

# **Code of Ethics**

## **Companion Guide**

Updated in 2011



## Background

In April 2004 the Executive Council of the Baptist Union of Victoria (BUV) established a Professional Standards Group (PSG) to examine processes related to the education of its pastors and congregations and to review the BUV's complaints' procedures. The PSG determined that a Code of Ethics needed to be established that would be linked clearly to the Professional and Personal Development Plan (PDP).

A Professional Standards Worker was appointed to facilitate the process and an invitation was issued to a group of pastors in July 2004 to draft the Code. The establishment of a Code is a recognized practice that has been undertaken by other Baptist Unions in Australia and by various denominations in recent years. The Code's drafting group drew on material from these codes and from earlier work done by the Revd Rowland Croucher.

A Draft was presented to the December 2004 Assembly and feedback was invited from Pastoral Leaders. In 2005 the Director of Ministries and the Regional Ministers held a series of consultations with Pastoral Leaders throughout Victoria to receive comments on the Draft. The Code reflects an ongoing process of education that the BUV has been engaged in with its congregations and leaders for several years, particularly in the area of Duty of Care.

The Code is **not** intended to replace other official documents prepared by the Baptist Union of Victoria but should be read in conjunction with them. They are:

- Doctrinal Statement of the BUV
- Our Church is a Safe Place – BUV Duty of Care Policy
- Complaint Procedure for Allegations of Misconduct by Pastoral Leaders
- Professional and Personal Development (PDP) Guidelines
- Privacy policy of the Baptist Union of Victoria

The Code is **not** intended to replace a Statement of Understanding established between a Pastoral Leader and his/her congregation at the commencement of a period of ministry but should be read in conjunction with the Statement.

The Code aims to provide Pastoral Leaders (and their churches) with clear guidelines and common benchmarks for ethical conduct and legal responsibility. It is not designed to be a replacement for the Bible as a fundamental guide for faith and practice. It recognizes however, that a diversity of Scriptural interpretation exists among Victorian Baptists.

The Code is not intended to be an exhaustive 'How to Manual' for ministry but seeks to exude something of the spirit of the Biblical call to faithfulness of ministry. Several of the Code's principles are **aspirational**: Pastoral Leaders will endeavour to fulfil them to the best of their ability. Several are **advisable**: guidelines which are strongly recommended; and other principles

are **mandatory**: failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action being taken by the BUV and/or removal from the official list of pastors. The document titled "Complaint Procedure for Allegations of Misconduct by Pastoral Leaders" outlines the process undertaken when misconduct occurs. Some of the principles underpinning that process are compassion, accountability, natural justice, healing and where appropriate, restoration to ministry. However, in some circumstances restoration to ministry will not be possible. These circumstances include when the misconduct is adult to child sexual abuse, where the misconduct involves significant violence or significant predatory behaviour by the Pastoral Leader.

This document is based around the twelve principles of the Code of Ethics which are listed below. The rest of the companion is an elaboration and application of the Code. The Companion is an open document that will be reviewed from time to time by the BUV Professional Standards Group.

**Pastoral Leaders include the following people associated with the BUV:**

- Ordained and Accredited Pastoral Leaders;
- Recognised Pastoral Leaders (non-ordained but accredited);
- Candidates in Training;
- All people appointed to BUV's 'Special Positions' list;
- The President, Vice President, and Immediate Past President;
- Anyone who is registered as a marriage celebrant;
- Any person in a position appointed by Assembly but not mentioned above.

## Pre-Amble

People enter into ministry in response to a gracious call from God and the Church. It is this call that requires Pastoral Leaders to carry out their responsibilities in a faithful, professional and accountable manner. As Scripture says: "See to it that you fulfil the ministry that you have received from the Lord" (Col 4:17). Pastoral Leaders have been given a significant role within the life of the Church. They are called upon to exercise leadership in its worship, preaching, mission, pastoral care and training; they also serve as Christ's representatives in the world (Matt 28:18-20). As Pastoral Leaders live out their call to ministry in positions of power and influence, they will seek to express the love and character of Christ in all their relationships.

### **1. Pastoral Leaders must exercise ministry within the limits of their expertise and within the Code of Ethics for Pastoral Leaders.**

- 1.1. Pastoral Leaders must uphold professional standards of ministry.
- 1.2. Pastoral Leaders should offer the best quality ministry of which they are capable.
- 1.3. Pastoral Leaders must ensure that they act responsibly and with integrity towards others.
- 1.4. Pastoral Leaders should not offer unqualified advice in areas in which they do not hold credentials.

### **2. Pastoral Leaders must treat those to whom they minister, and all with whom they come into contact, with respect, honesty and compassion.**

- 2.1. Pastoral Leaders should be an example of Christ-like behaviour to the members of both the church and the community.
- 2.2. Pastoral Leaders should respect the dignity of others regardless of race, religion, gender, political beliefs, ability or sexual orientation.
- 2.3. Pastoral Leaders should work to further justice in society.
- 2.4. Pastoral Leaders should have a moral and spiritual commitment to truthfulness, and must not knowingly plagiarise.

**3. Pastoral Leaders must respect the right of all people to make their own educated decisions and choices in life, and encourage them to move towards maturity in Christ.**

- 3.1 Pastoral Leaders should seek to empower others rather than control or exploit.
- 3.2 Pastoral Leaders should recognize diversity of opinion and encourage discussion that is respectful of persons.

**4. Pastoral Leaders must refrain from any form of conduct that exploits another for their own advantage or the advantage of any third person.**

- 4.1. Pastoral Leaders must not spiritually, emotionally, verbally, physically or sexually abuse anyone.
- 4.2. Pastoral Leaders must not engage in a sexualized relationship with anyone other than their spouse or partner.
- 4.3. Pastoral Leaders must not seek financial gain for themselves or their families from a pastoral relationship beyond recognized fees, stipends and entitlements.

**5. Pastoral Leaders must respect the right of all to whom they minister, to a relationship of mutual trust, privacy and confidentiality.**

- 5.1. If requested Pastoral Leaders must maintain confidentiality unless this would result in harm to another person(s) or disclosure is required by law.
- 5.2. Pastoral Leaders must not disclose private or confidential material in public unless prior consent has been given.
- 5.3. Pastoral Leaders must comply with the provisions of the Privacy Act

**6. Pastoral Leaders must commit themselves to ongoing personal and professional development.**

- 6.1. Pastoral Leaders should maintain professional standards of knowledge and skill in areas of ministry relevant to their context.
- 6.2. Pastoral Leaders should seek to contribute to the development of the wider ministry.
- 6.3. Pastoral Leaders must actively participate in the Baptist Union of Victoria's Personal Development Plan (PDP) process.

**7. Pastoral Leaders must accept responsibility for their own spiritual, emotional, physical and mental health and act with due care towards their families and friends.**

- 7.1. Pastoral Leaders should nurture their spiritual lives through regular attention to prayer, the reading of scripture and other spiritual disciplines.
- 7.2. Pastoral Leaders should seek to maintain a proper balance between personal, family, church and other responsibilities.
- 7.3. Pastoral Leaders should seek to manage their time wisely and should set aside regular opportunities for rest, recreation and spiritual renewal.

- 7.4. Pastoral Leaders should fulfil their responsibilities of love and care for their spouses (partners) and families and avoid imposing unreasonable expectations and demands upon them.
- 7.5. Pastoral Leaders should seek to maintain their physical and mental health.
- 8. Pastoral Leaders must avoid entering into relationships or situations that may diminish their ability to maintain professional integrity and independence.**
- 8.1. Pastoral Leaders have a responsibility to discern situations in which their ability to provide proper pastoral care may be compromised and to act appropriately.
- 8.2. Pastoral Leaders should exercise caution and discretion when entering into contracts or commercial arrangements with people to whom they minister.
- 8.3. Pastoral Leaders should exercise caution and discretion concerning the acceptance of gifts as a result of their ministry.
- 9. Pastoral Leaders must maintain integrity and exercise faithful stewardship in managing finances.**
- 9.1. Pastoral Leaders must manage their personal finances ethically and should seek to do so wisely.
- 9.2. Pastoral Leaders must not use Church funds, accounts or resources for private advantage.
- 9.3. Pastoral Leaders should not charge church members for pastoral services.
- 9.4. Pastoral Leaders should refrain from direct involvement in the collection, counting and handling of money received by the church.
- 10. Pastoral Leaders must treat all colleagues in ministry with respect, consideration and fairness.**
- 10.1. Pastoral Leaders must refrain from any communication that may needlessly damage the reputation of colleagues.
- 10.2. Pastoral Leaders should not proselytize members of other congregations and should exercise discretion in rendering pastoral service to a member of another congregation.
- 10.3. Pastoral Leaders should not determine the selection of a successor and must not interfere in the ministry of their successor/s.
- 10.4. Pastoral Leaders must not consider a call to a church to replace a current pastor who has not resigned or been removed.
- 11. Pastoral Leaders should respect the doctrinal basis and policies of the Baptist Union of Victoria and must work within its officially recognized guidelines.**
- 11.1. Pastoral Leaders should contribute to the wider life of the denomination, participating as they are able in its assemblies, ministries and organizations.
- 11.2. Pastoral Leaders should encourage the congregation in which they are serving to participate in the fellowship of the Baptist Union of Victoria.

11.3. Pastoral Leaders should refrain from any communication that aims to damage the reputation and unity of the Baptist Union of Victoria.

**12. Pastor Leaders must act lawfully at all times, unless to do so would clearly contravene Christian principles or good conscience.**

12.1. Pastoral Leaders should promote adherence to the law within the sphere of their ministerial responsibilities.

12.2. Pastoral Leaders must inform the Baptist Union's Administrator or Director of Ministries of any matter which may lead to legal action against the Union or Church.

12.3. Pastoral Leaders must not encourage others to break the law except in instances where that may be required by Christian principles or good conscience.

(Initial document development was undertaken by Revs: Marita Munro, Chris Turner and David Devine)

## Bibliography

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Croucher, Rowland. *Baptist Union of Victoria Professional Standards and Code of Ethics for Pastors*. Draft copy amended 30 June 2003 & 21 September 2003.

New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Baptist Ministers' Association. *Code of Conduct for Ministers*, June 2003.

The Conference of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania. *Code of Ethics Applicable to the Ministers of the Churches of Christ*. Adopted by the Victorian-Tasmanian Conference Board on 9 April 2003, replacing issue dated 21 April 1999.

Uniting Church in Australia. *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Ministers of the Word, Deacons, Deaconesses, Youth Workers, Community Ministers and Lay Pastors in the Uniting Church of Australia*. Approved by the Ninth Assembly, July 2000.

## **Code of Ethics Companion Guide –**

to be read in conjunction with Code of Ethics.

- 1.1.1 Because Pastoral Leaders exercise a role in society that carries respect, they should act in a way that maintains the trust of the community. The nature of ministry requires Pastoral Leaders to be wholesome examples to others.
- 1.2.1 Pastoral Leaders touch people's lives in times of joy, pain, celebration, grief and vulnerability. They train the church to serve the Lord in caring for one another, praying, studying the Scriptures, and proclaiming the Gospel. They seek to enable others to grow in Christian maturity (Colossians 1:28) and to focus on God as the source of restoration and wholeness.
- 1.3.1 Because Pastoral Leaders exercise considerable influence and power, they must act at all times with integrity and maintain appropriate boundaries in their relationships with others.
- 1.3.2 Pastoral Leaders should recognize that they are not called to carry out their responsibilities alone. Therefore they will be readily accountable to and seek support from others including their local church, its leadership group; colleagues, peer support group, mentor, and/or spiritual director as well as the BUV.
- 1.3.3 Pastoral Leaders should seek to encourage the members of their congregations to exercise their own gifts and capacity for ministry and service in the church and society.

- 1.4.1 Professionals are expected to act within the scope of their profession. A 'profession' is a group of people engaged in an occupation or calling whose competency depends upon specialized knowledge and experience... Any service that is offered beyond the scope of the profession of Christian ministry must be accompanied by appropriate and recognized qualifications.
- 1.4.2 Pastoral Leaders are not normally trained to provide services such as specialized Counselling, Spiritual Direction or Psychological Analysis or other areas requiring specific training and qualifications.
- 1.4.3 Most professions have their own codes of ethical standards. When Pastoral Leaders are offering a service from a particular profession (eg Counselling or Spiritual Direction), they must also observe the code of ethics attached to that profession.
- 1.4.4 Where Pastoral Leaders are in any doubt about their ability or qualifications to offer a service to a person in their care, they should refer the person to a qualified professional.
  
- 2.3.1 Pastoral Leaders should recognize the church's concern for all aspects of life and society.
  
- 3.1.1 Pastoral Leaders may express their own opinions and offer appropriate advice but should avoid making a decision for another person. To take the responsibility for a person's life out of their hands may represent a subtle form of abuse.
  
- 4.1.1 Pastoral Leaders should recognize the power that they exercise in their ministerial roles. They must refrain from the abuse of the power that is inherent in their role. Power needs to be exercised wisely to sustain and build up the church, never to bully, manipulate or denigrate.
- 4.1.2 Pastoral Leaders have the responsibility to ensure that their churches are places of safety where the personal boundaries of those within their care will not be violated. Where others indicate by words or actions that their conduct is unwelcome, Pastoral Leaders must stop the conduct in question.
- 4.1.3 Pastoral Leaders must refrain from sexual exploitation or sexual harassment of any kind. Sexual misconduct includes:
  - a. Sexual harassment: a wide range of unwelcome and unreciprocated behaviours, verbal and physical such as overt or covert seductive speech or gestures, the display of offensive pictures, unwelcome sexual advances or unwelcome requests or demands for sexual favours or engagement in other unwelcome contact of a sexual nature. Such contact may include expressions of inappropriate

- 'affection' such as unwelcome kissing, touching, patting, pinching or bumping;
  - b. Sexual assault: any unwelcome sexual behaviour that may occur along a continuum from verbal insult to sexual intercourse that makes a person feel threatened or afraid;
  - c. Sexual conduct prohibited by criminal law, such as rape.
- 4.2.1 Pastoral Leaders must not sexualize a pastoral or professional relationship. Sexualization includes sexual interaction, consensual or otherwise with a person within their ministerial care. Apart from behaviour mentioned under 4.1.3, such interaction may also include inappropriate questioning of another's sexual history.
- 5.1.1. In the context of a pastoral relationship, confidentiality is an assurance that pastoral leaders will not divulge written or spoken information about an individual with other people unless:
- a. Permission has been granted by the individual;
  - b. Retaining such information would result in physical, emotional or sexual harm to another person(s);
  - c. Disclosure is required by law or is necessary to prevent financial loss to some other person due to fraud or other dishonesty where undue hardship might result.
- 5.1.2. Pastoral Leaders should not seek to gain sensitive or confidential material to which they are not entitled or which would require another person to breach a confidence.
- 5.1.3. Pastoral Leaders must take care to discuss the nature and limits of their confidentiality with those receiving counselling.
- 5.1.4 Pastoral Leaders must ensure that confidential records are securely stored; that rooms in which counselling takes place are properly soundproofed and that staff members are informed of their duty in matters of confidentiality.
- 5.2.1 Pastoral Leaders should not use information or stories from private counselling in their preaching and public prayers that would reveal a counselee's identity except with the counselee's permission. Even then, it may be inappropriate to reveal such information:
- a. In deference to relatives of the counselee who may recognize the person(s) involved;
  - b. Because some people relish prurient information about themselves being broadcast;
  - c. Because it may discourage sensitive people from seeking help if they fear that inappropriate disclosure may be made about them.
- 6.1.1 A Pastoral Leader's professional conduct is enhanced by disciplined and prayerful reflection on the various ways in which the Christian faith affects the lives of the people within their care.

- 6.2.1 Pastoral Leaders are encouraged to share their professional knowledge and experience with ministerial colleagues and to contribute their expertise and experience to the development of the BUV's ministry, policies and practice.
- 6.3.1 The Baptist Union of Victoria's PDP process provides an opportunity for Pastoral Leaders to review their sense of call on a regular basis and renew their response to it. The PDP ensures that provision is made for the establishment and continuation of mentoring and supervisory relationships that will support Pastoral Leaders in their ministries. The PDP includes accountability for matters of personal health, lifestyle, spiritual growth and study. Pastoral Leaders who wish to remain on the BUV's recognized ministerial lists are required to participate in the PDP process.
- 7.1.1 Pastoral Leaders should recognize that fruitful ministry is an expression and extension of a dependent relationship upon God.
- 7.2.1 Some Pastoral Leaders will face the temptation of being consumed by the ministerial role; others will struggle to give adequate attention to ministerial priorities.
- 7.2.2 Personal wellbeing is enhanced by good friendships. It is desirable for Pastoral Leaders to develop and maintain personal friendships with people outside the sphere of their ministerial responsibilities.
- 7.3.1 It is desirable for Pastoral Leaders to establish viable work patterns that include weekly time (Sabbath) away from pastoral responsibilities and regular scheduled holiday breaks and/or annual leave.
- 7.4.1 Pastoral Leaders should allow adequate time to fulfil their family responsibilities.
- 7.4.2 Pastoral Leaders should exercise fidelity and integrity in their relationships to their spouses (partners).
- 7.4.3 Pastoral Leaders should encourage their loved ones to grow in faith. This may mean that Pastoral Leaders will ensure that someone else has the responsibility for the pastoral care of family members.
- 7.4.4 Pastoral Leaders should respect the rights of their family members to privacy and refrain from making public references to them without first seeking their permission.
- 7.4.5 The responsibility of a Pastoral Leader's spouse is as a marital partner and, where, applicable, as a co-parent to the children, not as a church employee or unpaid leader (unless this arrangement has been made with the free consent of the spouse). A spouse

should be able to choose the nature of their involvement in the life of the congregation (like any other church member).

- 7.5.1 Physical health requires proper nutrition, adequate sleep, regular exercise and avoidance of the misuse of alcohol and other drugs. A regular (annual) health check with a medical practitioner is advisable.
- 7.5.2 Pastoral leaders should be discriminating in their use of the media and avoid the use of explicit pornography and any other materials that may encourage harmful patterns of thought or behaviour.
- 7.5.3 Pastoral leaders who experience personal difficulties with addictive forms of behaviour should seek professional help at the earliest opportunity and consult with a senior colleague, mentor or peer group for advice and support.
- 8.1.1 Because pastoral leadership occurs within a caring community, close friendships may develop with some members of the church community. At times the nature of these relationships may challenge the capacity of pastoral leaders to provide appropriate care. Such relationships may include: special friendships that may reasonably be construed by others as evidence of partiality or conflict of interest; and relationships that are becoming romanticized. Pastoral leaders have a responsibility to discern such developments and take appropriate action such as:
  - a. Disengaging from the pastoral relationship and arranging alternative pastoral care for the person(s) in question;
  - b. Seeking advice from a supervisor, mentor or senior colleague.
- 8.3.1. Pastoral leaders should take into account the intent and value of the gift, and the possibility of being unduly compromised or influenced by such a gift. Where pastoral leaders accept a gift to satisfy certain cultural traditions, they should consider using the gift for the benefit of the wider community of faith.
- 9.1.1 Pastoral Leaders should set an example of stewardship by seeking to live within their means and practising generosity as they are able.
- 9.1.2 Pastoral Leaders should be scrupulously honest in their private management of money. This includes seeking to pay bills in a timely manner and acting with integrity in matters of taxation.
- 9.1.3 Pastoral Leaders should avoid participating in artificial tax minimization schemes and claiming unwarranted expense deductions. Integrity means managing personal financial affairs in such a way that Pastoral Leaders would not be embarrassed by such affairs being made public.
- 9.1.4 Pastoral Leaders may supplement their stipend through other

employment. It is good practice to discuss with the church how other employment will impact on the Pastoral Leader's availability and ministry. Pastoral Leaders should not take up employment that threatens their integrity or the good name of the Church.

- 9.2.1 Churches have a responsibility to ensure that Pastoral Leaders, as employees, receive a fair wage for their labour and that agreed ministry related expenses are reimbursed. Pastoral Leaders must ensure that reimbursements for ministry related expenses are supported by appropriate documentation. Pastoral Leaders should ensure that church funds and their personal money are kept separate.
- 9.2.2 At the conclusion of a ministry within a church Pastoral leaders should return to the church any properties or material belonging to the church
- 9.3.1 Pastoral Leaders must obtain the support of the church body employing them before accepting remuneration beyond that agreed in their Statement of Understanding.
- 9.3.2 Where Pastoral Leaders receive fees or honoraria for ministry activities conducted within the usual bounds of their work, these should be passed on to the Church.
- 9.3.3 Pastoral Leaders should not normally accept fees or honoraria for weddings and funerals from church members.
- 9.4.1 Pastoral Leaders are often the recipients of a significant proportion of a church's funds as stipends. It is therefore good practice for them to remain "at arms length" from the handling of monies received by the church, so as to avoid any perceived conflict of interest. Pastoral Leaders should encourage churches to implement generally accepted accounting practices and internal controls.
- 10.1.1 Pastoral Leaders must refrain from gossip, slander and other communication (both written and spoken) that is false, degrading, defamatory or harmful to another's character or reputation.
- 10.1.2 When a person transfers from another congregation it is good practice for the Pastoral Leader of the receiving congregation to contact the leadership of the previous church to ensure that they are aware of the move and to ascertain if there are any issues to be aware of. Where a person is under discipline from a congregation, another church should receive them into fellowship only if they have ensured that the relevant matters have been dealt with as far as possible. An effort should be made to assist people to resolve conflicts with other believers.
- 10.3.1 Upon conclusion of a ministry, Pastoral Leaders should normally seek membership in a different congregation from the one in which

they have been serving. Participation in activities such as weddings and funerals would normally take place with the agreement of the current Pastoral leadership.

- 10.3.2 Pastoral Leaders who are concluding a ministry should not serve on the Search Committee for their successor. Nor should they seek to influence the composition or work of that committee.
- 10.3.3 Interim Pastoral Leaders must recognize the temporary nature of their tenure and not encourage the development of personal loyalties that may hinder the congregation in the process of calling and installing a new Pastoral Leader.
- 10.4.1 Pastoral Leaders should not establish a new work within close geographical proximity of another Baptist church without appropriate consultation with any local Baptist churches and the BUV.
- 11.2.1 Pastoral Leaders should report accurately and fairly the processes and decisions of Assemblies and other Church councils to the congregation and its leadership.
- 11.3.1 Pastoral Leaders should respect the due processes of the Union in matters of decision-making and change. When they disagree with a decision or policy of the Assembly or its councils, they should work through established procedures to express their point of view.
- 12.1.1 Pastoral Leaders are members of society and therefore subject to the laws of the State. They should seek to be good citizens as a commendation of the Gospel.
- 12.1.2 Pastoral Leaders who intend to break the law or engage in civil disobedience must be prepared to face the consequences of their actions.
- 12.1.3 Pastoral Leaders who engage in acts of civil disobedience should not behave in a violent or harmful manner.
- 12.3.1 Pastoral Leaders should not coerce others to join them in acts of civil disobedience or law breaking, but should recognize and respect the right of individuals to make free choices. In calling for or encouraging such actions, they should make clear the possible consequences.