

Code of Ethics for Congregations and Their Leadership Teams

Jesus and his apostles gave the Church instruction in the responsible use of gifts, in the practice of unity and holiness, and in witness to the world. Jesus also gave gifts to the Church so that it might be built up and reach unity in the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity.

The Church of Jesus Christ is embodied in local congregations. Among the gifts Jesus provides the Church are pastors to teach congregations, lead them, and care for their spiritual well-being. In return, the lay leaders of our congregations are responsible to provide for the clergy and to facilitate their work. They also have responsibilities to the congregation at large, to the family of churches to which they belong, and to the communities in which they live and worship. Therefore responsible congregational leadership will:

Honor and Support the Gifts Christ Gives to the Churches

Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the Church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the Church, the Body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12, NLT)

- Provide for the physical and spiritual needs of pastors and their families; pay an adequate salary and benefits to pastors and other staff; provide annual compensation reviews.
- Ensure that pastors have both weekly and annual times of rest and opportunities for study.
- Seek to enable and cultivate the spiritual gifts of the congregation's members.

Promote the Unity of Christ's Body

Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. (Ephesians 4:3-4, NLT)

- Foster interaction between generations and between social and ethnic groups in the church.
- Affirm the strengths of differing worship styles.
- Honor pastoral vision and teaching, engaging an appropriate outside counselor to facilitate healing when a dispute with a pastor reaches an impasse.
- Present a united front in support of major initiatives.
- Confront those in the congregation that actively oppose the leadership or demonstrate apathy toward the leadership's vision.
- Work to reconcile dissident factions through mutual listening and sharing.
- Work to ensure that all members are engaged in opportunities for growth in discipleship.

- Strive in all things to live out Jesus' command to his followers, "Love one another, as I have loved you."
- Foster constructive connections with and keep commitments to other churches in its community, and to churches that belong to its denomination or the network of churches with which it shares a heritage.

Practice Accountability

The time is coming when everything that is covered up will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear! (Luke 12:2-3, NLT)

- Model openness and clear communication in doing the congregation's business; work with the congregation to develop shared expectations about transparency.
- Open the church's financial records for periodic independent review.
- Create periodic opportunities for both pastors and lay leaders to receive feedback from those they serve and give opportunity for personal and professional growth.
- Hold pastors and lay teachers to the truths found in Scripture, especially as they are embodied in the standards of doctrine and personal holiness established by the congregation or denominational family.
- Train pastors, staff and volunteers in methods of preventing the abuse of vulnerable persons, particularly children.
- Establish and use a system of church discipline to deal with members who persist in sinful ways after attempts to guide and restore them have failed.
- Deal fairly and openly with causes of scandal when they occur, within the framework of the law.

Practice Good Stewardship

If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? (Luke 16:10-11, NLT)

- Pay bills in a timely fashion and take care not to encumber the church with unmanageable debt.
- Use gifts as they are intended.
- Maintain the property and equipment the church owns in good, safe and attractive condition.
- Maintain appropriate levels of insurance.
- Practice wise stewardship in use of natural resources.
- Participate financially in the denomination or extended family of churches to which it belongs.
- Honor the financial record-keeping and reporting practices involved in its membership in a denomination or network of churches.

Practice Hospitality

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4:9-10, ESV)

- Maintain a safe and secure environment for public worship, study and community events.

- Minimize barriers that would discourage persons with disabilities from full participation.
- Affirm the varied cultural heritages represented in the congregation and community.
- Eliminate artificial barriers to welcoming the surrounding community to public events.
- Allow appropriate community use of church facilities, when such use is not inconsistent with the church's witness and its ethical commitments.
- Be sensitive to the impact of traffic, parking and the sounds of worship on its neighbors.

Seek the Welfare of the Community Where God has Placed It

Work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you ... (Jeremiah 29:7, NLT)

- Demonstrate in the congregation's own life the global and multicultural nature of Christ's Body.
- Speak through designated leaders to issues of injustice in the local community and beyond.
- Work to alleviate suffering and promote health and spiritual well-being of its community and the world.

As the church leadership team, we commit to abide by the standards set forth in the NAE Code of Ethics for Congregations.

Printed Name of Church _____ Date _____

Leadership Representative Name: _____ Leadership Role: _____

Signature: _____