

September 1, 1998

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As you may be aware, the 210th General Assembly (1998) approved a report submitted by the Special Committee on a Professional Code of Ethics. The report, as approved, is titled "Life Together in the Community of Faith:

- A. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- B. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees and Volunteers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- C. Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);"

The General Assembly took several actions to implement the use of "Life Together in the Community of Faith." Though it was not the first action taken, the action that is perhaps of the most interest to you is that the General Assembly commended the Standards, as a model, to presbyteries and synods for study, approval, and inclusion in manuals of operations, and to congregations, as a model, for study, approval, and use with sessions, new member classes, adult education classes, personnel committees, and in contracts. In addition, the General Assembly commended the Standards to seminaries for inclusion in curricula. The General Assembly approved A and B as Standards of Ethical Conduct for those serving in General Assembly entities and instructed those entities to include the Standards in personnel policies.

To make the report available to governing bodies and the seminaries, I have been instructed to publish and distribute the full report, including references and examples. I am pleased to put this important report in your hands. Some may ask why we need "Life Together in the Community of Faith." After all, we have the Bible, The Book of Confessions, and the Book of Order. However, the 207th General Assembly (1995) recognized there were a number of different perspectives from which the issue of misconduct might be viewed. The committee was given the task of providing a resource that can help the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) prevent harm to individuals and the community of faith and provide an example of ethical conduct to the world.

I hope that in your session, presbytery, synod, or seminary faculty, the study of this report and implementation of the standards it upholds will be an enriching experience and will help produce a life together that reflects the shalom that God intends for us.

Yours in Christ,

Clifton Kirkpatrick

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

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

As a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in obedience to Jesus Christ, I accept Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of the church, 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.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that is faithful to the gospel and consistent with my membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Therefore I will:

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my life's work and church membership, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

I will conduct myself within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) so that nothing need be hidden from sisters and brothers in Christ. Therefore I will:

1. Bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise my witness and relationships within the community of faith;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit to others where due and observe copyrights;
9. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me; and 10. Accept the discipline of the church.

III

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

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

**LIFE TOGETHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:
STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR
EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)**

As an employee or volunteer in an entity, governing body, or congregation associated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I commit myself to the following standards of ethical conduct.

I

I will conduct my life in a manner that will support the ministry of my workplace. Therefore I will:

1. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
2. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern;
3. Maintain a healthy balance among the responsibilities of my position, my commitments to family and other primary relationships, and my need for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual renewal;
4. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs; and
5. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech.

II

I will conduct myself at my workplace in a manner that will support its ministry. Therefore I will:

1. Honor relationships within the workplace and observe appropriate boundaries;
2. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my position;
3. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my work;
4. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the workplace for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
5. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
6. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
7. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
8. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria;
9. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and, upon leaving a position, speak and act in ways that support the work of my successor;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;
11. Accept the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable;
12. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
13. Show respect and provide encouragement for colleagues; and
14. Cooperate with persons of other faith traditions.

**LIFE 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.

I

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

1. Practice the disciplines of study, prayer, reflection, worship, stewardship, and service;
2. Be honest and truthful in my relationships with others;
3. Be faithful, keeping the covenants I make and honoring marriage vows;
4. Treat all persons with equal respect and concern as beloved children of God;
5. 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;
6. Refrain from abusive, addictive, or exploitative behavior and seek help to overcome such behavior if it occurs;
7. Refrain from gossip and abusive speech; and
8. Maintain an attitude of repentance, humility, and forgiveness, responsive to God's reconciling will.

II

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

1. Preach, teach, and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ with courage, speaking the truth in love;
2. Honor the sacred trust of relationships within the covenant community and observe appropriate boundaries;
3. Be judicious in the exercise of the power and privileges of my office and positions of responsibility I hold;
4. Avoid conflicts of interest that might compromise the effectiveness of my ministry;
5. Refrain from exploiting relationships within the community of faith for personal gain or gratification, including sexual harassment and misconduct as defined by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy;
6. Respect the privacy of individuals and not divulge information obtained in confidence without express permission, unless an individual is a danger to self or others;
7. Recognize the limits of my own gifts and training, and refer persons and tasks to others as appropriate;
8. Claim only those qualifications actually attained, give appropriate credit for all sources used in sermons, papers, music, and presentations, and observe copyrights;
9. Refrain from incurring indebtedness that might compromise my ministry;
10. Be a faithful steward of and fully account for funds and property entrusted to me;

11. Observe limits set by the appropriate governing body for honoraria, personal business endeavors, and gifts or loans from persons other than family;
12. Accept the discipline of the church and the appropriate guidance of those to whom I am accountable for my ministry;
13. Participate in continuing education and seek the counsel of mentors and professional advisors;
14. 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;
- **15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;
- ** 16. 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
- ** 17. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

III

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

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

** These standards apply only to pastors; they also apply to commissioned lay pastors when they are performing pastoral functions.