

Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for Ministers of Word and Sacraments

1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of Ministers of Word and Sacraments within the United Reformed Church. Parallel papers about the expectations of Church Related Community Workers and Elders are to be read alongside this document.

2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of Ministers is in the Basis of Union, summarised in Schedule E paragraph 2,

‘Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed Church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.’

The relevant promises in Schedule C are:

- a) ‘to live a holy life and to maintain the truth of the Gospel whatever trouble or persecution may arise’;
- b) ‘to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world; and
- c) as a Minister of the United Reformed Church ‘to seek its well- being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’.

3. Standards of professional behaviour

3a Personal integrity and health

- To live a Christian life as a person of prayer and integrity.
- To recognise the need for and have concern for a healthy lifestyle, to balance availability and accessibility to ministry demands with time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.

- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared with them in confidence, except when required by law to do otherwise eg when children or adults are experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse, harm or neglect, or when there is a safety issue affecting the whole congregation.
- To safeguard people and protect the more vulnerable by attending and refreshing mandatory URC Safeguarding training (basic, intermediate and advanced) and having a working knowledge of the URC's Safeguarding Policy and Guidance (Good Practice 5) and its code of conduct in working with children and adults at risk (Appendices A3 and A4).
- To be aware of and maintain appropriate boundaries by undertaking mandatory URC Safer Sacred Space Boundaries training and promoting safe and healthy relationships with those they come in contact with.
- To exercise care and sensitivity in seeking counsel from colleagues and to protect the identity of third parties unless permission has been granted.
- To attend meetings, respond to correspondence and keep appropriate records efficiently and effectively, having regard to the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations requirements (GDPR).
- To observe the URC's Gift Policy for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers and to account carefully for expenses and any funds held on behalf of others.
- Not to undertake duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to do so.
- To refrain from using privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material (Good Practice 5 Section 3.3.10).
- Not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.

3b Relationships with ministerial colleagues

All Ministers:

- To strive to protect colleagues from prejudicial discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another Minister and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.
- To respect the work of predecessors and successors and deal honourably with their record.
- To consider carefully the location of retirement housing and try to avoid living in the immediate area of past pastorates.

Ministers in pastoral charge:

- To support the ministry of other Ministers and not interfere with the conduct of ministry or the direction of church life of other pastorates.
- To sever all professional ties with a previous pastorate and refer any requests or enquires of previous pastorates to the Interim Moderator or new Minister.

- To welcome retired colleagues and those Ministers serving the wider church as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

3c Relationship with elders, members and others

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To uphold values of faithfulness, trust and respect.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- Not to seek to influence inappropriately a pastorate in the call of a new minister.
- To work collaboratively and value the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To seek advice from colleagues or other professionals who may offer specialist advice if in doubt about one's competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consult and liaise with the church Safeguarding Coordinator (or the Synod Safeguarding Officer if a coordinator has not been appointed or been available) when a safeguarding concern, allegation or incident arises.
- To consult with colleagues, Elders and others as appropriate when considering taking on extra work.
- To observe proper boundaries in relationships and not to enter into a sexual relationship with anyone in their care.
- Not to meet alone with a child, a young person, children or young people under the age of 18. If a child or young person wants to discuss a personal matter, follow Good Practice G5 Guidance on Lone Working 8.3.7.

3d Relationship with Councils of the Church

- To be active in the councils of the Church.
- To accept the oversight of synod and the pastoral care of Synod Moderators.
- To submit to disciplinary procedures when initiated by the councils of the church and to inform as soon as possible the Synod Clerk and Synod Moderator, or where appropriate the Secretary for Ministries, when involved in legal proceedings (civil or criminal).
- To undertake mandatory training including Safer Sacred Space Boundaries training, Safeguarding Training at an appropriate level, Pastoral Supervision and any other mandatory training deemed appropriate.
- To work to the agreed Terms of Settlement.
- To be aware of the guidelines for on-going ministerial training issued by the Education and Learning Committee.

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