



REFORMED CELTIC CHURCH **Code of Pastoral Conduct**

For Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers

I. Preamble

Bishops, priests, deacons, pastoral ministers, administrators, staff, and volunteers (clergy, staff, and volunteers) in our parishes, religious orders, and institutions must uphold Christian values and conduct. The Code of Pastoral Conduct for Bishops, Priests, Deacons, Pastoral Ministers, Administrators, Staff, and Volunteers provides a set of standards for conduct in certain pastoral situations.

II. Responsibility

The public and private conduct of clergy, staff, and volunteers can inspire and motivate people or it can scandalize and undermine the faith of the people. Clergy, staff, and volunteers must, at all times, be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. They must also know that God's goodness and grace supports them in their ministry

Responsibility for adherence to the Code of Pastoral Conduct rests with the individual. Staff and volunteers who disregard this Code of Pastoral Conduct will be subject to remedial action by the Reformed Celtic Church. Clergy who disregard this Code of Pastoral Conduct will be subject to remedial action by the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Celtic Church. Corrective action may take various forms—from a verbal reproach to removal from the ministry—depending on the specific nature and circumstances of the offense and the extent of the harm.

III. Pastoral Standards

1. Conduct for Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors¹

Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must respect the rights and advance the welfare of each person.

1.1 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors shall not step beyond their competence in counseling situations and shall refer to other professionals when appropriate.

¹ Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors: Clergy, staff, and volunteers who provide pastoral, spiritual, and/or therapeutic counseling services to individuals, families, or other groups.

- 1.2 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should carefully consider the possible consequences before entering into a counseling relationship with someone with whom they have a pre-existing relationship (i.e., staff, professional colleague, friend, or other pre-existing relationship). [See Section 7.2.2]
- 1.3 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should not audiotape or videotape sessions.
- 1.4 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors must never engage in sexual intimacies with the persons they counsel. This includes consensual contact, forced physical contact, and conversation.
- 1.5 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors shall not engage in sexual intimacies with relatives, friends, or other individuals who are close to the client, when there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should presume that a potential exploitation or harm exists in such intimate relationships.
- 1.6 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors assume the full burden for setting and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all counseling and counseling-related relationships.
- 1.7 Physical contact of any kind (i.e., touching, hugging, holding) between Pastoral Counselors or Spiritual Directors and the persons they counsel can be misconstrued and should be avoided.
- 1.8 Sessions should be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times.
 - 1.8.1 No sessions should be conducted in private living quarters.
 - 1.8.2 Sessions should not be held at places or times that would tend to cause confusion about the nature of the relationship for the person being counseled.
- 1.9 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors shall maintain a log of the times and places of sessions with each person being counseled.

2. Confidentiality

Information disclosed to a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director during the course of counseling, advising, or spiritual direction shall be held in the strictest confidence possible.

- 2.1 Information obtained in the course of sessions shall be confidential, except for compelling professional reasons or as required by law.

- 2.1.1 If there is clear and imminent danger to the client or to others, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director may disclose only the information necessary to protect the parties involved and to prevent harm.
 - 2.1.2 Before disclosure is made, if feasible, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director should inform the person being counseled about the disclosure and the potential consequences.
- 2.2 Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors should discuss the nature of confidentiality and its limitations with each person in counseling.
- 2.3 The staff or volunteer providing pastoral counseling services or spiritual direction should keep minimal records of sessions.
- 2.4 Knowledge that arises from professional contact may be used in teaching, writing, homilies, or other public presentations only when effective measures have been taken to absolutely safeguard both the individual's identity and the confidentiality of the disclosures.
- 2.5 If a Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director discovers, while counseling a minor, that there is a serious threat to the welfare of the minor and that communication of confidential information to a parent or legal guardian is essential to the child's health and well-being, the staff or volunteer should:
 - Attempt to secure written consent from the minor for the specific disclosure.
 - If consent is not given, disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and well being of the minor.

Consultation with the appropriate Church supervisory personnel is recommended before disclosure.
- 2.6 **These obligations are independent of the confidentiality of the confessional. Under no circumstances whatsoever can there be any disclosure, even indirect, of information received through the confessional.**

3. Conduct with Youth

Clergy, staff, and volunteers working with youth shall maintain an open and trustworthy relationship between youth and adult supervisors.

- 3.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers must be aware of their own and others' vulnerability when working alone with youth. Use a team approach to youth activities.

- 3.2 Physical contact with youth can be misconstrued and should only occur under appropriate public circumstances.
- 3.3 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should refrain from the possession and use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs when working with youth.
- 3.4 Clergy should not provide shared and private accommodation for individual young people.
- 3.5 Staff and volunteers should not provide shared and private overnight accommodation for individual young people including, but not limited to, accommodations in any Church-owned facility, private residence, hotel room, or any other place where there is no other adult supervision present.
 - 3.5.1 In rare, emergency situations, when accommodation is necessary for the health and well being of the youth, the clergy, staff, or volunteer should take extraordinary care to protect all parties from the appearance of impropriety and from all harm.
 - 3.5.2 Use a team approach to emergency situations.

4. Sexual Conduct

Clergy, staff, and volunteers must not exploit the trust placed in them by the parish community for sexual gain or intimacy.

- 4.1 Priests, religious, staff, and volunteers who are committed to a celibate lifestyle are called to be an example of this promise in all relationships at all times.
- 4.2 Staff and volunteers who provide pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services should use discretion in developing intimate relationships with minors, staff, or parishioners.
- 4.3 No clergy, staff, or volunteer may exploit another person for sexual purposes.
- 4.4 Allegations of sexual misconduct by staff or volunteers should be taken seriously and reported to the parish priest. Allegations of sexual misconduct by clergy should be taken seriously and reported to the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Celtic Church.
- 4.5 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should review and know the contents of the child abuse regulations and reporting requirements for their State and should follow those requirements.

5. Harassment

Clergy, staff, and volunteers do not engage in physical, psychological, written, or verbal harassment of staff, volunteers, or parishioners and do not tolerate such harassment by other Church staff or volunteers.

- 5.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation or harassment.
- 5.2 Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written, or verbal behavior that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Physical or mental abuse;
 - Racial insults;
 - Derogatory ethnic slurs;
 - Unwelcome sexual advances or touching;
 - Sexual comments or sexual jokes;
 - Requests for sexual favors used as
 - A condition of employment, or
 - To affect other personnel decisions, such as promotion or compensation; and
 - Display of offensive materials.
- 5.3 Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of behavior where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment.
- 5.4 Allegations of harassment by staff or volunteers should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the parish priest.
- 5.5 Allegations of harassment by clergy should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Celtic Church.

6. Parish, Religious Order, and Institutional Records and Information

Confidentiality will be maintained in creating, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of parish, religious order, or institutional records.

- 6.1 Sacramental records shall be regarded as confidential. When compiling and publishing parish, religious order, or institution statistical information from these records, great care must be taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals.
- 6.2 Most sacramental records older than 70 years are open to the public.
 - 6.2.1 Information regarding adoption and legitimacy remains confidential, regardless of age.
 - 6.2.2 Only staff authorized to locate the records and supervise their use shall handle requests for more recent records.
- 6.3 Parish, religious order, or institution financial records are confidential unless review is required by an appropriate government agency. Contact the parish priest and the Chair of the Parish Stewardship Committee upon receipt of any request for release of financial records.
- 6.4 Individual contribution records of the parish, religious order, or institution shall be regarded as private and shall be maintained in strictest confidence.

7. Conflicts of Interest

Clergy, staff, and volunteers should avoid situations that might present a conflict of interest. Even the appearance of a conflict of interest can call integrity and professional conduct into question.

- 7.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should disclose all relevant factors that potentially could create a conflict of interest.
- 7.2 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should inform all parties when a real or potential conflict of interest arises. Resolution of the issues must protect the person receiving ministry services.
 - 7.2.1 No clergy, staff, or volunteer should take advantage of anyone to whom they are providing services in order to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
 - 7.2.2 Pastoral counselors should not provide counseling services to anyone with whom they have a business, professional, or social relationship. When this is unavoidable, the client must be protected. The counselor must establish and maintain clear, appropriate boundaries.

7.2.3 When pastoral counseling or spiritual direction services are provided to two or more people who have a relationship with each other, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director must:

- Clarify with all parties the nature of each relationship,
- Anticipate any conflict of interest,
- Take appropriate actions to eliminate the conflict, and
- Obtain from all parties written consent to continue services.

7.3 Conflicts of interest may also arise when a Pastoral Counselor's or Spiritual Director's independent judgment is impaired:

- By prior dealings,
- By becoming personally involved, or
- By becoming an advocate for one (person) against another.

In these circumstances, the Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director shall advise the parties that he or she can no longer provide services and refer them to another Pastoral Counselor or Spiritual Director.

8. Reporting Ethical or Professional Misconduct

Clergy, staff, and volunteers have a duty to report their own ethical or professional misconduct and the misconduct of others.

8.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers cannot minister to others unless they minister first to themselves.

8.1.1 When there is an indication of illegal action by a staff member or volunteer, please notify the proper civil authorities immediately. Also notify the parish priest and the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Celtic Church.

8.1.2 When there is an indication of illegal action by clergy please notify the proper civil authorities immediately. Also notify the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Celtic Church

8.2 When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation or course of conduct violates this Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, consult with:

- Peers,
- Others knowledgeable about ethical issues, or

- The Council of Bishops of the Reformed Celtic Church.
- 8.3 When a staff member or a volunteer may have violated this Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, report the issue to a supervisor or to the parish priest.
 - 8.4 When a member of a religious order may have violated this Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, report the issue to the Abbot or Abbess of the religious order and to the parish priest.
 - 8.5 When clergy may have violated this Code of Pastoral Conduct or other religious, moral, or ethical principles, report the issue to the Council of Bishops of the Reformed Celtic Church.
 - 8.6 The obligation of Pastoral Counselors and Spiritual Directors to report client misconduct is subject to the duty of confidentiality. Any agreement or duty to maintain confidentiality must yield to the need to report misconduct that threatens the safety, health, or well-being of the persons involved.

9. Administration

Employers and supervisors treat clergy, staff, and volunteers justly in the day-to-day administrative operations of their ministries.

- 9.1 Personnel and other administrative decisions made by clergy, staff, and volunteers shall meet civil codes and also reflect Celtic Christian social teachings and this Code of Pastoral Conduct.
- 9.2 No clergy, staff, or volunteer shall use his or her position to exercise unreasonable or inappropriate power and authority.

10. Staff or Volunteer Well-being

Clergy, staff, and volunteers have the duty to be responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional health.

- 10.1 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own mental, physical, and/or spiritual health.
- 10.2 Clergy, staff, and volunteers should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their professional and/or personal lives.

- 10.3 Clergy, staff, and volunteers must address their own spiritual needs. Support from a Spiritual Director or an Anamchara is highly recommended.
- 10.4 Inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs is prohibited.