biblical standards. 2 Timothy 4:5, *“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”*

GLOSSARY

Associate Ministerium Member: Includes licensed theological students, those who are ordained, commissioned, or consecrated but in the inactive category, and ministers serving ECC congregations but who do not hold ECC credentials. Each one does not hold voting privileges, but has voice in the ministerium.

Competence: All those in vocational ministry in the ECC must demonstrate core competencies in preaching, teaching, leading and caring. These are life-long learning and formational endeavors. The commitment to competency is a commitment to continually grow in these pastoral arts.

Excellence: All those in vocational ministry in the ECC make a commitment to live a virtuous life, to celebrate the requisite gifts and graces God has placed in each and to live out this commitment in sustainable, renewable patterns.

Ministerium Member: Includes those ordained, commissioned, or consecrated in the ECC, ministers who hold ministerial license, and ministers who have retired from active status.

Pastor: The ECC has historically used the word pastor in a very broad and inclusive context. Essentially, all of the New Testament terms for various forms of spiritual leadership are gathered in this one word. We do not ordain bishops, elders and deacons. We ordain to a large, broad pastoral office. We also use the term to describe anyone functioning in a ministry vocation within the ECC, even if their letter of call and/or job description might refer to them as directors or coordinators because they are still holding a pastoral office within their various specializations.

Pastoral Care/Counseling: Pastoral care is one of the core pastoral arts. Everyone who serves in vocational ministry performs pastoral care to varying degrees. Pastoral counseling is scheduled care with people in a ministry setting and is intended to be focused on discernment, prayer and discipleship. It is not therapeutic care. Pastors are not trained as therapists and shall be careful to make that distinction clear with everyone under their care.

Integrity: Pastoral integrity is the congruence between one's personal life and the public office. It asks the question, "Who are you when no one is looking?"

Loyalty: The body that endorses and credentials ministry vocations has basic expectations of those in ministry. In essence, we expect they would not knowingly do anything to harm or disparage the ministry and witness of the ECC and Jesus Christ.

Power differential: Those endorsed for ministry must always be aware of the inherent power of the pastoral office. When a pastor is working with individuals or groups s/he carries power in many capacities: (1) the endorsement of the church, (2) education, (3) a pastor may be physically more powerful, (4) s/he may have power granted through

gender or age differences, (5) the role of the office. This power must always be guarded and used to make the environment and context safe for all those participating in it. It can never be used in any way that would coerce or take advantage.

Rules for the Ordered Ministry: The rules that govern ministers in the Evangelical Covenant Church. These are available at www.covchurch.org.

Self care: Self care is encompassed in the wholistic nature of soul care, but it is focused in answering the questions, "Who are you under pressure?" "Who are you under extreme pressure?" and "What is your intentional strategy to maintain emotional, spiritual and physical health?"

Soul care: This is the formational work that sustains ministry. Covenant pastors need deep formational lives that sustain their public ministry. Soul care is often intentionally conceived and made accountable through spiritual direction and the development of a life rule.

Spiritual Direction: Spiritual direction is a ministry of listening, discernment and prayer in a confidential setting of encouragement and compassion. Through this ministry one finds a spiritual companion who can listen to the stories of one's life and help discern the presence and work of God's spirit.

Vocational Ministry: The highest calling in a person's life is the call to be a Christian. A few are called and set apart by the Word, for the Word to the office of credentialed ministry. Vocational ministry is not a higher place but is a place of service that strengthens and nurtures the whole church and its greater Gospel witness.

Sexual Misbehavior:

Sexual insensitivity: Behavior which, though unintentional by virtue of ignorance or lack of feeling for others, is offensive to another person whether based upon gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or any like reason. Insensitivity may be verbal (e.g. jokes, demeaning comments, slurs); physical (e.g., body contact or blocking movements); or visual (e.g., any offensive sights).

Sexual indiscretion: Behavior of a sexual nature which is offensive or intimidating by virtue of the perpetrator's poor judgment in conduct or speech and which demonstrates an overt lack of respect for the person to whom the behavior is directed or disregard for the effects of such behavior on the persons involved. Indiscretion may be verbal (e.g., demeaning comments, jokes, slurs, belligerent or threatening words); physical (e.g., body contact or blocking movements); or visual (e.g., offensive sights of any nature).

Sexual misconduct: Behavior of a sexual nature which is offensive or intimidating to the person to whom the behavior is directed and which intentionally disregards that person's directly or indirectly expressed reactions or

feelings of discomfort. Previously described behaviors are considered sexual misconduct when the perpetrator knowingly continues offensive behavior. Sexual misconduct can be divided further into:

Sexual harassment: Any form of direct or implied sexual behavior which is unwelcomed by the person to whom the behavior is directed or which creates a sexually offensive, hostile or intimidating atmosphere. Sexual harassment may include verbal behaviors (e.g., sexual jokes, innuendoes, or solicitation), physical contact (e.g., touching, hugging, rubbing against, blocking movements), or visual offenses (e.g., ogling, offensive sexually explicit sights, pictures, objects).

Sexual abuse: Sexual behavior by any person in a position of authority or responsibility toward another. This includes verbal, physical or visual offenses by which the perpetrator defies the other person's aversion or intentionally violates sexual, ethical, or moral standards in relation to those under their implied or direct authority. Sexual abuse involves the misuse/abuse of trust and power, personal and professional. Such behavior includes the following classifications which are not mutually exclusive:

Sexual exploitation by a person in authority: Any sexual contact between persons in authority and those under their care (e.g., a parent, relative or family friend and a child/youth; a Sunday school teacher and a student; a childcare worker and a child; a youth worker and a youth; a church leader and a parishioner; a therapist/counselor and a client, including pastoral counselors or those acting in a counselor role; an employer and an employee). Such contact may include the use of a deception (representing to the person the person that the sex will be educative, healing or therapeutic).

Child sexual abuse: any form of direct or implied sexual behavior between an adult and a minor or between an adult and a minor or between an older minor and a younger minor, either within or outside of family relationships.

Sexual molestation and rape: any sexual contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) that is achieved by force, coercion, threats, blackmail, manipulation, trickery or deceit. In many states legal definitions include varying degrees or criminal sexual conduct and attempted criminal sexual conduct.

Appendix

Resolution on Confidentiality set forth by Covenant Annual Meeting of June 1975

WHEREAS, it has long been recognized that one of the ministries of pastors in our churches is to counsel with persons, and give advice, comfort, and guidance; and

WHEREAS, Christian ministers can be singularly effective in witnessing to the gospel of Christ by assisting people with anxieties, guilts, fears, doubts, and despair; and

WHEREAS, in some situations Christian ministers can perform unique ministries to groups of people, particularly those with problems of isolation, conflict, oppression, and deprivation; and

WHEREAS, the performance of these ministries both to individuals and groups often requires a sense of complete trust that what is said will be kept private and a confidential communication; be it

Resolved, that it is the policy of the Evangelical Covenant Church that their pastors shall not divulge any information disclosed to them in confidence during counseling or while giving any person advice, comfort, or guidance in their capacity as ministers; and

Resolved, that the Evangelical Covenant Church shall support its clergy in this position; and further, be it

Resolved, that our pastors be encouraged to acquaint themselves with the laws of their respective states and provinces which have to do with the right of confidentiality, so as to be aware of the legal setting under which they minister.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Local Ministry Setting

- When calling a pastor, the search committee may use this document for potential interview questions.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) shall read and understand the integrity of the ministerial role according to these ethical principles. When giving annual reviews, this document serves as the standard for all those serving in vocational ministry.
- Review the ethical code at staff meetings or staff retreats.

Ministerium Meetings

- May be used to generate thoughtful reflection and accountability at ministerium meetings.

Potential Discussion Questions for PRC or Ministerial Meetings

What surprised you most about this document?

What is challenging/dangerous about living within this document?

This ethical code includes many principles for our personal lives as well as professional lives. In what area are you leading by your own example? In what area can you improve?

How much time do you spend on being a healthy, missional pastor? What are the repeated practices that are helpful to your formation as a pastor? What habits are you forming?

How do you evidence a commitment to ongoing formation, education and health?

In light of these expectations, how has God been present to you as you live into your leadership role? Is there a Scripture passage or story from the Bible that comes to mind when you think of yourself living into this role?

How do you discern among the many voices to decide what steps are most valuable to you in your decision making and desire to live into the ethical principles?

In the last month, what actions have you taken to care for yourself as one serving in vocational ministry?

(For PRC use only) Evaluate each principle: How has your pastor displayed excellence in each area? How can the PRC assist the pastor in developing excellence and competency?