

Code of Ethics: some examples

Our [Code of Ethics](#) sets out how we expect those who serve in our Diocese (paid or unpaid) to behave.

This behaviour is similar to that expected of all licenced ministers and office holders by the formal rules of the Anglican Church in New Zealand, known as '[Title D](#)'. For this smaller group of people, not behaving appropriately can lead to church disciplinary proceedings.

What behaviour can I expect? Many of the expectations set out in the Code of Ethics are the same as, or similar to, the standards expected of licensed ministers and office holders under Title D and are helpful in understanding those standards. However, it is the Title D standards themselves and the Title D description of 'misconduct' and 'unsatisfactory conduct' that are relevant to decisions made under the complaints procedure that applies to licensed ministers and office holders.

Until examples of what constitutes misconduct and unsatisfactory conduct are built up and publicly available following changes made to Title D in 2020, the best assistance we can give to help you understand what behaviour to expect from licensed ministers and office holders are the actual words used to describe expected standards in Title D and the examples referred to below.

How will I understand the ministry offered? This is particularly relevant for pastoral ministry, such as prayer for healing or pastoral support. Those providing prayer ministry or pastoral support are not providing professional counselling unless they are specifically qualified to do so and you have asked for professional counselling. Rather, the prayers and support offered will be of a spiritual nature, arising from our Christian faith in God as the Great Physician, or Healer. You can expect to be asked if you would like prayer. Sometimes the person praying for you may place a hand on you as they pray. You can expect to be asked for permission for this to happen. You are free to say you don't want to be prayed for or touched and to have your wishes respected.

What information will be kept confidential? If you tell personal information to someone praying for you or supporting you, you can expect them to keep it confidential. However, an exception to this is where they need to share that information because you or others are at risk of harm, or because some information must be shared to carry out the reason you provided it in the first place. Even in these cases, information should only be shared to the extent needed. So, for example, if a young person shares with their youth group leader that they are being bullied in youth group, the leader must put measures in place to stop this from happening (eg, by increasing supervision) but can do this without sharing everything they've been told. However, if the young person shares that they are suicidal, the leader needs to break confidentiality to make sure that young person is kept safe.

Just because the person providing ministry must keep your personal information confidential does not mean they can ask you to keep secret/confidential what happens in ministry. This is your information to share as you wish. We expect all ministry practices to be open and transparent.

What does it mean to use the internet /social media wisely? This Diocese has a [Social Media and Electronic Communications Policy](#) (available on the Standards page) which explains what is expected.

We expect appropriate boundaries to be kept, especially with young people. Just as we expect boundaries to ensure people's safety in other areas of our Christian life, we expect proper boundaries in our use of social media. Our policy sets out what people should consider when deciding whether to 'friend' a young person, when and how often to contact them, what to say, whether to use 'private' groups and when to contact parents. The policy also talks about people

knowing the difference between their personal and professional lives and how this affects their use of social media.

How do I know when someone has crossed appropriate boundaries? Proper boundaries are there to protect both the person receiving ministry and the person providing it. So, for example, if you are meeting with someone because you need pastoral support, especially if they are of a different gender, meetings should usually take place in regular working hours and in a public space, such as with an open door and others nearby. If meetings can only be held outside normal working hours (maybe because you work during the day) then, again, for everyone's safety they should be held in a public or with your support person present. It is not usual or proper to hold meetings late at night.

Sometimes Christians may hug each other as a sign of care and support. However, if you are receiving pastoral support you should be asked if this is OK. You are absolutely free to say you don't want to be touched and to have your wish respected. It is never OK to be touched on the breasts or genital area or any other place or in any manner that feels sexualised. You should tell someone immediately if this happens.

The amount of time someone spends with a person receiving ministry will vary depending on the circumstances. However, the ministry provided is for your benefit and you should never feel pressured or uncomfortable by excessive contact (in person or by email). Nor is it healthy for you to develop a dependent relationship on the person providing ministry. No-one providing ministry, except where they are providing professional services in a different capacity (such as professional counselling services, where you may agree a fee) should ever ask for anything in return for their ministry or make you feel under an obligation. Please tell someone if you feel uncomfortable, troubled by, or unsure about the ministry you are receiving.

Clergy and other church leaders are in positions of power. They can sometimes be given a special status by parishioners, who may look up to them and think they have all the answers. Equally, many who receive ministry are particularly vulnerable. It is essential that clergy and other leaders take responsibility for keeping proper boundaries at all times.

What should I do if I am concerned about the ministry I or someone else is receiving? Please see the [Complaints Policy](#). It sets out who to contact if you have concerns about the ministry you or someone else is receiving. If you are still unsure who to contact for help, please call the Diocesan Executive Secretary (ph. 03 5483124) who can guide you to the right person to help.