



# Code of Ethics for Ministers

of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc

and all affiliated Churches and Agencies

Version 2

Approved 14.12.2017

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the personal and professional behaviours and ethical standards required of Ministers within Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc (CCVT).

The Code is designed to help those to whom it is applicable to understand the responsibilities and obligations of working ethically in ministry. The behaviours and ethical practices described in the Code are essential for healthy and safe ministry, having significant implications for the recipients of ministry, those in ministry roles, and the church.

The Code applies equally to all electronic and online communications as it would to face-to-face or in-person interactions and communications.

### 1.2. Who does the Code of Ethics apply to?

The Code of Ethics applies to all Ministers within CCVT, its affiliates, national partners, and associated ministries. This includes but is not limited to senior, executive, associate, families, children, youth and student ministers/pastors, chaplains, and church planters.

These Ministers shall be listed in the “People in Ministry” section of the CCVT Directory and are required to familiarise themselves with the Code of Ethics.

In accordance with Affinity:2, all people appointed to formal ministry roles, paid or unpaid, are required to be Accredited with CCVT. Adhering to the Code of Ethics is an ongoing requirement of Accreditation and Endorsement with CCVT.

### 1.3. Foundations of Ministry

People in Ministry are called to pattern their ministry practices on the example of Jesus Christ, as he expressed his priestly, prophetic, servant and mutual ministry leadership. These practices form the foundation of Ministry, and of this Code of Ethics.

As a ‘priest’, Ministers accept that all people are created in the image of God with a clear recognition in Scripture that everybody is of unique value. Ministers have a responsibility to respect and enable all people to fulfil their calling as children of God. Ministers are called to encourage, lead and guide those who seek their ministry, recognising the personal autonomy of all made in the image of God.

As a ‘prophet’, those who minister in the name of Jesus Christ’s love will act with respect, consideration and truthfulness towards all people. Ministers are called to seek justice where there is oppression, and truth where there is deceit.

As a ‘servant’, Ministers are called to a ministry of service carried out in humility and marked by deep spiritual love. The abuse of power and privilege has no place in ministry and the exercise of a Christ-like ministry means that Ministers will be aware of their relationship with all with whom they come into contact, and will seek to avoid harm, whilst actively seeking to do good.

In practicing ‘mutual ministry’, those who minister within the life of the church share in the ministry of Christ. Within that ministry all people exercise a particular responsibility, and are accountable to each other and to Christ for the exercising of such ministry.

### 1.4. Commitment to Safety

We believe that Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc (CCVT) will be doing better at building Communities of Hope and Compassion and developing Leaders to lead them when each place of ministry and mission affiliated with CCVT is a safe place for everyone to grow in their discipleship of Jesus and in their relationships with one another.

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13: 34-35 (NIV)*

*“No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”  
Micah 6:8 (NLT)*

Our commitment to expressing the love of Christ leads us to the view that all people should be able to live and work in an environment that is free from abuse of any kind.

The nature of ministry requires Ministers to be Christlike examples to others. It is the responsibility of a person in ministry to be respectful of and act responsibly towards the people who are within their duty of care.

The adoption of this Code of Ethics, and the investigation of breaches of the Code, reflects a deep desire for an open, accountable process that provides justice and compassion to all parties and, where possible, provides opportunity for reconciliation and healing.

### 1.5. Format

Each section of the code contains a ‘preamble’ which introduces the topic and outlines its guiding principles. The ‘minimum standards’ then specify the expectations of personal behaviour and professional conduct of those in formally recognised ministry positions.

### 1.6. The Code of Ethics and other Policies and Procedures

The Code of Ethics is to be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures. Where there is any inconsistency between them, the higher standard will apply.

- Affinity:2 (or any future iterations thereof)
- CCVT Accreditation and Endorsement of People in Ministry Policy
- CCVT Safe Places Policy
- CCVT Child Safety Policy
- CCVT Child Safety Reporting Procedure
- CCVT Marriage Licence Policy
- Local Church Policies and Procedures
- Individual Employment Contracts

### 1.7. Complaints or Allegations of Misconduct

Any person may bring a complaint or allegation of a breach of the Code against a Minister to the CCVT Professional Standards Committee.

Any allegations of breaches reasonably believed to be criminal and/or reportable conduct will be reported to the relevant civil or statutory authorities.

The CCVT Child Safety Reporting Procedure outlines the CCVT process for reporting any concerns regarding the safety of children.

For advice on specific matters or to make a report to the CCVT Professional Standards Committee, contact:

CCVT Safe Places Coordinator  
1st Floor, 582 Heidelberg Rd  
Fairfield Victoria 3078  
safeplaces@churchesofchrist.org.au  
03 9488 8800 or 0411 255 494

## 1.8. Evaluation, Review, and Update

This document is clearly marked with the date of adoption by the Board of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc.

Formal evaluation of the Code of Ethics will take place within 5 years with a view to making revisions. More regular revision may take place if required.

The Board will provide opportunity for Ministers or members of Affiliates to contribute to the review of this Code.

## 1.9. Authorisation

Responsible person	Paul Cameron, EO
Version	2
Approved by the Board of CCVT Inc	14.12.2017
Approved by the Board of Stirling Theological College	28.02.2018
Review date	14.12.2022

## 2. Key Terms and Definitions

This section lists and defines the key terms used in this document.

**Abuse:** includes bullying, harassment, emotional/psychological abuse, elder abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, or child abuse.

**Accountability:** willingness (or necessity) to be called to account for our actions.

**Accredited:** the status of a person who has completed all the requirements of the CCVT Accreditation process.

**Adult:** any person aged 18 years or older.

**Affiliate:** a church or agency affiliated with CCVT.

**Affinity:2:** the relationship between CCVT and Affiliated Communities is a covenant partnership, expressed in Affinity:2, a 2017 revision of the Affinity document approved in 2012. This covenant seeks to describe a living and dynamic partnership, where more is implied than stated, and where much of the future is yet to be lived out. CCVT values this covenant partnership with each and every Affiliate.

**Allegation:** a complaint, claim or assertion that someone has done something illegal or wrong, typically one made without proof.

**Bivocational:** having two or more sources of income, with one income provided by the church, and a second or more income(s) from a source other than the church.

**Breach:** failure to act in a required or promised way, or do what is required by a law, obligation, standard, agreement or duty.

**Bullying:** the repeated seeking out or targeting of an adult, child or young person to cause them distress and humiliation or to exploit them, and which creates a risk to their health and safety. Where it involves the use of technology, it is often called online or cyberbullying. Bullying may be physical or psychological (verbal and non-verbal). It may include but is not limited to:

- making derogatory, demeaning or belittling comments or jokes about someone's appearance, lifestyle, beliefs, background or capability
- communicating in an abusive manner
- spreading rumours or innuendo about someone or undermining their performance or reputation in other ways
- dismissing or minimising someone's legitimate concerns or needs
- inappropriately ignoring or excluding someone from information, peer groups or activities
- touching someone threateningly or inappropriately
- invading someone's personal space or interfering with their personal property
- teasing or making someone the brunt of pranks or practical jokes
- displaying or distributing written or visual material that degrades or offends
- intimidation and extortion

Behaviour which is *not* bullying includes:

- disagreeing respectfully with someone's beliefs or opinion
- setting reasonable performance goals, standards or deadlines
- giving reasonable directives, feedback or assessments of performance or behaviour
- taking legitimate disciplinary action

**Child:** any person under 18 years of age. This includes those also referred to as a young person. Some State/Territory based legislation indicates a child to be under 16 with regard to certain rights, however

anyone under 18 years of age is still considered a child in accordance with general child protection legislation.

**Child Abuse:** any non-accidental act that endangers the child's physical or emotional health or development. These may be things people do *to* children or things they *fail* to do for them. Abuse occurs when those in positions of trust and power abuse that trust and make use of their power to harm children. It can take many forms, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as well as neglect and exploitation.

**Child Exploitation Material:** any film, printed matter, electronic data, computer image or any other portrayal that describes or depicts a person who is, or appears to be, a child:

- engaged in sexual activity
- in a sexual context
- as the subject of torture, cruelty or abuse (whether or not in a sexual context) in a way that a reasonable person would regard as being, in all the circumstances, offensive.

**Child Pornography:** sexually explicit or suggestive material depicting children. Child pornography is a form of child exploitation material.

**Child Protection:** the safeguarding of children and young people. It involves legislative compliance, and requires the use of Statutory Authorities within each state and territory. Child Protection is everyone's responsibility.

**Child Safety Policy:** the CCVT umbrella policy regarding the safety of children and youth. This policy applies to all Communities of Hope and Compassion affiliated with CCVT, and forms a minimum acceptable standard of safety. Communities are encouraged to develop further policies that build on this base to meet the needs of their own context.

**Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania (CCVT):** a movement of more than 130 Communities of Hope and Compassion (Affiliates) spread across Victoria and Tasmania.

**Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc. (CCVT Inc.):** the networking and coordinating body that serves and supports affiliated churches and agencies.

**Code of Conduct:** an agreed commitment to uphold policies, procedures and practices within the church and its ministries.

**Coercion:** the action or practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats.

**Colleague:** a person with whom one works in a profession or business. This may include other Ministers, employed staff, appointed leaders or those working alongside or in the same team within a particular entity, as well as Ministers of other Affiliates or agencies within CCVT or other denominations.

**Consent:** Giving permission for something to happen or agreement to do something. All parties must be willing *and able* to give consent.

**Council of Churches of Christ in Australia (CCCA):** the national body for Churches of Christ, made up of representatives from each of the states.

**Complaint:** See Allegation

**Complainant:** the person who makes a complaint or notification about alleged abuse. In most cases, but not all, the complainant will also be the person against whom it is alleged that the abuse was directed.

**Criminal behaviour:** Conduct or actions which are prohibited by law and punishable by the State.

**Domestic/Family Violence:** refers to violence, abuse and intimidation between family members or people who are or have been in an intimate relationship. The perpetrator uses violence to control and

dominate the other person. This causes fear, physical harm and/or psychological harm. Domestic/Family violence can include emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal abuse, financial abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, spiritual abuse, and/or isolation from friends and family. Domestic violence is a violation of human rights.

**Dual relationships:** refers to any situation where multiple roles exist between a Minister and a recipient of ministry, e.g. when one is also a customer, client, student, friend, family member, employee or business associate of the other.

**Duty of Care:** the moral and legal responsibility that the church and/or an individual has to ensure the safety and well-being of those who participate in its ministries, services and activities.

**Elder Abuse:** the mistreatment or exploitation of a person aged 65 years or older by someone they know and trust. Elder abuse takes many forms, ranging from criminal acts (such as physical assault, mistreatment and neglect) through to coercive behaviour and exploitation.

**Emotional Abuse:** acts or omissions that have caused, or could cause emotional harm or lead to serious behavioural or cognitive disorders. It includes:

- subjecting a person to excessive and repeated personal criticism
- ridiculing a person, including the use of insulting or derogatory terms when referring to them
- threatening or intimidating a person
- ignoring a person openly and pointedly
- behaving in a hostile manner or in any way that could reasonably result in another person feeling isolated or rejected

**Endorsed:** the status of a person who has completed all the requirements of the CCVT endorsement process and who is therefore eligible for ordination with Council of Churches of Christ in Australia.

**Family Violence:** see Domestic/Family Violence

**Financial Abuse:** a common tactic used by abusers to gain power and control in a relationship. The forms of financial abuse may be subtle or overt but in general, include tactics to either limit a person's access to assets or conceal information and accessibility to finances, or use a personal relationship or connection to coerce a person into giving money or gifts to the abuser.

**Grooming:** Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. It is often very carefully planned and it can take place over weeks, months or even years. Grooming is about making a child think that sex with the offender is normal or that they have no choice. Offenders do this by building a relationship and emotional connection with the child and often involves conditioning parents, other adults, colleagues, church leaders and the community to consider the relationship with the child to be 'normal'. Initially, conduct might appear to be innocent but it progresses over time and escalates to sexual abuse or exploitation. Threats and bribes are often used to stop the child from disclosing the abuse. Indicators may include but are not limited to:

- Treating a child or group of children as favoured, making them feel special compared with others in a group
- Seeking out opportunities to be alone with a child or children (in person or online)
- Exhibiting frequent physical affection such as kissing, hugging, stroking hair or wrestling even when the child clearly does not want it or it is not required.
- Sharing secrets with a child and encouraging the keeping of secrets
- Having an inappropriate interest into children's physical and sexual development
- Openly or pretending to accidentally expose the victim to nudity, sexual material and sexual acts
- Making close physical contact sexual, such as inappropriate tickling and wrestling
- Talking about sex and sexuality with a child

- Controlling a child through threats, force, or use of authority

**Harassment:** unwelcome conduct in relation to another person where the person feels offended, belittled or threatened. 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 on open display pictures, posters, graffiti or written materials that could reasonably give offence
- making unwelcome communication with a person in any form (e.g. phone, email, messaging)
- stalking

**Hazing:** refers to the practice of rituals, challenges, and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. The initiation rites can range from relatively benign pranks, to protracted patterns of behaviour that rise to the level of abuse or criminal misconduct. Hazing is often prohibited by law or prohibited by institutions because it may include either physical, sexual or psychological abuse.

**Minister:** (also known as Pastors), this term refers to all people appointed to formal ministry roles, paid or unpaid. This includes senior, executive, associate, families, children, youth and student ministers/pastors, chaplains, and church planters. These Ministers shall be listed in the "People in Ministry" section in the CCVT Directory and are required to familiarise themselves with the Code of Ethics. Affinity:2 outlines the requirement that affiliated churches and agencies seek the accreditation of all Ministers.

**Neglect:** the failure to provide the basic necessities of life where a child's health and development are placed at risk of harm. Neglect is a form of Child Abuse. It includes being deprived of food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, education, supervision, safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

**Offensive Language:** includes blasphemy, verbal harassment, racial and other forms of vilification, personal insult or comment and obscene words.

**Ordination:** the public recognition by the Council of Churches of Christ in Australia that a Minister has met the requirements set out in their Policy on the Endorsement and Ordination of Ministers.

**Pastoral Care/Ministry:** the provision of care, counsel and education to persons who seek the support of the church, including:

- guiding spiritual matters by means of Biblical or church teaching
- prayer
- provision of practical support such as meals, counselling
- reconciling someone to God and/or other people
- spiritual advice, guidance, and direction
- sustaining through a period of hardship and/or crisis

**Pastoral Relationship:** means the relationship between a Minister and another person:

- in which the Minister is providing spiritual care for the person; or
- where the person has looked to the Minister for guidance, protection, or care; or
- where the person has made contact with the Minister in their responsibility or function as Minister

Ministers may form pastoral relationships in a variety of contexts:

- Ministers are in a pastoral relationship with all members and attendees of a congregation through the commitments they make at their induction, commissioning or other service of recognition.
- Where Ministers are in a non-Congregational placement, they are in pastoral relationship with those persons they meet by virtue of their placement.
- Where Ministers are not in or are yet to commence a placement, they are in a pastoral relationship with those persons they meet by virtue of their role as a Minister.

**People in Ministry:** See Minister.

**Personal Boundaries:** guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave towards them and how they will respond when someone exceeds those limits.

**Physical Abuse:** 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. It does not include lawful discipline by a parent/guardian.

**Position of Authority:** those in a position of authority within the church include all those in formal ministry roles including, but not limited to: ministers/pastors; missionaries; deacons; elders; church workers (paid or volunteer); all those working with children, young people and vulnerable adults; and any other recognised leadership position.

**Positional Power:** the authority you have by virtue of your role or position in the organisational structure.

**Professional Boundaries:** limits that define appropriate conduct in accordance with the professional role or duties being assumed.

**Professional Standards Committee (PSC):** a committee of the CCVT Board that oversees compliance with the CCVT Code of Ethics, investigation of breaches of that Code, and processing and responding to allegations of abuse and misconduct within the church.

**Professional Supervision:** a joint endeavour in which a Minister, with the help of a Supervisor, develops themselves in relation to their ministry and wider context, attends to the people they minister to, and feeds back into the knowledge and effectiveness of the wider CCVT movement by developing their own practice. It includes:

- Registered Supervision - practised by an experienced minister/professional who has completed a lower level of training. Training will be provided through CCVT and those who have received training will enter a pool of Supervisors available to CCVT People in Ministry
- Accredited Supervision - a specialist area of supervision practised by an individual that has been trained through an accredited body such as Stirling Theological College

This process of debriefing and caregiving to those in a pastoral and leadership role provides professional support, formation and accountability. This relationship is confidential, evaluative, and extends over time. It is preferable if the supervisor:

- has no other pastoral or personal relationship with the person being supervised; and
- has been trained in professional supervision

**Recipient of Ministry:** any individual for whom a Minister would be deemed to have a pastoral responsibility.

**Reportable Conduct (Vic):** the 5 types of reportable conduct listed in the Victorian *Child Wellbeing & Safety Act 2005* are:

- sexual offences (against, with or in the presence of, a child)

- sexual misconduct (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- physical violence (against, with or in the presence of, a child)
- behaviour that is likely to cause significant emotional or psychological harm
- significant neglect

These behaviours must be reported to the relevant authority and the CCVT Safe Places Coordinator if committed, or alleged to have been committed, at any time by anyone in a position of authority within the church,

**Reportable Conduct Scheme (Vic):** The Victorian Commission for Children & Young People oversees the Reportable Conduct Scheme, which requires the head of organisations working with children to report any allegations of reportable conduct made against any employee or volunteer over the age of 18 years of age even if they do not have direct contact with children as part of their role and/or the alleged conduct occurred outside of the organisation.

**Risk of Significant Harm:** at risk of significant harm is a term used by a number of State/Territory child protection services for situations where a reasonable person has current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person. For example, when there is a potential that a child or young person may be injured or harmed as a result of physical, sexual or psychological abuse, ill-treatment, neglect or exposure to violence. Conduct putting a child or young person at risk of significant harm may also be reportable conduct.

**Safe Places Policy:** the umbrella policy under which all CCVT safety policies and resources sit. It applies to every individual, congregation, and organisation affiliated with CCVT and forms a minimum standard of safety. Communities are encouraged to formulate their own policies that build on this base to reflect the needs of their context.

**Sexual Abuse:** includes sexual assault, sexual exploitation or sexual harassment.

**Sexual Abuse of a Child:** the use of a child by another person for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification or for that of others. It includes:

- exposing oneself indecently to a child
- having vaginal or anal intercourse with a child
- penetrating a child's vagina or anus with an object or any bodily part
- sexually touching or fondling a child
- kissing, touching, holding or fondling a child in a sexual manner
- staring at or secretly watching a child for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification
- making sexual references, gestures, actions or innuendo in a child's presence using any form of communication
- discussing or inquiring about personal matters of a sexual nature with a child
- exposing a child to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- forcing a child to sexually touch or fondle another person
- forcing a child to perform oral sex
- forcing a child either to masturbate self or others, or to watch others masturbate
- forcing a child to engage in or watch any other sexual activity

Behaviour which is *not* sexual abuse includes:

- 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, where neither has positional power or responsibility for the other)

**Sexual Assault:** any intentional or reckless act, use of force or threat to use force involving some form of sexual activity against any person without their consent. It includes:

- having vaginal or anal intercourse with a person without their consent

- penetrating another person's vagina or anus with an object or any bodily part without that person's consent
- sexually touching and fondling a person without their consent
- kissing another person without their consent
- holding another person in a sexual manner without their consent
- forcing a person to sexually touch or fondle another person
- forcing a person to perform oral sex

**Sexual Exploitation:** any form of sexual contact or invitation to sexual contact with an adult, with whom there is a pastoral or supervisory relationship, whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the contact or invitation.

**Sexual Harassment:** unwelcome sexual behaviour, which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. Sexual harassment is a type of sex discrimination.

Sexual harassment can take many different forms – it can be obvious or indirect, physical or verbal, repeated or once-off, and perpetrated by males or females against people of the same or opposite sex. Interaction, flirtation or friendship which is mutual or consensual is not considered sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is covered in the workplace when it happens at work, at work-related events, between people sharing the same workplace and/or between colleagues outside of work. Sexual harassment may include:

- staring or leering
- unnecessary familiarity, such as deliberately brushing up against you or unwelcome touching
- suggestive comments or jokes
- insults or taunts of a sexual nature
- intrusive questions or statements about your private life
- displaying posters, magazines or images of a sexual nature
- sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- inappropriate advances on social networking sites
- accessing sexually explicit internet sites
- requests for sex or repeated unwanted requests to go out on dates
- behaviour that may also be considered to be an offence under criminal law, such as physical assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, stalking or obscene communications.

**Sexual Misconduct:** any behaviour that could be reasonably considered to be sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or grooming of an adult, child or young person. Sexual misconduct is contact or invitation, via any means, of a sexual nature which is inconsistent with the integrity of a person in a position of authority within the church.

**Sexualised Behaviour:** any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed.

**Sexuality:** A person's capacity for sexual feelings, sexual orientation or preference, and sexual activity.

**Spiritual Abuse:** the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith or religion, and/or the abuse of power in the context of Christian community or fellowship. It may include but is not limited to:

- using biblical or religious texts or terminology to justify abuse
- using a position of spiritual authority to dominate, manipulate, or seek inappropriate deference from others
- invoking divine authority in order to manipulate people into carrying out actions that meet the needs of the abuser

- inflating the vocation and spiritual insight of the Minister above other people, enabling the Minister to get away with abuse or unhealthy behaviour
- inflating the importance of the religious organisation above the health of the individual
- exploitation of a recipient of ministry for one's own advantage or profit
- verbal, emotional, spiritual, and/or physical harm done to recipients of ministry by a person in ministry or those in leadership within a church or religious organisation
- isolating a person from friends and family members and/or restricting normal contact with others
- coercing a recipient of ministry to accept ideas or behaviour that opposes legal standards and/or crosses personal boundaries
- failure by a Minister to acknowledge a recipient of ministry's presence, value, or worth
- communication by a Minister to a recipient of ministry that they are worthless and/or inferior to others, devaluing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences
- behaviour that negatively influences the identity, self-worth, and dignity of a recipient of ministry, such as name-calling, ridicule, insults, intimidation, and condescending commentary
- threatening behaviour or commentary towards a recipient of ministry such that intense terror or fear is induced
- neglecting a recipient of ministry by failing to provide care and concern in a sensitive and responsive manner, when reasonably requested to do so. This may occur when a person in ministry interacts inappropriately, is uninvolved and detached, and/or ignores a recipient of ministry's emotional and/or physical needs

**Statutory Authorities:** The Police, Government Child Protection Services and other emergency services and government authorities for the administration of laws relating to complaints, allegations and/or disclosures of abuse, misconduct and criminal offences (State/Territory and Federal level).

**Transparency:** the practice of being willing and able to demonstrate to another responsible person how you are caring for others. It is not only *doing* the right thing but also being *seen* to do the right thing.

**Vulnerable Adult:** a person who may be more susceptible to abuse or exploitation based on factors such as their health status (physical or mental), age, grief, previous experience of abuse, social isolation or financial hardship. Vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

**Young Person:** a teenager who is still under the age of 18 years old. This term is used interchangeably with the terms child/children. This term can also indicate specific rights for a child in some states/territories (e.g. consent, mandatory reporting and living out of home laws). See also 'Child'.

## 3. Personal Conduct

### Preamble

The Code of Ethics reflects standards that God expects of all people. Ministers within CCVT are therefore expected to be examples and models of Christian faith and practice, keeping their public and private life above reproach.

The personal conduct of a Minister will have an impact on the professional standing of that Minister and on the profession as a whole.

It is the duty of any Minister not to use the influence or authority of their position for personal gain, and to refrain from any form of conduct that exploits another for their own advantage or the advantage of any third person. This includes any action, verbal, written or electronic, physical, or emotional that could be interpreted as abuse.

It is the responsibility of the Minister to care for themselves appropriately, ensure a healthy work/life balance, pay attention to the effect that unhealthy work practices and personal conduct has on their ability to function professionally, and actively work to build and sustain healthy personal relationships such as marriage and friendships.

Ministers should avoid situations where they are vulnerable to temptation or where their conduct may be construed to be a breach of this Code of Conduct.

It is always the responsibility of the Minister to uphold the minimum standards of this Code and maintain appropriate boundaries and conduct at all times.

### Minimum Standards

- 3.1 Speak politely and with respect for others.
- 3.2 Take responsibility for your words and actions.
- 3.3 Do not use offensive language including blasphemy, verbal harassment, racial and other forms of vilification, personal insult or comment, or obscene words.
- 3.4 Show respect for others, regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference.
- 3.5 Do not discriminate against any person based on race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference except where allowable under the law.
- 3.6 Tell the truth.
- 3.7 Do what you say you will do and keep your promises.
- 3.8 Do not take property that belongs to others, including intellectual property.
- 3.9 Do not use or consume any substance banned or prohibited by law.
- 3.10 Do not misuse alcohol, drugs or other substances.
- 3.11 Do not participate in, or allow, hazing or secret ceremonies.
- 3.12 Maintain appropriate boundaries in all areas of personal conduct.
- 3.13 Maintain appropriate boundaries in all areas of professional conduct.
- 3.14 Undertake ministry conscientiously, and with efficiency and effectiveness.
- 3.15 Carry out responsibilities in accordance with your employment agreement and/or position description.

- 3.16 Obey the policies and procedures governing the ministry activity, occupation, or entity in which you are serving.
- 3.17 Utilise leave entitlements in accordance with your employment agreement.
- 3.18 Actively work to prevent abuse to the best of your ability.
- 3.19 Do not participate in abuse of any kind against any person (including spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, financial, or bullying).
- 3.20 Do not condone abuse of any kind against any person (including spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, financial, or bullying).
- 3.21 Report any criminal or reportable conduct as required.
- 3.22 Do not break the law or encourage another person to do so.
- 3.23 Inform the Executive Officer of CCVT Inc of any matter which may lead to legal action against yourself and/or the Church.
- 3.24 Do not penalise, discriminate against, or have action taken against any person who reports reasonable concerns made in good faith regarding breaches of this Code of Ethics.
- 3.25 Use continuing education or personal development to improve strategies of self-care.
- 3.26 Be accountable through professional supervision for your own emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual health, and value its effect upon your professional engagements and pastoral care.

## 4. Financial Integrity

### Preamble

Ministers must maintain integrity in financial matters and exercise faithful stewardship in managing both their own finances and that of the Affiliate or entity in which they work.

At no time should a Minister operate outside their authority regarding financial matters or give financial advice to others unless qualified to do so.

Ministers are not to exploit any person or organisation for financial purposes, and are to avoid situations of conflict between personal financial interests and pastoral ministry responsibilities.

With regards to financial integrity, a general principle is that Ministers should not receive personal gifts resulting from the pastoral relationship. There are times where a gift is offered as a gesture of good will, and in that situation a Minister should use discretion concerning the acceptance or return of gifts by considering the intent, value and affordability of the gift and whether there is a risk of the Minister being compromised or losing objectivity. See also the Conflict of Interest section of the Code of Ethics.

Ministers accepting a gift to satisfy cultural traditions should be sensitive and gracious while still considering the appropriateness of the gift.

Where Ministers do accept a gift, they should consider an appropriate use of the gift to benefit the community of faith, and be transparent in its origin and application.

### Minimum Standards

- 4.1 Maintain a strict separation between work-related and personal financial matters, ensuring that clear account and transaction boundaries are maintained.
- 4.2 Only use, or authorise the use of, the Affiliate or entity's financial resources or facilities for work-related purposes, unless otherwise stipulated in your employment agreement.
- 4.3 Fully disclose and be publicly accountable for all Affiliate or entity monies which you handle.
- 4.4 Act within the level of your authority and in accordance with relevant policies.
- 4.5 Do not give financial advice to any person unless qualified to do so.
- 4.6 Any fees or honoraria received for ministry activities conducted within the normal course of your work, must be passed on to the Affiliate or entity in which you work.
- 4.7 Ensure that where fees and payments are charged for any service, those to whom you minister are aware of all fees beforehand and can give informed consent.
- 4.8 Do not use 'cultural traditions' as a basis for accepting an otherwise inappropriate gift.
- 4.9 Do not allow yourself to be influenced by offers of money, gifts or financial reward.
- 4.10 Do not seek and/or obtain personal advantage or financial gain for yourself or your family from your position or from a pastoral relationship, beyond your stipend or wage and recognised allowances and deductions.
- 4.11 Do not use your ministry to recruit clients for private practice or personal commercial interests.
- 4.12 Do not use your ministry skills as a basis for personal commercial benefit during work hours.
- 4.13 Consult with the church's governance group, before accepting remuneration or employment other than that which is stipulated in your employment agreement.

- 4.14 Ensure that any bi-vocational or external employment does not impede or adversely affect your ability to minister within the agreed vocational ministry time, as assessed together with the church's governance group.
- 4.15 Maintain clear work hours and expenses for any separate bivocational roles.
- 4.16 Pay all taxes, debts, and family support obligations as required.

## 5. Sexuality

### Preamble

Sexuality is a gift from God and is fundamental to human nature. It is proper for Ministers to value this gift, whilst understanding the spiritual, physical, emotional, psychological, and relational complexities of this topic.

#### Discussing sexuality with recipients of ministry

When preaching, teaching, counselling, or providing pastoral care, the use of theological and educational materials, including online material, must be appropriate and honouring of the God-given gift of sexual expression.

Ministers may have their own understanding of human sexuality, but must be respectful of the views of others both inside and outside the Church, recognising that there are a variety of social and theological views on sexuality.

For some, discussion of sexuality may be a difficult or traumatic topic. Ministers should be sensitive to the needs of some recipients of ministry, (e.g. in cases of sexual abuse), and consider whether they are best qualified to provide pastoral care or whether the recipient of ministry should be referred to another Minister or professional counsellor.

#### Ministers and sexual conduct

It is always the responsibility of the Minister to ensure that their own physical, emotional and sexual needs are met in healthy ways and in accordance with the Code of Ethics minimum standards.

Ministers should be aware of the example they set to others, avoid situations of temptation, seek advice and accountability through appropriate professional supervision, and ensure that healthy personal boundaries are in place and adhered to.

Any sexualised behaviour must be appropriate, regardless of whether a minister is single with the spiritual gift of celibacy, single but seeking a relationship, in a committed romantic relationship such as dating or engaged, married, divorced, or widowed.

Those in marriage relationships should actively work to strengthen, nurture and protect their marriage, recognising that this is the appropriate relationship in which their emotional and sexual needs are met. Furthermore, Ministers should appreciate that their own marriage may be at risk from the pressure of ministry and the complexity of pastoral relationships.

If a Minister who is single seeks to establish a committed romantic relationship with a person *who is also single* and is *not* a recipient of ministry, it is always the responsibility of the Minister to ensure that initiating and/or participating in that relationship will not be exploitative or harmful to the other person in any way, and that it does not breach the Code of Ethics.

See also the 'Personal Relationships' section of this Code.

#### Sexuality and Misconduct

Those exercising ministry are in a position of power relative to those receiving ministry. This positional power means that *any* sort of sexual or romantic behaviour or relationship between a minister and recipient of ministry can *never* be as equals and is therefore prohibited.

A Minister must take responsibility for their own sexual conduct and respect the boundaries of others, recognising that sexual misconduct by a Minister has a particularly significant impact on victims, the Minister's family, and on the ministry.

Due to the potential for significant harm, a Minister who is found to have engaged in a sexual relationship with a recipient of ministry may be liable for a range of sanctions including the removal of accreditation or endorsement as a Minister of Churches of Christ.

## Sexuality in the Workplace

A place of ministry is considered a workplace. What may be acceptable socially or in private life could well be inappropriate in a work context. Ministers should be careful to ensure that professional standards are maintained in the workplace and that a culture of inappropriate behaviour does not develop.

### Minimum Standards

- 5.1 Maintain chastity in singleness.
- 5.2 Maintain faithfulness in marriage or any committed romantic relationship, and do not suggest, instigate, or participate in any romantic relationship or engage in any sexualised activity with any person other than your own spouse.
- 5.3 Do not solicit or engage in any sort of sexual or romantic activity with anyone who is married to another person.
- 5.4 Do not solicit or engage in any sort of sexual or romantic activity with a recipient of ministry or anyone with whom you have a supervisory, pastoral care, or counselling relationship.
- 5.5 Do not solicit or engage in any sort of sexual or romantic activity with anyone who is unwilling or unable to give consent.
- 5.6 Do not invite, request, participate in, or condone any behaviour that could be considered sexual misconduct.
- 5.7 Do not sexually abuse any person.
- 5.8 Do not sexually harass any person.
- 5.9 Do not sexually exploit any person.
- 5.10 Do not view, access, possess, produce, or distribute any form of pornography or exploitative material of any kind.
- 5.11 Do not engage in, solicit, or provide prostitution, escort, or sex work services of any kind.
- 5.12 Do not exhibit any coercive sexual behaviour.
- 5.13 Do not exhibit any sexual grooming behaviour.
- 5.14 Do not ask any questions about the intimate details of a person's sexual life or share details of your own sexual life, without legitimate reason.
- 5.15 Do not participate in sexually explicit conversation or online activity via social media, apps, gaming, or any other means, with anyone other than your own spouse, without legitimate reason.

## 6. Personal Relationships

### Preamble

A 'personal relationship' refers to a relationship between a Minister and another person that is separate from a professional (pastoral or supervisory) relationship. For example:

- a very close personal friendship; or
- a close family relationship; or
- a marriage; or
- a romantic relationship; or
- a relationship which is becoming romanticised

It is not appropriate that Ministers be responsible for the pastoral care of people with whom they have a personal relationship.

### Pre-existing personal relationships

Some personal relationships such as close personal friendships, family, or marriage relationships may exist prior to a Minister's appointment or employment. In such circumstances, the Minister should not be the provider of pastoral care, but steps should be taken to ensure that independent professional pastoral care is available to the other person.

Ministers should be proactive and diligent about building or sustaining healthy close personal friendships with people that are *not* involved in their Ministry. This helps to create a healthy work/life balance for a Minister.

### New or developing personal relationships

With any new or developing personal relationship, transparency, accountability, and good communication are especially important, ensuring that there is a clear understanding by all parties regarding the expectations, obligations, and limitations of pastoral responsibility.

It is often the nature of ministry that Ministers find themselves becoming 'friends' with those to whom they minister, but it is inappropriate to develop a very close personal friendship with a recipient of ministry as it would not be between equals due to the Minister's positional power over the other.

Pastoral ministry responsibilities and Code of Ethics obligations take precedence, consequently it is the responsibility of the Minister as the professional to recognise and maintain appropriate boundaries with friends in ministry.

Ministers should also be aware of the danger of emotional attachments as a pre-cursor to inappropriate emotional, physical and sexualised relationships.

It is recognised that Ministers who are single sometimes face a situation where they want to pursue a personal relationship with another adult who is single, but for whom they have pastoral or supervisory responsibilities.

Ministers must respond promptly in such situations, recognising that any sexualized or romanticised behaviour with someone with whom they have a Pastoral Relationship is prohibited and it is inappropriate for them to enter in to a personal relationship until after the pastoral or supervisory relationship has ended.

Advice should be sought from both the professional supervisor and the employing entity regarding the circumstances, ensuring that all parties are aware of the possible pastoral, employment and social implications.

### Minimum Standards

- 6.1 Maintain professional boundaries, ensuring that there is a clear demarcation between pastoral and personal relationships.

- 6.2 Do not take responsibility for the pastoral care of anyone with whom you have a personal relationship.
- 6.3 Ensure that appropriate alternate pastoral care is arranged for the other person in a personal relationship.
- 6.4 Ensure that an independent person who holds responsibility for the employment relationship has final approval over continuing any situations which place the Minister and a person with whom they have a personal relationship in dual roles with each other (e.g. key leadership/staff/team or ministry positions, positions in which one is accountable to the other, situations of significant imbalance of power).
- 6.5 Do not participate in inappropriate emotional attachments or relationships.

If a Minister and a person with whom they have a pastoral or supervisory relationship identify a potential personal relationship, the Minister must:

- 6.6 Immediately terminate/disengage from any pastoral or supervisory relationship with the recipient of ministry.
- 6.7 Immediately ensure that alternative pastoral care for the recipient of ministry has been arranged with another Minister or professional.
- 6.8 Immediately encourage the recipient of ministry to obtain independent and separate counselling to discuss the potential personal relationship.
- 6.9 Immediately disclose the situation to an appropriate officer of the entity (e.g. Board Chair, Senior Minister or other appropriate person within the Affiliate or entity.)
- 6.10 Immediately obtain advice on the appropriateness of such a personal relationship through professional supervision.

If a Minister and a person with whom they have previously had a pastoral or supervisory relationship identify a potential personal relationship, the Minister must:

- 6.11 Immediately obtain advice on the appropriateness of such a personal relationship through professional supervision with an accredited counsellor/supervisor/senior minister.
- 6.12 Immediately encourage the other person to obtain independent counselling on the matter.
- 6.13 Ensure that both yourself and the other person have been given enough time to adjust to any change of the pastoral/ministry recipient or supervisory basis of the relationship.
- 6.14 Maintain a high level of professional supervision, mentoring, accredited counselling or spiritual direction to facilitate reflection on the power and attractional dynamics of the relationship and change of the pastoral/ministry recipient basis of the relationship.

## 7. Pastoral Relationships

### Preamble

In the context of this Code of Ethics, the pastoral relationship means the relationship between a Minister and another person:

- in which the Minister is providing spiritual care for the person; or
- where the person has looked to the Minister for guidance, protection, or care; or
- where the person has made contact with the Minister in their responsibility or function as a Minister

Ministers form pastoral relationships in a variety of contexts:

- Ministers are in a pastoral relationship with all members and attendees of a congregation through the commitments they make at their induction, commissioning or other service of recognition.
- Where Ministers are in a non-congregational appointment, they are in pastoral relationship with those persons they meet by virtue of their appointment.
- Where Ministers are not in or are yet to commence an appointment, they are in a pastoral relationship with those persons they meet by virtue of their role as a Minister.

Ministers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships that they have with their recipients of ministry, communities, and colleagues.

The Minister role comes with the responsibility to uphold professional standards of practice in ministry, and work to further them. This includes an acknowledgement of the real or perceived power given to them as a result of holding this position.

The authority and training associated with their roles means that they have power in pastoral relationships which is always to be exercised in the service of others.

People in ministry are accountable to those receiving that ministry for its quality and impact.

Ministers have a role in society that carries positive expectations and they must ensure that they act responsibly and with integrity, so as to maintain such a position of positive expectations and trust.

Trust is of primary importance in the creation and maintenance of an effective pastoral relationship. Trust grows with the maintenance of physical, sexual, emotional and psychological boundaries suitable to pastoral ministry. Ministers will enhance their ability to maintain these boundaries by attending to their own wellbeing.

The Minister has the role of respecting, protecting, and caring for all with whom they have a pastoral relationship. The pastoral relationship is concerned for maturity in Christian life, and for fullness of life for all people, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, economic circumstances or other personal characteristics. It is a relationship in which Ministers seek to express an ethic of care, which includes nurturing the other person's power over their own life as they relate to others and to God.

The pastoral relationship is nurtured and guided through the commitments of commissioning, ordination or other service of recognition. These commitments reflect the intention of Ministers to exercise their ministry:

- through faith in Jesus Christ and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit
- in accordance with the purpose and values of CCVT as expressed in Affinity:2
- by being nourished and guided by the study of Scripture
- through announcing the Good News in Christ to those outside the community of faith
- through faithful affirmation of spiritual practices including the Lord's Supper and Baptism

- in a mutual manner, offering pastoral care and nurturing people in faith, recognising and valuing other people's gifts, training them for ministry and working cooperatively with their ministry
- through working for justice and peace
- by striving for peace and unity among all Christian people
- by engaging in ongoing study
- by respecting the guidance and decisions of those to whom they are accountable (e.g. governance committee)
- within the discipline of the church

## Minimum Standards

- 7.1 Encourage those to whom you minister to live a life centred on faith in Christ and expressed in Christian values.
- 7.2 Encourage those to whom you minister to move towards self-determination under God, recognising their responsibility for their own lives.
- 7.3 Respect the right of all people to make their own decisions and choices in life.
- 7.4 In encouraging robust and authentic debate and dialogue around issues of religion and society, you must respect the right of others to hold and articulate divergent views on such matters.
- 7.5 Treat those to whom you minister, and all with whom you come into contact, with compassion and respect for the human person.
- 7.6 Uphold your duty of care to all people as required by your position as Minister.
- 7.7 Follow laws relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- 7.8 Do not condone or permit discriminating, harassing, bullying, or victimising behaviours by others.
- 7.9 Provide ministry regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, or any other difference.
- 7.10 When exercising pastoral ministry, you must not inappropriately discriminate between people.
- 7.11 When exercising pastoral ministry, act in the best interests of those to whom you are ministering, recognising any potential conflict of interest and taking steps to resolve it.
- 7.12 Ensure that when participating in any complaints or disciplinary processes, principles of natural justice including impartiality and fairness for all sides are upheld.
- 7.13 When on leave or unable to fulfil your responsibilities through illness or any other reason, you are to make alternative arrangements for pastoral ministry in conjunction with the leadership team or governance group.
- 7.14 Follow the counsel and direction of those to whom you are accountable (e.g. governance committee), recognising that membership of the Body of Christ implies a partnership in ministry.
- 7.15 Respect the purpose, values, and policies of CCVT and act in accordance with Affinity:2 and any subsequent iterations thereof.
- 7.16 Improve the standard and quality of ministry within the Church and wider community through professional development in accordance with the CCVT Accreditation and Endorsement of People in Ministry Policy.



## 8. Conflict of Interest

### Preamble

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual has competing interests or loyalties. A conflict can be actual, potential or perceived. It may relate to circumstances where the Minister is, or could be, directly influenced or where it is perceived the Minister might be influenced.

Ministers should avoid entering into contracts or situations with colleagues, individuals or organisations, where conflicts of interest may diminish their, or others, ability to maintain professional integrity and independence.

The term 'dual relationship' refers to any situation where multiple roles exist between a Minister and a recipient of ministry, e.g. when one is also a customer, client, student, friend, family member, employee or business associate of the other. Dual relationships are often unavoidable in ministry settings but it is the responsibility of the Minister to manage such relationships in an ethical manner.

Ministry in a small community such as a rural or ethnic community poses particular challenges. Some dual relationships cannot be avoided when a Minister potentially socialises, shops and takes part in community activities with recipients and their families and friends. The Minister must be especially mindful of the ethical issues inherent in such situations.

Accountability and transparency are crucial to the healthy management of dual relationships and conflicts of interest. If unsure about a possible conflict of interest, a Minister should obtain advice from their supervisor. See also the Financial Integrity section of the Code.

### Minimum Standards

- 8.1 Declare any conflicts of interest to the governing body at the Affiliate or entity.
- 8.2 Do not enter relationships or situations that diminish your ability to maintain professional integrity and independence.
- 8.3 Refer people to another competent colleague, ensuring continuity of care, where there is a conflict of interest.
- 8.4 Ensure your personal or financial interests (including the interests of family members, friends, or associates) do not influence, or could not be perceived to influence, the performance of your role.
- 8.5 Act fairly by objectively considering all relevant facts and fair criteria.
- 8.6 Make decisions and provide advice that is free of prejudice, favouritism, bias or self-interest.
- 8.7 Deal with issues consistently, fairly and in a timely manner.
- 8.8 Where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, act in accordance with the judgement of the governing body of the Affiliate or entity in managing the conflict of interest and follow the affiliate or entity's policies and procedures.

## 9. Confidentiality

### Preamble

Confidentiality refers to the obligation of those in ministry to protect the privacy of the recipient of ministry's personal information. The establishment and maintenance of confidentiality between a Minister and a recipient of ministry is a fundamental aspect of ethical ministry practice.

Confidentiality is not about secrecy. In the context of a pastoral relationship or professional supervision relationship, it is an assurance that Ministers will not share written or spoken information about an individual with other people (except where legally allowed or required), or use it for a purpose for which it was not collected.

### Limits to Confidentiality

Confidentiality is not absolute. There may be occasions when the provision of ministry requires that information is disclosed to health professionals, statutory authorities, or family members. For example:

- to lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of any individual, or to public health or safety; or
- to report reasonable concerns of abuse;
- to report criminal behaviour or reportable conduct

When those in ministry are legally allowed to disclose recipient information but not compelled, this judgement frequently involves the determination of risk, harm or danger to the recipient, which is sometimes referred to as the duty to warn or the duty to protect or care for the recipient or others.

CCVT does not recognise a 'clergy - penitent privilege' that may give Ministers an option to refuse to report or otherwise divulge a confession of child sexual abuse. Ministers must comply with the legal requirement of adults to report child sexual abuse to Police for investigation, as per the CCVT Child Safety Policy and CCVT Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

### Informed Consent

As part of the informed consent process, those in ministry must explain to recipients the limits of confidentiality at the outset of intentional pastoral care, counselling, or professional supervision. It is preferable to obtain written consent from a recipient that indicates what personal information may be released, under what circumstances, and to whom it may be disclosed in accordance with the relevant privacy policy. Where safety permits, those in ministry should inform recipients:

- if their information is to be disclosed
- about what information is to be disclosed
- of the circumstances and reasons for the intended disclosure
- to whom and when the disclosure will be made

### Capacity to Consent

Issues that could affect an individual's capacity to consent include:

- age
- physical or mental disability
- temporary incapacity, for example during a psychotic episode, a temporary psychiatric illness, or because the individual is unconscious, in severe distress or suffering dementia
- limited understanding of English

Ministers should consider whether any such issue could be addressed by providing the individual with appropriate support or resources to enable them to have capacity to consent.

If an individual does not have capacity to consent, even with support or the provision of additional resources such as an interpreter or alternative communication methods, and consent is required, Ministers should consider who can act on the individual's behalf. Options include a legal guardian, someone with an enduring power of attorney, or a person who has been nominated in writing by the individual while they were capable of giving consent. An individual who lacks the capacity to consent should nevertheless be involved, as far as practicable, in any decision-making process.

### Children and Young People

The Privacy Act does not specify an age after which individuals can make their own privacy decisions. A Minister will need to determine on a case-by-case basis whether an individual under the age of 18 has the capacity to consent. As a general principle, an individual under the age of 18 is considered capable of giving informed consent when he or she:

- has sufficient understanding and maturity to understand what is being proposed
- can understand the nature of the ministry relationship
- has the capacity to make an informed choice
- can understand the limits of confidentiality

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for a parent or guardian to consent on behalf of a young person (e.g. if the child is young or lacks the maturity or understanding to do so themselves).

If it is not practicable or reasonable for a Minister to assess the capacity of individuals under the age of 18 on a case-by-case basis, the Minister may presume that an individual aged 15 or over has capacity to consent, unless there is something to suggest otherwise. An individual aged under 15 is presumed not to have capacity to consent.

### Minimum Standards

- 9.1 Do not disclose confidential information received in pastoral ministry to your spouse, family, friends, colleagues, or any other person, unless consent has been given for the particular disclosure.
- 9.2 Do not disclose confidential information received in pastoral ministry to any other person unless:
  - 9.2.1 The person gives consent for the particular disclosure; or
  - 9.2.2 Retaining such information would result in physical, emotional or sexual harm to another person or persons; or
  - 9.2.3 Required by law
- 9.3 Comply with any legal requirements to report child abuse to Police for investigation.
- 9.4 Explain the nature and limits of confidentiality to the recipient of ministry at the beginning of any intentional pastoral conversation, counselling, or professional supervision arrangement or program.
- 9.5 Ensure that the nature and limits of confidentiality are discussed with individuals who have impaired decision-making capacity in a way that is understandable by them.
- 9.6 Obtain informed consent from those who have provided the information prior to disclosing information, or, where prior consent was not possible or appropriate, advise those who have provided the information as soon as possible after the disclosure.
- 9.7 Maintain accurate and reliable records as required by relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

- 9.8 Ensure that any record keeping systems such as diaries, appointment books, notes, prayer requests, and databases are kept in such a way as to ensure their accuracy, security and reliability and are adequate to maintain confidentiality.
- 9.9 Implement and comply with organisational privacy policies and procedures in an open and transparent manner.

## 10. Collegiality

### Preamble

A colleague is any person with whom one works in a profession or business. This may include other Ministers, employed staff, appointed leaders or those working alongside or in the same team, as well as Ministers of other Affiliates or agencies within CCVT or other denominations.

It is the responsibility of all Ministers to work co-operatively with their colleagues and treat all colleagues in ministry with respect, consideration and fairness.

### Minimum Standards

- 10.1 Maintain appropriate personal and professional conduct, recognising that it affects your own reputation, the reputation of the Affiliate or entity at which you work, and that of the profession.
- 10.2 Work co-operatively with colleagues.
- 10.3 Treat all colleagues with respect, consideration, fairness, and in good faith.
- 10.4 Demonstrate respect for the abilities, expertise, areas of responsibility, skills, talents, time commitments and views of colleagues.
- 10.5 Do not make comments that may damage the reputation of colleagues, cause anxiety to a person receiving ministry, or damage the wider profession and Church.
- 10.6 Seek and participate in mediation when in conflict with colleagues.
- 10.7 Ensure that colleagues for whom you are responsible are provided with:
  - 10.7.1 A safe working environment (including safe housing where provided);
  - 10.7.2 Opportunities to maintain and enhance their ministry skills; and
  - 10.7.3 Personal encouragement, support and regular constructive feedback.
- 10.8 Actively share professional knowledge, skills, and experience with colleagues.
- 10.9 Support and learn from colleagues and accept differences in personal style.
- 10.10 Respect, and obtain when necessary, the professional opinions of colleagues in their area of competence, and acknowledge their contribution.
- 10.11 Respect the professional expertise of members of other disciplines/professions with whom you work in the Church or other organisations.
- 10.12 Respect workplace diversity and follow laws relating to discrimination and equal opportunity.
- 10.13 Work with, encourage, equip, and support both women and men in all forms of leadership and as colleagues in ministry.
- 10.14 Respect the call and appointment of other Ministers, recognising those people who are colleagues, or with whom you are in team ministry, as equals in standing and responsibility in the fulfillment of their duties as a Minister in that appointment.
- 10.15 Retired Ministers and Ministers in non-congregational appointments must recognise the inherent power you may be perceived to have in the congregations in which you worship or are members. In seeking to express collegiality with the Minister(s) appointed in that congregation, you must:
  - 10.15.1 Respect the Minister(s) call and appointment in that congregation
  - 10.15.2 Support and encourage those in ministry

- 10.15.3 Not encourage discontent about, or seek to interfere with, the ministry of a Minister in that congregation or elsewhere
- 10.15.4 Exhibit leadership within that congregation only when invited to do so by the Minister and/or relevant leadership team
- 10.16 Ministers who are under the authority or management of other Ministers or leaders will accept the guidance or direction of those who have been given authority over you by the Affiliate or entity, unless such direction would constitute a breach of the Code.
- 10.17 Work within the policies and practices of the CCVT as guided by Affinity:2 and the CCVT Accreditation and Endorsement Policy, respecting the rights and responsibilities of all others who share leadership in the CCVT.
- 10.18 Contribute professional expertise and experience to the development of ministry, policy, and practice within CCVT.

## 11. Competence

### Preamble

Ministers have a responsibility to maintain high standards of knowledge and skills in all the areas of ministry relevant to their role. This responsibility requires that Ministers undertake continuing education appropriate to this ministry and commit themselves to ongoing personal and professional development.

It also includes recognising their own personal and professional limits and not undertaking any ministry that is beyond their competence or certification, or that is not part of the role for which they have been, or are being, trained.

Ministers providing pastoral care should be very wary of purporting to be what they are not with respect to counselling. Unless formal counselling training has been undertaken, those who offer pastoral care and advice would be unwise to call themselves counsellors and certainly unwise to presume that they are able to operate with the training and expertise of a professional counsellor.

Affinity:2 outlines the requirement that affiliated churches and agencies seek the Accreditation of all appointed Ministers. The purpose of Accreditation is to ensure all Ministers in CCVT meet an appropriate level of personal, spiritual and leadership formation, which is supported by participation in regular external professional supervision, accountability processes, and professional development. Accreditation includes a commitment by Ministers to lifelong learning. This is part of CCVT's commitment to being a safe place for all people who engage with us, as outlined in the CCVT Safe Places Policy.

To ensure competency, Ministers must take responsibility for their own emotional, physical, spiritual and mental health. Ministers should be fit for the role they are undertaking and take appropriate measures in self-care to safeguard themselves and the recipients of ministry.

The welfare of the recipient of ministry, the public, and the ministry, takes precedence over the self-interest or reputation of the Minister and the Affiliate.

### Minimum Standards

- 11.1 Provide services that are beneficial to recipients of ministry and do not harm them.
- 11.2 Know and understand the legal, professional, ethical and where applicable, organisational rules that regulate the ministry you provide.
- 11.3 Only undertake work that you are competent to perform, ministering within the limits of your expertise, gifting and skills.
- 11.4 Provide only those services and use only those techniques that you are qualified to provide through relevant education, training or experience.
- 11.5 Ensure you have the adequate initial education to minister competently.
- 11.6 Undertake continuing education or professional development to ensure that you remain competent to minister.
- 11.7 Recommend obtaining additional opinions and services where the ministry required is not within your area of competence, or arrange for any such ministry to be provided by an experienced person or specialist agency.
- 11.8 Make appropriate referrals when you do not have the required professional competence or expertise, pastoral competence or cultural competence or experience.
- 11.9 End a pastoral relationship when it is not beneficial for the other person or where the help needed is outside your pastoral competence.

- 11.10 Where forced by circumstances to provide care beyond your normal level of competence, you must discuss this with your supervisor, obtain guidance from a person with appropriate competence and, where warranted, obtain opportunities to develop the appropriate skills.
- 11.11 Communicate with the church's governance group immediately if/when you begin to doubt your capability to fulfil your appointed role.
- 11.12 Demonstrate accountability by accepting responsibility for your decisions and actions and submitting yourself to appropriate scrutiny.
- 11.13 Build your professional or occupational reputation only on the basis of merit.
- 11.14 Do not misrepresent your competence, qualifications, training or experience.
- 11.15 Ensure a sustainable and healthy work/life balance so as to be able to fulfil the responsibilities of your role.
- 11.16 Carry out your work safely and avoid conduct that puts yourself or others at risk.
- 11.17 Do not misuse alcohol, drugs or other substances at work or when engaged in work related activities.
- 11.18 When on medication that could affect your work performance or the safety of yourself or others, you must inform your manager or supervisor to ensure any necessary precautions or adjustments to work can be put in place, consistent with any relevant occupational health and safety requirements.

## 12. Breaches of the Code of Ethics

### Preamble

Conduct that does not meet or maintain the minimum standards, regardless of intention, is seen to be unethical and a breach of the Code.

This includes breaches which occur via the internet or through other technology even in circumstances where those who have been affected cannot be identified.

The minimum standards of the Code must not be compromised, even in the face of internal pressure from the occupation or entity to which one belongs, or external pressure from outside organisations and groups.

The responsibility for maintaining the minimum standards of the Code of Ethics is always with the Minister.

Substantiated breaches of the Code may result in requirements for professional development, performance management, counselling, dismissal from employment, removal of Accreditation or Endorsement, and/or being placed on the Churches of Christ in Australia list of Ministers Disqualified from Service (MDS).

### Who Can Report

Any person may bring a complaint or allegation of a breach of the Code against a Minister to the CCVT Professional Standards Committee.

Instances involving child safety or reportable conduct should be reported to the police or statutory authorities as per the CCVT Child Safety Reporting Procedure.

Instances involving criminal behaviour should be reported to the Police first, and then the CCVT Professional Standards Committee.

Any person who reports reasonable concerns in good faith will not be penalised, discriminated against, or have action taken against them for their reporting. To penalise such a person in this manner would constitute a breach of this Code.

### Responsibility to Report

It is the responsibility of all leaders, including Ministers, to develop a positive culture of safety within their community and address negative issues of occupational or organisational culture e.g. secrecy or closing ranks in relation to wrongdoing or incompetence on the part of peers.

Ministers have ethical responsibilities in relation to the behaviour of individuals other than themselves by virtue of a collective responsibility to ensure that the minimum standards in the Code of Ethics is complied with.

This includes responding appropriately to any failure of their peers to meet the minimum standards, and encouraging people directly affected by such behaviour to report the conduct to the relevant statutory authorities and the CCVT Professional Standards Committee.

### What MUST be Reported to the CCVT Professional Standards Committee

All people are encouraged to contact the relevant authorities directly regarding any allegation or reasonable concerns regarding the following conduct by Ministers. The following must *also* be reported immediately to the CCVT Professional Standards Committee:

- Abuse against any person (including bullying, harassment, emotional/psychological abuse, elder abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, or child abuse).
- Criminal behaviour
- Sexual misconduct
- Conduct that resulted in a person suffering harm or being at risk of harm

- Relationships that breach the Code of Ethics

Any allegation of conduct that is reasonably believed to be criminal behaviour, child abuse or Reportable Conduct will be reported to the relevant civil or statutory authorities if it has not already been reported.

It is *not* appropriate that concerns regarding *abuse or criminal conduct* be addressed directly with the Minister about whom there are concerns. This is the role of the statutory authorities who have the proper training and authority to investigate such matters.

**Note: If you have concerns that someone is at risk of significant harm call 000.**

### Talking to a Minister About Their Conduct

If you know or have reason to believe that another Minister has not followed a minimum standard of the Code *other than those listed above*, you may approach the Minister directly and identify the concern, stating the actions that are thought to be in breach of the code and cite the section of the code which may have been breached.

If it is not safe or practical to do so, or if the Minister is persisting in disregarding the Code, you can report any concerns to the governing authority with responsibility for the Minister, or the CCVT Professional Standards Committee.

If in doubt, obtain advice from the CCVT Professional Standards Committee.

## Minimum Standards

12.1 Any Minister who becomes aware of:

- 12.1.1 Abuse against any person (including bullying, harassment, physical abuse, emotional/psychological abuse, elder abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, or child abuse)
- 12.1.2 Criminal behaviour
- 12.1.3 Sexual misconduct
- 12.1.4 Conduct that resulted in a person suffering harm or being at risk of harm
- 12.1.5 Relationships that breach the Code of Ethics

by a Minister subject to the Code, must report it to the CCVT Professional Standards Committee, except where it is known to have already been reported.

12.2 Any allegation of Reportable Conduct against a Minister in Victoria must be reported to the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme in accordance with the relevant legislation, except where it is known to have already been reported.

12.3 All complaints or allegations of a breach of the Code must be fully dealt with according to the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness, and in accordance with the Code of Ethics.

12.4 Do not penalise, discriminate against, or have action taken against any person who reports reasonable concerns of a breach of the Code of Ethics.

For more information or advice on specific matters, or to make a report to the CCVT Professional Standards Committee please contact:

CCVT Safe Places Coordinator

**Mailing address:** PO Box 5302, South Melbourne VIC 3205

**Office address:** Level 5/111 Cecil St, South Melbourne VIC 3205

[safeplaces@churchesofchrist.org.au](mailto:safeplaces@churchesofchrist.org.au)

03 9488 8800 or 0411 255 494