



## Code of Conduct

### 1. Purpose

This Code is intended to set the standard of behaviour expected of all staff members and anyone who serves in a church ministry position (hereby defined as a 'leader'). As a church, we value the importance of pastoral ministry to gospel growth and recognise that the conduct of Christian leaders can affect the public reputation of the Lord Jesus and the advance of his mission. This Code should be read alongside the Complaints Review Policy which sets out the process by which a person can submit a formal complaint regarding conduct under this Code.

### 2. Key Principles

This Code does not seek to describe the full breadth of behaviour expected of a Christian leader. Instead, it formally sets a minimum standard of conduct to which all leaders agree to be held accountable.

If persons covered by this Code are to conduct themselves in accordance with its objects and purposes, they will need continually to cultivate a healthy relationship with God. This includes making it a priority to be personally deep in word, prayer, and fellowship, to carefully safeguard appropriate rest and recreation as embodied and finite creatures, and to cultivate healthy relationships with friends, family, and colleagues.

### 3. Definitions

**abuse** means any of the following conduct: bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or spiritual abuse.

**appropriate church authority** means a pastor of SLE Church, or if in relation to the conduct of the Senior Pastor, the Chair of the Review Committee. The positions of the Chair of the Review Committee, and its members, can be found in the SLE Church Complaints Review Policy.

**bullying** means behaviour directed to a person or persons which is repeated, unreasonable (being behaviour that a reasonable person, having considered the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening), and creates a risk to their health and safety.

Bullying can include:

- Making derogatory, demeaning or belittling comments or jokes about someone's appearance, lifestyle (including sexual orientation and their cultural practices), background or capability (including their disabilities)
- Communicating in an abusive manner

- Spreading rumours or innuendo about someone or undermining in other ways their performance or reputation
- Dismissing or minimising someone's legitimate concerns or needs
- Inappropriate ignoring, or excluding someone from information or activities
- Touching someone threateningly or inappropriately
- Invading someone's personal space or interfering with their personal property
- Teasing someone, or playing pranks or practical jokes on someone with the intent of humiliating them
- Displaying or distributing written or visual material that degrades or offends.

Bullying does not include lawful conduct by leaders carried out in a reasonable manner, such as:

- Disagreeing with or criticising someone's belief or opinions or actions in an honest and respectful way
- Giving information about inappropriate behaviour in an objective way to the person or persons concerned and to any other person with a proper reason for having that information
- Setting reasonable performance goals, standards, or deadlines
- Giving information about unsatisfactory performance in an honest and constructive way
- Taking legitimate disciplinary action.

**child** means a person under the age of 18.

**child protection obligations** means all requirements under law or according to the church with the purpose of protecting the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable people.

**church** means SLE Church (ABN: 61 808 254 263).

**emotional abuse** means acts or omissions in relation to another person that can cause them significant emotional trauma or lead to serious behavioural or cognitive disorders.

**harassment** means unwelcome conduct, whether intended or not, in relation to another person where the person feels with good reason in all the circumstances, offended, humiliated or intimidated. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time. It includes:

- Making unwelcome physical contact with a person
- Making gestures or using language that could reasonably give offence including continual and unwarranted shouting
- Making unjustified or unnecessary comments about a person's capacities or attributes
- Putting up open display pictures, posters, graffiti or written materials that could reasonably give offence
- Making unwelcome communication with a person in any form (for example, phone calls, email, text messages)
- Stalking a person.

**offensive language** includes blasphemy, verbal harassment, racial, sexual, and other forms of vilification, personal insult or comment, and obscene words.

**pastoral relationship** means a relationship that a person under this Code has with another person for the purposes of providing pastoral care including but not limited to spiritual advice, instruction, support, and counselling.

**physical abuse** means any intentional or reckless act, use of force or threat to use force causing injury to, or involving unwelcome physical contact with, another person. This may take the form

of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving, or grabbing. An injury may take the form of bruises, cuts, burns, or fractures. It does not include lawful discipline by a parent or guardian.

**prohibited material** means images or sounds including all kinds of publications, films, and computer games that are considered by civil standards to be unsuitable for a child to see, hear, read or play, and any substance or product whose supply to or use by children is prohibited by law.

**prohibited substance** means any substance that is banned or prohibited by law for use or consumption by adults.

**restricted material** means images or sounds including publications, films, and computer games that are considered by civil standards to be offensive on the grounds of violence, sex, language, drug abuse, or nudity.

**sexual abuse** means sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or sexual harassment either of an adult or of a child. It does not include:

- Sex education with the prior consent of a parent or guardian
- Age appropriate consensual sexual behaviour between peers (i.e. the same or a similar age).

**Spiritual abuse** means the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith or religion. It includes:

- Using a position of spiritual authority to dominate or manipulate another person or group
- Using a position of spiritual authority to seek inappropriate deference from others
- Isolating a person from friends and family members
- Using biblical or religious terminology to justify abuse.

#### 4. Implementation of this Code

This Code will be effective only if it is widely known and available not only by those persons covered by it but also by all staff, volunteers, church members and attendees. Where the Code is consistently applied and enforced, it will promote proper behaviour and a healthy culture across the church.

- 4.1 You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the conduct set out in this Code.
- 4.2 If you are responsible for leading a team or ministry, you must ensure that the persons serving in your team or ministry are made aware of this Code.
- 4.3 You are not to tolerate or cover up any behaviour inconsistent with this Code and if you become aware of any serious or persistent breaches of it, you must inform the appropriate church authority.

#### 5. Pastoral Relationships

Christian leadership of any kind bears a unique spiritual and church authority. With that authority comes a degree of power in pastoral relationships that must always be exercised with the utmost care and in the best interests of those being ministered to.

- 5.1 Unless required or permitted by law, or necessary and lawful in the legitimate exercise of your pastoral duties, you must not disclose confidential information received in a pastoral

relationship to any other person without the prior consent of the person providing the information.

- 5.2 You are not to inappropriately show favouritism or discriminate between people in pastoral relationships.
- 5.3 Where you have a conflict of interest in a pastoral relationship, you must take appropriate steps to resolve the conflict and act in the best interests of those to whom you are ministering.
- 5.4 You must ensure that any staff, leaders or volunteers for whom you are responsible are provided with a safe working environment in which any abuse of power is not tolerated.

## **6. Children and Vulnerable People**

Vulnerable people (including children, families, the disabled and the elderly) are at particular risk of abuse and exploitation. It is vitally important that vulnerable people in Christian communities and churches are respected, listened to, and protected.

- 6.1 If you are responsible for leading a team or ministry, you must ensure that:
  - a. proper systems and policies for the safety and welfare of vulnerable people are implemented, maintained and adhered to in your team or ministry; and
  - b. all persons in your team or ministry who have a pastoral relationship with vulnerable people comply with all civil and church child protection obligations.
- 6.2 You are not to abuse vulnerable people.
- 6.3 You must not make any prohibited material available to a child.
- 6.4 You must comply with all civil and church child protection obligations including but not limited to any Blue Card requirements.
- 6.5 If you know or reasonably suspect that a child is at risk of harm from any form of child abuse, you must comply with all mandatory reporting obligations under the law. If you are aware of any other vulnerable persons being abused, please raise your concerns to an elder and/or raise this incident via [sle.church/safeministry](http://sle.church/safeministry).

## **7. Personal Conduct**

The personal behaviour of a Christian leader is core to their qualification for public ministry and can significantly affect the reputation of the gospel and the church. A leader's use of his or her position, and their relationship with the community at large, are of particular importance. The following are not exhaustive but demonstrative of the behaviour expected of a Christian leader.

- 7.1 You are not to engage in any abusive conduct including but not limited to:
  - a. bullying;
  - b. emotional abuse;
  - c. harassment;
  - d. physical abuse;
  - e. sexual abuse; or
  - f. spiritual abuse.
- 7.2 You must not abuse your spouse, children or other members of your family, or engage in any form of abuse in a family or domestic context.
- 7.3 You are not to knowingly make any statements that are false, misleading or deceptive or use offensive language, including in online contexts.
- 7.4 If you consume alcohol or any other addictive substances, you must do so responsibly and in moderation.

- 7.5 You are not to use any prohibited substance at any time.
- 7.6 You are not to view, possess, produce, or distribute any restricted material without a legitimate purpose.
- 7.7 You must obey civil and criminal laws other than any law that is contrary to the Bible or unjustly prohibits the practice of religion.
- 7.8 You are to inform the appropriate church authority if you are being investigated in relation to or being charged with a criminal offence.

## **8. Gender and Sexual Conduct**

God created humanity as male and female and gave human sexuality as a gift. It is important that Christian leaders honour their biological gender as given by God, and maintain sexual chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage. It is never appropriate for a Christian leader to take advantage of their role to engage in sexual activity with a person with whom they have a pastoral relationship and who is not their spouse.

- 8.1 You must not engage in sex outside of a heterosexual marriage or in any disgraceful conduct of a sexual nature.
- 8.2 You must not sexually abuse an adult or a child.
- 8.3 You are not to engage in prostitution, or visit brothels or places associated with the sex industry without a legitimate purpose.
- 8.4 In your interactions with members of the opposite sex, you are to be above reproach and avoid situations that may give rise to any real or perceived improper conduct.

## **9. Financial Management**

Maintaining integrity in financial affairs is an essential matter of trust and confidence. Christian leaders must guard against greed in their personal financial dealings and when handling money belonging to others, they must seek to be honest, transparent and accountable at all times.

- 9.1 You must not seek personal advantage or financial gain from your position or a pastoral relationship beyond your remuneration and any recognised allowances and deductions.
- 9.2 You are not to engage in tax evasion and must comply with all tax laws, regulations, and rulings at all times.
- 9.3 You must not allow yourself to be unduly influenced by offers of financial gain or show partiality or bias in your pastoral relationships on the basis of a person's financial means or activity.
- 9.4 You are to avoid situations of conflict between your personal financial interests and your pastoral responsibilities, including with respect to any monetary or non-monetary benefits provided to you by persons with whom you have a pastoral relationship.
- 9.5 With respect to all monies which you handle or receive in the exercise of your pastoral duties, including any honoraria or substantial gifts, you must abide by the policy or practice prescribed by the church.

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