

## Introduction to the Code of Conduct

Ethical practice is a foundation for godly life and ministry that reflects the teaching and practice of Jesus. The need for ethical practice is vital because of our commitment as a Baptist movement to follow Jesus in holy living and our commitment to providing a safe environment for all people to explore and express their faith in Jesus. The Code of Conduct outlines standards that are accepted collectively by Baptist Pastors, to which they are personally accountable, and by which we collectively commend our professional integrity to the wider community. The need for integrity is magnified by the present culture of scrutiny of people in church leadership. When pastors, leaders and volunteers in churches do not meet the ethical standards of the Bible or community expectations, it impacts the witness of the gospel and the perception of all in ministry. Those in pastoral leadership roles are called to a higher standard of conduct due to the unique challenges of pastoral ministry and the position of spiritual leadership and authority they occupy.

People in pastoral ministry are called to serve as an example of Christian faith in accordance with the teaching of the Bible (e.g. 1 Peter 5:3, 1 Timothy 4:12-16). This call requires all in pastoral ministry to carry out their responsibilities in a faithful, competent, and accountable manner. Section A of this Code provides clear guidelines as to what is and is not ethical in the practice of pastoral ministry and establishes the standards within which pastoral leaders are required to carry out their ministry roles.

All leaders and volunteers within a Church have privileges and responsibilities in their ministry that carry with them accountability and expectations regarding appropriate behaviour and boundaries, in order to reflect the key values of our churches. Section B of this Code establishes the standards of conduct required more broadly.

The Code does not seek to replace the Bible as the fundamental guide for all faith and practice but is based upon ethical standards and principles from the Bible, as well as relying on legal requirements and Movement expectations.

This Code exists to provide clarity and reduce ambiguity about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. In situations where it is breached, disciplinary action may be taken based on the framework outlined in BCSANT's *Regulations For Dealing With Complaints*. These situations also offer the potential for restoration and healing.

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## Section A: Code of Ethics for Pastoral Leaders

Pastoral leaders are called by God and affirmed by the Church to exercise leadership in a range of areas including worship, preaching, mission, pastoral care, and training. They also serve as Christ's representatives in the world (Matt 28:18-20, 2 Corinthians 5:20), expressing the love and character of Christ in all their relationships. In doing so, they accept positions in which they hold and exercise significant authority, influence, and power within their faith communities. They frequently work with vulnerable people and in situations of complexity. Pastors typically have a highly flexible work context and often work with limited direct oversight. As such, it is vital that pastors recognise the inherent power they have in their role and understand the boundaries to be observed in their ministry.

In Section A of the Code there is a distinction between things that pastoral leaders should do or not do, and the things that pastoral leaders must do or not do. While adherence to all parts of the Code is mandatory to ensure healthy, ethical ministry practice and personal witness, disciplinary action will not usually be initiated in relation to breaches of the ethical requirements pastoral leaders should do and will normally only be initiated regarding things pastoral leaders must or must not do. Disciplinary action may be taken, however, in cases of persistent breaches of things pastoral leaders should do or breaches in conjunction with breaches to the standards that must be adhered to.

### Who does Section A apply to?

Section A of this Code applies to

- a. Accredited/Ordained Persons
- b. Recognised Pastors
- c. BCSANT Ministry Staff
- d. BCSANT Assembly Board members
- e. Other persons appointed by a Member church to a role not covered above but whose role description refers to compliance with Section A of this Code (otherwise known as the Code of Ethics) as a requirement of their role. Member Churches are encouraged to incorporate this into the contract of all staff with a pastoral role who are not recognised or accredited.

Compliance with Section A is mandatory for all people to whom it applies. Other leaders, volunteers and members of a BCSANT Member Church and all other BCSANT staff not subject to Section A are subject to Section B of this Code of Conduct.

## 1. Personal Conduct

The role of pastor and the exercise of pastoral ministry is not merely a career, but a calling from God which pervades every part of a pastoral leader's life. Pastoral leaders must therefore be committed to Christian behaviour in all situations, not only when they are performing ministry duties in their role. As 1 Timothy 4:16 says, *Watch your life and doctrine closely.*

- 1.1. Pastoral leaders should take responsibility for:
  - 1.1.1. the maintenance and development of their own spiritual life
  - 1.1.2. the maintenance of their physical and emotional health

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- 1.1.3. establishing and maintaining the priority of their relationship with their spouse (where applicable), family and friends; and
  - 1.1.4. practicing responsible, law-abiding, ethical citizenship.
  - 1.1.5. forming ethically accountable relationships within church leadership, with peers, and through Professional Supervision
- 1.2. Pastoral leaders must not condone or participate in domestic or family violence.
  - 1.3. Pastoral leaders who experience addictive forms of behaviour should seek professional help and appropriate support at the earliest opportunity.
  - 1.4. Pastoral leaders should seek to be good citizens of society as a commendation of the gospel, and must act lawfully at all times, except where to do so would clearly and reasonably be understood to contravene Christian principles or good conscience.
    - 1.4.1. Pastoral leaders who engage in acts of civil disobedience must not behave in a violent or harmful manner.
    - 1.4.2. Pastoral leaders must inform the Director of Ministries if criminal charges have been laid or are likely to be laid against them or if they have been accused or suspected of committing a crime (other than expiable offences).
  - 1.5. When interacting online and through social media, pastoral leaders must ensure their interaction with people follows the same principles of respect and integrity that apply when engaging in person.
  - 1.6. Pastoral leaders must not engage in a sexual relationship with anyone other than their spouse, with whom they are in a legally recognised marriage in keeping with the Baptist definition of marriage.
  - 1.7. Pastoral leaders who separate from or divorce their spouse should inform the Director of Ministries and the Accreditation and Ordination Committee if they are Accredited or Recognised.
  - 1.8. Pastoral leaders must not produce or distribute pornographic material of any kind. Pastoral leaders should not access or view pornography or sexually explicit material.

## 2. Pastoral Relationships

Pastoral leadership is a highly relational role in which the pastor has the privilege of being an integral part of a church community and the lives of congregation members and the wider community. The overriding model for relating to others is found in Jesus Christ who modelled acting with humility, selflessness and unconditional love toward all people. The call to selfless Christlike leadership is described in Philippians 2 in this way, *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

- 2.1. Pastoral leaders should treat those to whom they minister, and all with whom they come into contact, with respect and compassion.
- 2.2. Recognising there is a power dynamic inherent within their role, pastoral leaders must not abuse their power and should take all measures to avoid abuse of their power.
- 2.3. Pastoral leaders must not abuse or harass anyone or engage in bullying behaviours

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- 2.4. Pastoral leaders should respect the dignity of all persons regardless of their race, religion, gender, sexuality, political beliefs or ability.
  - 2.5. Pastoral leaders must not engage in any form of conduct that exploits another for their own advantage, or the advantage of any third person.
  - 2.6. Pastoral leaders should exercise ministry within the limits of their expertise and should not offer unqualified advice in areas for which they do not hold credentials, nor claim competence or credentials that they do not have. Pastoral leaders should make referrals when they do not have the required professional competence or expertise.
  - 2.7. Pastoral leaders must not breach trust, privacy, or confidentiality unless to prevent risk of serious harm, or it is authorised or required by law, or the information could reasonably be considered non-sensitive or public, or the person who has given the information gives permission for it to be shared, or to the extent it is necessary to do so for the proper performance of the pastoral leader's ministry.
  - 2.8. Pastoral leaders should discuss the nature and limits of their confidentiality with those receiving pastoral counselling.
  - 2.9. Pastoral leaders should recognise and appropriately declare any conflicts of interest, or potential conflicts of interest, to their church leadership, manager or employer. Pastoral leaders should take appropriate steps to manage such conflicts appropriately.

### 3. Relationships with colleagues and the wider Baptist movement

Pastoral leadership takes place within the context of the Church body both locally and across the Movement. Each member of this body, including the pastor, brings their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of all. Pastoral leaders are called to exercise their particular gifts with diligence, humility and grace towards all other members of the body. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:24- 25, *God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.*

- 3.1. Pastoral leaders who have authority in relation to other people in both paid and voluntary roles should exercise their authority justly, with respect and with agreed accountability.
- 3.2. Pastoral leaders should accept the guidance and direction of those who have been given authority over them by the Church.
- 3.3. Pastoral leaders in conflict with a colleague should seek to resolve the issue in a timely and respectful process agreed to by all parties. When unable to reach resolution, mediation from an agreed third party should be sought.
- 3.4. Pastoral leaders must refrain from any communication that may needlessly damage the reputation of colleagues including gossip, slander, and any other false, defamatory, or harmful communication.
- 3.5. Pastoral leaders should not unduly influence the selection of a successor and should allow the church leadership to discern and recommend appropriate succession processes. Pastoral leaders concluding in a ministry role should not serve on the search committee and should not unduly influence the composition or work of that group.

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- 3.6. Retired pastoral leaders and those working in non-Church based ministry roles should recognise the inherent power they have in the congregations in which they are members. Considering this, such people should:
    - 3.6.1. Only remain or become part of a Church in which they were a pastoral leader with the endorsement of the current pastoral leader and church leaders.
    - 3.6.2. Respect the call and leadership of those in ministry in the Church.
    - 3.6.3. Not encourage discontent or interfere with the ministry of a pastoral leader.
    - 3.6.4. Only accept leadership roles in the Church with the support of the current pastoral leader and/or leadership team.
  - 3.7. Pastoral leaders should support and encourage the wider movement of BCSANT through prayer and participation as they are able. Pastoral leaders should encourage their congregations to do likewise.
  - 3.8. Pastoral leaders should support BCSANT being an ethical community through their relationships with colleagues and the wider Baptist movement
  - 3.9. Pastoral leaders must refrain from any communication and/or behaviours that aim to damage the reputation or unity of the Movement.

#### 4. Relationships with other organisations and the wider community

Pastoral leaders have the privilege and responsibility of representing Jesus and the Church in their interactions with the wider community. In Colossians 4:5-6, we are urged to *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity and to Let your conversation be always full of grace.*

- 4.1. Pastoral leaders should familiarise themselves with the Codes of Ethics or similar guidelines in other institutions where they minister (e.g. hospitals, schools and correctional centres).
- 4.2. Pastoral leaders serving in such situations should abide by the relevant codes as well as the BCSANT Code of Conduct.
- 4.3. Where the demands of another organisation conflict with this Code of Conduct, pastoral leaders must seek to clarify the nature of the conflict between those demands and the principles of this Code, inform all parties concerned of any perceived conflicts and seek to resolve them.
- 4.4. Pastoral leaders should exercise discretion providing pastoral services to members of another congregation.
- 4.5. As with pastoral relationships, pastoral leaders' relationships with people in the wider community should reflect Christlike attitudes based on respect for the dignity of all people as well as concern for their spiritual needs.
- 4.6. Where pastoral leaders speak out on community or political issues, including through the use of social media, they must ensure any statement is factually correct and is expressed with humility and respect.
- 4.7. Pastoral leaders should not make media comment on behalf of their church without permission of the appropriate church leadership and must not purport to do so on behalf of BCSANT.

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## 5. Professional integrity and competence

All followers of Jesus are called to lifelong learning and ongoing growth in holiness and integrity. Pastoral leaders have the privilege of living, teaching, and modelling this to others. As Paul says in Titus 2:7-8, *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.*

- 5.1. Pastoral leaders must have a commitment to ongoing education and professional development and should engage on an ongoing basis in practices that promote growth in their faith, knowledge, character, and ministry skills.
- 5.2. Pastoral leaders should keep appropriate pastoral records which may include such things as details of appointments, advice given, referrals and a journal of critical incidents. All records of a confidential nature must be maintained in a secure manner.
- 5.3. Pastoral leaders should maintain integrity and exercise faithful stewardship in handling their church's finances.
- 5.4. Pastoral leaders must not seek material gain for themselves or their families from a pastoral relationship, beyond recognised fees, stipends, and entitlements.
- 5.5. Pastoral leaders who receive gifts, financial or otherwise, resulting from a pastoral relationship, should use discretion concerning the acceptance or return of the gift by considering the intent, value and affordability of the gift and whether they are at risk of being compromised and losing objectivity.
- 5.6. Pastoral leaders must not use Church funds, accounts, or resources for personal advantage.
- 5.7. Pastoral leaders should, where possible refrain from direct involvement in the handling of money received by the church, without appropriate accountability under the oversight of the church leadership.

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## Section B: General Code of Conduct

Section B of this Code establishes standards of conduct required for a broader group of people across our churches. The standard required for each person under this is to be assessed objectively and is to be that reasonably to be expected for a person:

- a. Of similar training and experience;
- b. Occupying a similar position in BCSANT and/or a Member Church; and
- c. Where that person has made a specific commitment to any particular standard in accordance with that standard.

### Who does Section B apply to?

Section B of this Code applies to:

- a. All persons subject to Section A of this Code
- b. All other employees of BCSANT and/or Member Churches
- c. All volunteers of BCSANT Churches who have entered into a Ministry Covenant
- d. All members of any Member Church to the extent to which it has adopted the Code and/or the Child Protection Policy
- e. The Code applies only to natural persons and it does not apply to BCSANT or Member Churches.

## 6. Obligations under Section B

All persons subject to Section B will:

- 6.1. Behave in accordance with Christian moral standards as understood and accepted by Baptists and in a manner consistent with the fundamental values of BCSANT as expressed in its Constitution.
- 6.2. Act in love and with respect for the dignity and the rights of all others in their dealings with others, both inside and outside of Baptist churches.
- 6.3. Maintain the confidentiality of information derived in the course of their ministry for BCSANT or any Member Church, except where disclosure is to prevent risk of serious harm, or is authorised or required by law, or the information could reasonably be considered non-sensitive or public, or the person who has given the information gives permission for it to be shared, or to the extent it is necessary to do so for the proper performance of that ministry
- 6.4. If they have entered into a contract of employment with BCSANT or a Member Church or a Ministry Covenant, not do anything which is contrary to their obligations under that contract or covenant.
- 6.5. Not claim competence or credentials they do not have; and make referrals when they do not have the required expertise.
- 6.6. Where they have counselled anyone in the course of their ministry, not enter into any intimate relationship with that counselee for a period of two years after the end of the counselling.
- 6.7. Comply with their obligations under the Child Protection Policy.

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- 6.8. Not do anything to bring BCSANT and/or the Member Churches into disrepute.
  - 6.9. Co-operate with, and provide information to, the DPS in the course of dealing with a complaint or a charge under the Regulations and comply with any orders of PSAT or the Tribunal.

## 7. Definitions

**abuse** includes the following conduct: bullying, emotional abuse, financial abuse, harassment, physical abuse or physical assault, psychological abuse, sexual abuse or sexual assault, spiritual abuse, verbal abuse or verbal assault, neglect in the case of children under a pastoral leader's direct domestic care, and domestic and family violence.

**Baptists** are the members of the Member Churches.

**BCSANT** is Baptist Churches of South Australia and the Northern Territory Inc.

**Child Protection Policy** is the Child Protection Policy adopted and promulgated by BCSANT and includes both the Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Procedures Manual.

**DPS** is the Director of Professional Standards.

**Member Church** is a church or ministry which is at the relevant time a Member or Affiliate Member of BCSANT.

**Ministry covenant** is the covenant generally designated by Appendix G to the Child Protection Policy.

**PSAT** is the Professional Standards Assessment Team set up under the Regulations.

**Regulations** are the 'Regulations for Dealing with Complaints' set up by BCSANT.

**Tribunal** is the Tribunal set up under the Regulations.

**Specific definitions of the different forms of abuse are provided below:**

**bullying** means behaviour directed to a person or persons which is repeated, intentional, is unreasonable, (being behaviour that a reasonable person, having considered the circumstances, would see as unreasonable, including behaviour that is victimising, humiliating, intimidating, or threatening) and creates a risk to their health and safety. Bullying does not include lawful conduct carried out in a reasonable manner, such as disagreeing with or criticising someone's belief or opinions or actions in an honest and respectful way, giving information about inappropriate behaviour or unsatisfactory performance in an objective way to the person or persons concerned and to any other person with a proper reason for having that information, setting reasonable performance goals, standards, or deadlines, taking legitimate disciplinary action in accordance with established natural justice procedures.

**domestic and family violence** means abusive behaviour within an intimate relationship including marriage, dating, or within a family and includes physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and psychological



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abuse, as well as threatening or coercive behaviour aimed at control or domination of the other person through fear.

**emotional abuse** means intentional acts or omissions that a reasonable person knows, or ought to have known, might cause significant emotional harm, without a valid or appropriate reason.

**harassment** means unwelcome conduct, whether intended or not, in relation to another person where a reasonable person knows, or ought to have known, that conduct might cause offence, belittlement or someone feeling threatened. It includes making unwelcome physical contact with a person, making gestures or communicating in such a way that could reasonably give offence, 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 persistent unwelcome communication with a person in any form (for example, phone calls, email, text messages) and stalking a person, and spreading information with the intent to discredit and or defame any person.

**physical abuse** means any intentional act or use of force which does or could reasonably be expected to cause injury to another person. This may take the form of slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, or shoving. It does not include lawful discipline by a parent or guardian or lawful acts of self-defense.

**psychological abuse** means intentional acts that torment, intimidate or harass another person, as well as threatening or coercive behaviour aimed at control or domination of another person through fear.

**sexual abuse of a child** means any form of sexual conduct with, towards or in the presence of a child that would be considered a criminal offence. This could include sexual contact, grooming, indecent exposure, or possessing, creating, or exposing children to child exploitation or pornographic material.

**sexual abuse of an adult** means sexual assault, or any other sexual conduct prohibited by criminal law.

**sexual assault** means any intentional or reckless act, use of force or threat to use force involving some form of sexual activity against an adult without their consent.

**sexual harassment** means an unwelcome sexual advance and/or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. It involves circumstances in which a reasonable person would have anticipated that the other person would be offended, humiliated, embarrassed, or intimidated. Such conduct may include seductive speech or gestures, the display or sending of offensive pictures, unwelcome sexual advances, continuing unwanted romantic communication, making jokes containing sexual references or innuendo using any form of communication, stalking, or expressions of inappropriate 'affection' such as unwelcome kissing, touching, patting, or pinching.

**spiritual abuse** means the mistreatment of a person by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith, or religion. It includes using a position of spiritual authority to dominate, control or manipulate another person or group, using a position of spiritual authority to seek inappropriate deference from others, isolating a person from friends and family members, and using biblical or religious terminology to justify other forms of abuse.

**verbal abuse** means the use of words to assault, ridicule, manipulate, belittle, and/or degrade another person.