

FOOTHILLS PRESBYTERY
Protection Policy for
Children, Youth and Vulnerable adults

Approved: May 19, 2018
Foothills Presbytery Stated Meeting #107
Eastminster Presbyterian Church, Simpsonville, SC

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POLICY APPLICATION STATEMENT¹

It is the policy of Foothills Presbytery that all church members, church officers, nonmember employees and/or contractors, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and entities of the church are to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy applies to all activities sponsored by Foothills Presbytery that involve children, youth or vulnerable adults. Individual churches within Foothills Presbytery are expected to create and implement their own policies that are consistent with the Foothills Presbytery Protection Policy for Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults.

POLICY RATIONALE

The implementation and documentation of a Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy strives to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for the following reasons:

- Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Church is called to be a place that reflects the open arms of Jesus. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me.” The Church is to be, at all levels of council and in all entities, a place of safety and nurture reflective of the arms of Christ.
- Children and youth are not only persons of care and service in the church, but they are also co-recipients of the graces and love of God. Jesus exemplified this in the Gospel of Mark 10:15-16 when he urged his followers to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. And he specifically takes up the children into his arms and blesses them. So also the Church, as the body of Christ, is to be the presence of Christ’s love, in the same way taking up all children and youth into its arms and blessing them; providing for them a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment in which to grow in every way.
- The *Book of Order* states, “The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life,” and Presbyterians believe this baptismal commitment to be a serious one, understanding it to apply to all in the church’s care, including children, youth, and vulnerable adults (*Book of Order* W-2.3013).

1. A Vision for Children and the Church

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of

¹ Adapted from the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) CHILD/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY AND ITS PROCEDURES approved GA, 2016.

God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them. Mark 10:14-16

Because we affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good;
all children are a gift to the whole of the human community;
all children have a real faith, and gifts for ministry;
all children have the right to be children;
and all children are not just tomorrow, they are today.

Because we believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children;
all children are affected first and most deeply by those things that work against health and wholeness:
where there is disease, children sicken and die;
where there is homelessness, children sleep on the streets and in other dangerous places;
where there is war, children are frightened and without a safe place;
where the air and water are polluted, children feel the effect in their bodies and in their futures;
where there is shame, children’s spirits are wounded.

Therefore we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place;
where all ages, races, genders, creeds, and abilities are recognized, valued, and celebrated;
where all adults hear the voices of children and speak with as well as for them;
where all children have “first call” on the world’s resources and first place in the minds and hearts of the world’s adults.

Because Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name; Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the realm of God is like;
Therefore we hope for a church where we take seriously our baptismal vow to nurture all children committed to our care;
where we bring good news to all those places where children are in need;
where adults and children alike share in ministry.

We covenant to act so that this vision may be made real for all children, now and in times to come.

Adopted by the 205th General Assembly, 1993

For the purpose of the Foothills Presbytery Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adults Policy, the word Children in this statement refers to ALL of God’s Children.

2. Definitions- Capitalized terms not defined below shall be as defined in the PCUSA Book of Order.

Abuse:

- **Sexual Abuse**

- **Child and Youth:** Sexual contact or interactions with a child or youth, including physical contact (such as fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (such as exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, sexting, and voyeurism).
- **Vulnerable Adult:** Unwanted, unwelcomed, and solicited sexual contact or interactions with a vulnerable adult, including physical contact (such as fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (such as exhibitionism, prostitution, pornography, sexting and voyeurism).

Sexual abuse between a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is always considered forced whether or not by consent.

- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcomed and unsolicited sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, obscene or suggestive language or behavior, gender discriminating behavior, and other unwelcomed verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Sexual misconduct** includes, but is not limited to the following:
 1. Sexual abuse as defined above.
 2. Sexual harassment as defined above.
 3. Rape or sexual contact by force, threat or intimidation.
- **Emotional Abuse** is intentional, non-physical conduct, which results in impaired physiological growth and development including bullying, belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive and unreasonable demands on child's performance, and isolation from normal social activities.
- **Spiritual Abuse** is that which occurs when a teacher, leader, or volunteer uses his or her position or religious influence to control, manipulate or dominate another person regardless of the ramification to other's life and well-being.
- **Physical Abuse** is that which results in physical injury, including but not limited to bruises, burns, cuts, welts, fractures and internal injuries and is caused by intentional or grossly negligent conduct.
- **Neglect** is that which occurs when persons responsible for the well-being of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult fail to take reasonable steps to adequately provide for the child. This may include failure to keep children clean, lack of appropriate supervision, or withholding food, clothing, shelter, and medical care.

Accused: A person who is alleged to have violated this policy.

Accuser: A person who makes a report or provides information indicating that someone may have violated this policy.

Advocate: A person who is permitted to accompany the Accused or Accuser to meetings in order to give moral support and advice.

Allegation: A claim or assertion that someone has done something illegal or wrong.

Alleged Victim: The person who is the subject of alleged misconduct or abuse as defined in this policy.

Book of Order: Part II of the PC(USA) Constitution. It contains the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Form of Government (operating rules), Directory of Worship (sacerdotal matters), and Rules of Discipline (judiciary procedures) of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Certified Authority: The designated person(s) of Foothills Presbytery, who submits, reviews, evaluates, and maintains background checks and other documents associated with Foothills Presbytery's Protection Policy for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

Certified Christian Educator: Certified Christian educators are persons certified and called to service in the ministry of education in congregations or councils.

Child or Youth: Persons under the age of eighteen years old.

Commissioned Ruling Elder: A Ruling Elder commissioned to limited pastoral service as assigned by the presbytery.

Deacon: Persons elected by a congregation for the ministry of "compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress."

Employee/Staff Member: Any person who is employed and/or compensated by the Presbytery.

Pastoral Care Givers: A Pastoral Counselor fits the category of persons defined in the *Book of Order* as "a person duly appointed by a governing body." The *Book of Order* further specifies that such persons "shall not testify before a ... Permanent Judicial Commission..." See Book of Order, D-14.0203 (new version of Rules of Discipline.)

Required Reporter: A person who has a legal obligation to report information regarding harm, or risk of harm, involving abuse or misconduct involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults under applicable state law or the PC(USA) Order.

- Refer to APPENDIX C: South Carolina Definition of Abuse Law & Abuse Reporting Law.
- PC(USA) book of Order reference G-4.0302: **Mandatory Reporting** Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal

authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

Ruling Elder: Persons elected by a congregation who have wisdom, maturity of faith, demonstrated skills in leadership and a compassionate spirit. Ruling elders, together with Ministers of Word and Sacraments, exercise leadership, government, spiritual discernment, and discipline and have responsibilities for the life of a congregation as well as the whole church, including ecumenical relationships.

Sexting: The act of transmitting sexually explicit messages through cell phone text messaging, emails, cyber chat, social media, websites, or other means of electronic communication.

Sexual Ethics Team: The six-member team nominated by the Nominating Committee of Foothills Presbytery and elected by the entire Presbytery. A full description of this team, its makeup and function is found in Foothills Presbytery's Manual of Operations.

Stated Clerk/Associate Stated Clerk: Chief ecclesiastical officers of Foothills Presbytery. They are to further the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world through vision, interpretation, and inspiration. The position exists to carry out the responsibilities and functions outlined in the *Book of Order*. The work of the Stated Clerks must be undertaken as a conscious act of discipleship to Jesus Christ. It always bears elements of a pastoral style, both with individuals to whom the Stated Clerk(s) relates, and as a leader for Foothills Presbytery.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament: An ordained minister or pastor in the PC(USA) is known as a Ministers of Word and Sacrament, or a teaching elder. They may serve in a variety of ministries, as authorized by the presbytery: preachers, teacher, worship leader, pastor and presbyters.

Volunteer: Persons working directly with children, youth and vulnerable adults at any Foothills Presbytery sponsored or co-sponsored events.

Vulnerable Adult: Is a person who may be unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm, or exploitation due to disability, age or illness.

3. POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND VULNERABLE ADULTS ENGAGED IN OUR MINISTRIES

A. Policy

Foothills Presbytery adopts the following covenant to provide a safe place for our children, youth or vulnerable adults to experience the kingdom of God.

Foothills Presbytery sponsored events, activities, and programs are subject to the following:

1. Employees are required to have a background check and be approved according to this policy in order to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
 - Sign background check consent form (Appendix A).
 - Background Check consists of: Credit report, SSN verification, national criminal search, state criminal bureau search, sexual offender search and motor vehicle record search.
2. Foothills Presbytery strives to provide two unrelated adults, older than eighteen years of age, to supervise or lead activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults. Supervising adults must have a completed and approved background check.
 - Complete Foothills Presbytery Volunteer Release Form (Appendix A)
 - Sign background check consent form
 - Background check consists of: SSN verification, national criminal search, state criminal bureau search, sexual offender registry search and in the case of those who will be transporting, a motor vehicle record search.
 - In the case of individuals who do not possess a social security card, an international search may be done.
3. All volunteers and supervising adults shall have been an official or affiliate member with a congregation within the Foothills Presbytery for at least six months prior to contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults. For church-employed staff workers who have gone through the church pre-hiring process and whose background screening has been approved, the six-month rule is waived.
4. Foothills Presbytery strives to have supervising adults be at least five (5) years older than those being supervised.
5. All persons transporting children, youth or vulnerable adults must be at least 25 years of age, have a current valid driver's license, up-to-date auto liability insurance coverage, and have an acceptable driving record as confirmed by Motor Vehicle Record search (MVR). An MVR for persons transporting children, youth and vulnerable adults will be done annually.
6. Drivers should not engage in any cell phone or digital diversion while transporting children, youth and vulnerable adults. Driver must pull over to a safe parking area to make that communication.
7. A Foothills Presbytery church may adopt a policy that is more stringent than this Foothills Presbytery policy so long as it is consistent with applicable laws and

regulations. If a Foothills Presbytery church that is hosting a Foothills Presbytery activity has a policy that is more stringent than this policy the more stringent policy will apply.

8. A copy of this policy is available to each congregation within the bounds of Foothills Presbytery by contacting Foothills Presbytery Office or website.
9. The Foothills Presbytery Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults is a part of the Operational Manual of the Presbytery and is shared as a regular part of presbytery, employee, committee and council orientation.

B. Standards of Behavior

Sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct by Presbytery employees and volunteers are prohibited.

Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol, or drugs (legal or illegal), juuling, or vaping, while leading or participating in a ministry program of Foothills Presbytery involving children, or youth is prohibited.

Foothills Presbytery maintains supervision responsibility when registration begins and during the event.

C. Screening

As described above, national background checks must be completed on employees and volunteers of the Foothills Presbytery before they supervise activities involving Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults. After the initial check, follow-up background checks should be completed at three year intervals. Employees and volunteers who serve in positions requiring such background checks complete the Foothills Presbytery Release Authorization in Appendix A. [Note: the release form is not just for volunteers.]

D. Training

The Committee on Ministry shall include Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult policy training in conjunction with their scheduled Ethics, Boundaries Awareness and Sexual Misconduct Policy training.

E. Reporting Procedures

In order to maintain a safe environment for all children, youth and vulnerable adults, all persons serving Foothills Presbytery and its churches (both as employees and as volunteers) should be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation thought to be in violation of this policy by following steps detailed in this section (Appendix C). **South Carolina State Law requires prompt**

reporting of suspected abuse. Your efforts can help protect a child, youth or vulnerable adult with one simple phone call. Nothing in this policy is intended to require anyone to divulge religious, medical, or legally privileged communications.

Any employee or volunteer covered by this policy that witnesses or receives an allegation of any of this policy must follow these steps listed below to insure the security and protection of all persons involved:

1. Personally ensure the safety of children, youth or vulnerable adults. Do not abandon or leave the child/children, children, youth or vulnerable adult in order to report the incident.
2. FOLLOW the steps in Appendix C if the suspected abuse occurred in the State of South Carolina. In the event the suspected abuse occurred in another state, the law of that state will inform next steps.
3. Report the incident to the program or ministry supervisor. A copy of the Incident Report (Appendix B) should be sent to the Foothills Presbytery Stated Clerk and/or Associate Stated Clerk.
4. Do not personally confront the accused violator of the policy.
5. Maintain the confidentiality of the accused, the accuser, and the victim.
6. Do not contact parents or legal guardians of those involved. This responsibility is handled by law enforcement or other social services authorities.
7. Do not investigate the accusation. Allow professional/law enforcement officials this responsibility.
8. Until an investigation is complete, the accused and accuser should not participate in Presbytery meetings or Presbytery-sponsored events. This policy does not prohibit attendance at regular worship services.

F. Right to Exclude from Service

Foothills Presbytery reserves the right to exclude from serving or terminate any volunteer or employee who has been found in violation of this policy or for whom potentially negative or questionable information has been discovered in background screenings, interviews or reference checks.

4. THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

- **See Foothills Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Policy**
 - The Sexual Ethics Team (SET) and Committee on Shared Ministry (CSM) will work with the Presbytery as they create systems for churches to write and adopt policies and procedures for preventing and reporting child, youth, and vulnerable adult misconduct and abuse.

5. THE FOOTHILLS PRESBYTERY SEXUAL ETHICS TEAM (See Operations Manual for Definition)

6. AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS TO THIS POLICY

This policy, in its entirety, is to be revised and applied under the primary supervision of Foothills Presbytery's Coordinating Council and Sexual Ethics Team (SET).

Every three (3) years, CSM and will review this policy and suggest any revisions which seem prudent or necessary to ensure the safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Coordinating Council of Foothills Presbytery has the responsibility:

1. To receive and act upon recommendations for changes which are received from CSM (Foothills Presbytery's Protection Policy for children, youth and vulnerable adults sub-team) and SET.
2. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Ministry (COM) to be compliant with the current Sexual Misconduct Policy as it relates to any portion of this policy.
3. To review the Policy as a whole to ensure cohesion and the consistent use of this Policy across Foothills Presbytery.
4. To take any changes approved by the Coordinating Council of Foothills Presbytery to the whole Presbytery for action so the Policy may be amended by Presbytery:
 - a. After the adoption of the original Policy, this Policy may be revised at any Foothills Presbytery Stated Presbytery Meeting as long as:
 - i. Suggested revisions come from CSM and/or COM and have been discussed and voted on by those bodies.
 - ii. The suggested revisions passed on by those entities are made available to the entire Coordinating Council of Foothills Presbytery at least 3 days prior to the meeting when suggested revisions are to be considered, and the proposed revisions are approved by a majority of the Coordinating Council of Foothills Presbytery.
 - iii. The suggested revisions, thus approved by Coordinating Council of Foothills Presbytery, are listed on the Agenda of a Stated Meeting of Foothills Presbytery and the text of the revisions are made available to at least voting members of Foothills Presbytery
 - iv. After these requirements are met, revisions may be made by a majority vote of Foothills Presbytery at that Stated Meeting and will become official upon approval.
5. To make this policy available to all Moderators of Foothills Presbytery Committees, Ordered Ministry, Clerks of Sessions and professional church leaders/staff on an annual basis and to ensure that training and education is carried out as it seems appropriate and necessary.

7. Foothills Presbytery Appendices

Appendix A: Release Authorization

Appendix B: Incident Report

Appendix C: SC Definition of Abuse Law and Abuse Reporting Law

Appendix D: Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordered Ministries of the PCUSA

APPENDIX A: FOOTHILLS PRESBYTERY RELEASE AUTHORIZATION

Applicant Complete the Following

In connection with my service through Foothills Presbytery, I understand that a thorough background check will be required.

I acknowledge that a telephonic facsimile (FAX), photographic, or scanned copy shall be as valid as the original. This release is valid for most federal, state and county agencies.

I hereby authorize, without reservation, any law enforcement agency, institution, information service bureau, school, employer, reference or insurance company contacted during a background check, to furnish the information described in Section 1. The following information is required by law enforcement agencies and other entities for positive identification purposes when checking public records. It is confidential and will not be used for any other purposes. I hereby release the employer and agents and all persons, agencies and entities providing information or reports about me from any and all liability arising out of the requests for or release of any of the above mentioned information or reports.

Please print your full name: _____ Date: _____

Please sign your full name: _____

APPENDIX B: FOOTHILLS PRESBYTERY INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Date and time of incident: _____

Name of Reporter: _____

Primary phone #: _____ Work # _____

Name(s) of persons involved incident:

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

_____ Age: _____

Location of Incident (including City, State and Country): _____

Quote the first words verbatim of the child, youth or vulnerable adult making the accusation: _____

Describe the behavior and appearance of the person making the accusation: _____

Describe the behavior and appearance of anyone else making the accusation or involved in the incident: _____

Describe what exactly happened as reported to you: _____

Were there any witness? Yes: _____ No: _____

1stName: _____ Age: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

2ndName: _____ Age: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

3rdName: _____ Age: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

4thName: _____ Age: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

What actions did you take? _____

Has the incident been resolved? How so? _____

Person(s) this report was given to:

1stName: _____ Date: _____

2ndName: _____ Date: _____

3rdName: _____ Date: _____

Signature of person submitting report: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C: South Carolina Definition of Abuse Law & Abuse Reporting Law

SECTION 63-7-20: Definitions:

(6) “Child abuse or neglect” or “harm” occurs when the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child’s welfare:

- a. inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child physical or mental injury or engages in acts or omissions which present a substantial risk of physical or mental injury to the child, including injuries sustained as a result of excessive corporal punishment, but excluding corporal punishment or physical discipline which:
 - i. is administered by a parent or person in loco parentis;
 - ii. is perpetrated for the sole purpose of restraining or correcting the child;
 - iii. is reasonable in manner and moderate in degree;
 - iv. has not brought about permanent or lasting damage to the child; and
 - v. is not reckless or grossly negligent behavior by the parents.
- b. commits or allows to be committed against the child a sexual offense as defined by the laws of this State or engages in acts or omissions that present a substantial risk that a sexual offense as defined in the laws of this State would be committed against the child;
- c. fails to supply the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter, or education as required under Article 1 of Chapter 65 of Title 59, supervision appropriate to the child’s age and development, or health care though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so and the failure to do so has caused or presents a substantial risk of causing physical or mental injury. However, a child’s absences from school may not be considered abuse or neglect unless the school has made efforts to bring about the child’s attendance, and those efforts were unsuccessful because of the parents’ refusal to cooperate. For the purpose of this chapter “adequate health care” includes any medical or nonmedical remedial health care permitted or authorized under state law;
- d. abandons the child;
- e. encourages, condones, or approves the commission of delinquent acts by the child, including but not limited to, sexual trafficking or exploitation and the commission of the acts are shown to be the result of the encouragement, condemnation, or approval;
- f. has committed abuse or neglect as described in subsections (a) through (e) such that a child who subsequently becomes part of the person’s household is at substantial risk of one of those forms of abuse or neglect.²

² To see complete section of SECTION 63-7-20 see: www.scstatehouse.gov Title 53 SC Children’s Code

SECTION 63-7-310: Persons required to report.

- A. A physician, nurse, dentist, optometrist, medical examiner, or coroner, or an employee of a county medical examiner's or coroner's office, or any other medical, emergency medical services, mental health, or allied health professional, member of the clergy including a Christian Science Practitioner or religious healer, school teacher, counselor, principal, assistant principal, school attendance officer, social or public assistance worker, substance abuse treatment staff, or childcare worker in a childcare center or foster care facility, police or law enforcement officer, juvenile justice worker, undertaker, funeral home director or employee of a funeral home, persons responsible for processing films, computer technician, judge, or a volunteer non-attorney guardian ad litem serving on behalf of the SC Guardian Ad Litem program, must report in accordance with this section when in the person's professional capacity the person has received information which gives the person reason to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected as defined in Section 63- 7- 20.
- B. If a person required to report pursuant to subsection (A) has received information in the person's professional capacity which gives the person reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by acts or omissions that would be child abuse or neglect if committed by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, but the reporter believes that the act or omission was committed by a person other than the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the reporter must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- C. Except as provided in subsection (A), any person, including but not limited to, a volunteer non-attorney guardian ad litem serving on behalf of the SC Guardian Ad Litem program, who has reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse and neglect may report and is encouraged to report in accordance with this section.
- D. Reports of child abuse or neglect may be made orally by telephone or otherwise to the county department of social services or to a law enforcement agency in the county where the child resides or is found.

APPENDIX D:



STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

**Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

**Life Together in a Community of Faith:
Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers
in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

Professional Code of Ethics

**Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

Developed by

The Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics
Published by The Office of the General Assembly PC(USA)

Edited by

The Committee on Ministry of Foothills Presbytery
The Committee on Preparation for Ministry of Foothills Presbytery
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The Office of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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**TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH: STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR
ORDAINED OFFICERS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As an ordained officer* in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture and guided by our Confessions, I affirm the vows made at my ordination, confirm that Jesus Christ is the pattern for my life and ministry and, relying on God's grace, commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct:

b) ONE

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my public ministry. Therefore I will:

- a. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
- b. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
- c. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
- d. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
- e. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my office of ministry, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
- f. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
- g. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
- h. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

c) TWO

I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a council or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will:

- a. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
- b. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
- c. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
- d. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
- e. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by appropriate;
- f. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks as appropriate.
- g. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
- h. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
- i. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
- j. Observe limits set by the appropriate council for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
- k. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
- l. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
- m. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;

- n. ****Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;**
- o. ****Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and**
- p. ****Consult with the Committee on Ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.**

d) THREE

I will participate as a partner with others in the ministry and mission of the Church universal. Therefore I will:

- a. Participate in the mission and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and work for the unity of the holy catholic church;
- b. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues in ministry;
- c. Recruit church members responsibly, respect existing congregational relationships, and refrain from exploiting persons in vulnerable situations; and
- d. Cooperate with those working in the world for justice, compassion, and peace, including partners in ministry of other faith traditions.

*Includes all Ordered Ministry personnel

**These standards apply only to pastors. They also apply to commissioned ruling elders when they are performing pastoral functions.