

CARING FOR CHURCH LEADERS

A CODE OF BEST PRACTICE



PASTORAL
WELL-BEING

| HEBREWS 13:17 |

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

| THE AIM OF THIS CODE |

To encourage churches and church leaders to improve the standards of pastoral care and spiritual health of those involved in church leadership.

Introduction

Churches that thrive spiritually are led by leaders who are thriving spiritually

The condition and health of local churches is closely related to the condition and health of the leaders who serve them. One factor that affects the spiritual vitality of leaders is the terms agreed with a church on which they will serve together. Each church and each leader is responsible for agreeing the terms and conditions which will ensure leaders are well-nourished and sustained in grace-filled service.

The aim of this Code of Best Practice is to promote positive, grace-filled relationships that reflect the gospel, foster a culture of spiritual health throughout local churches and bear a good testimony to the world around.

PASTORAL WELL-BEING OF LEADERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IS A KEY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

| WHO ARE LEADERS? |

All churches, streams and denominations have their own distinctive characteristics for defining and understanding ministry and leadership. We use the generic “leader” throughout this code and encourage you to adapt it to best fit your situation. The spirit of the code applies to all paid church leaders and church-based gospel workers, whether locally referred to as *pastor*, *minister*, *vicar* or by some other title. In the same way, all references to *leadership team* mean church officers, elders, church wardens or the equivalent leadership body within the church.



Principles and Values

The code lays out a number of core scriptural principles and values to help promote good practice. They include:

- The pastoral well-being of leaders and their families is a key responsibility of the church. It is a sad irony that those with the responsibility of feeding others are sometimes the least well-nourished and cared for people themselves
- Leaders who are unburdened by unnecessary anxieties over terms and circumstances of ministry are more able to concentrate on the work of the gospel and leading the church in the joy of the Lord
- Breakdown in the relationships between leaders and their churches is always devastating to both and additionally a poor witness to the world and an obstacle to the spread of the gospel
- Churches should be a shining light when it comes to caring for leaders. It is a rebuke to us if it ever appears that secular organisations are more concerned for and committed to the care of their employees than are churches to the care of those who serve them

This means that the highest possible standards should apply to the way in which the terms of appointment for leaders are determined and implemented.



HOW CAN WE HONOUR OUR LEADERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN SUCH A WAY AS THEY WILL NEVER WANT TO GO ANYWHERE ELSE?

Five Core Areas of Best Practice

Good practice will look to include at least the following five areas for well-being of church leaders:

- A Covenant of Care between leaders and congregation
- Terms and conditions of employment that honour gospel workers and lead to sustainable and spiritually healthy patterns of life
- Personal support and opportunity for ministry development
- Consultation and communication
- A mutually agreed dispute resolution processes

Each of these five core areas of best practice is addressed by:

- A statement of ideals which churches and leaders are encouraged to adopt and formally agree together.
- A number of specific proposals which a church may wish to consider adopting or adapting as an expression of good practice

| LOVING LEADERS WELL |

In establishing and maintaining the best possible relationship between congregations and their paid ministers, we recognise that there is a judicious blend of the legal, the spiritual, the pastoral and the practical. It is our conviction that these are in no way in conflict. Some good questions to ask to help get them in balance are:

How can we so love our leaders in this area that their ministry will be fresh and their hearts encouraged?

How can we honour them and their families in such a way as they will never want to be anywhere else?



Using this Code

It is for each church to tailor its own policies under each set of specific proposals in order to meet its own needs. Not all will be equally applicable to all situations. The important issue is that each church and each leader shape and agree their own arrangements to meet the spirit of the statement of ideals covering each of the five areas of well-being. The code is intended to affirm the need for biblical attitudes and standards to govern our relationships in purposeful ways.

We strongly recommend that a church prays about mutually agreeing policies with their paid leaders in all these areas regardless of whether they are needed at the present time, but at the bare minimum adopt some version of the Covenant of Care laid out in Section 1.

This code and supporting resources was developed by a working party on pastoral care of leaders convened by the Living Leadership network in 2015. The group consisted of church leaders, spouses and others from a variety of denominations who share a practical concern and experience in the pastoral well-being of the local church and its leaders. Our prayer is that the Code and supporting documents will encourage churches and leaders to build a grace-filled local church culture for the spiritual health of leaders as well as congregations.

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Section 1: A Covenant of Care Between Leaders and Congregation

TO ENCOURAGE:

- A biblical vision for healthy relationship between the local church and its leaders
- Churches and leaders to mutually own the need for pastoral care of leaders as well as the flock

STATEMENT OF IDEALS

As the leaders and the people of _____ church, we willingly enter into this Covenant of Care for the glory of God's name, the well-being of Christ's Church, and the mutual welfare of the leaders, their families, and of the congregation.

We accept that the fundamental nature of the relationship between leaders and people is that of a mutual covenant, rather than an employment contract, a formal agreement or an authority arrangement. It is a partnership for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ.

On this basis, we recognise that we have mutual responsibilities of care and accountability, each to the other, for the common good.

MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. We acknowledge that the church belongs not to the leaders, nor to the people, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not "my" church or "our" church but "His" church;
- b. We accept that we each have a responsibility towards each other – in intention, attitude, behaviour, and word – to follow Christ's fulfilment of the law, which is love (Romans 13:10);

- c. We agree that in matters of conflict we will submit ourselves to the principles of biblical wisdom as expressed in Matthew 18:15-20, Matthew 5:23-26 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and as expressed in the church's dispute resolution procedures;
- d. We aim that our communications with each other will be honest, transparent and candid (2 Corinthians 4:1-2). We reject gossip, innuendo, suspicion and manipulation;
- e. We agree to ongoing, annual review of how this Covenant of Care is working out, in practice and reality, across the life of this congregation;
- f. We accept the responsibility to pray for and seek practically each other's good

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PEOPLE TO THE LEADERS

- a. We affirm that our leaders are called to lead this congregation, and to equip its people for the work of mission and ministry;
- b. If any of them are employed by the local church, we accept our legal and spiritual responsibility to honour them by providing appropriately for their physical, emotional and financial needs and those of their families in order that they may follow God's calling without undue concern for these matters;
- c. We agree to respect appropriate boundaries of time, space and emotional demands, with regard to our leaders' family and personal lives;
- d. If we have issues about our leaders or their ministry, we will take them first directly to them, or use appropriate channels within the leadership team to deal openly, honestly, lovingly and confidentially with our concerns.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEADERS TO THE PEOPLE

- a. We acknowledge that our role individually and collectively is to pastor this congregation through prayer and the ministry of the word and to lead it in following Jesus' call to make disciples; it is our responsibility to serve and equip the believers not to lord it over them (Acts 6:1-7 Mark 10:35-45; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Ephesians 4:11-16);
- b. We agree to hold ourselves appropriately accountable to our fellow leaders in the church for our lives and ministries;
- c. If we have issues or disagreements with a fellow church leader or member of the congregation, we will speak directly to that person;
- d. We accept that our position as leaders brings with it various kinds of authority. We will use this authority, under God, to serve and bless not to abuse this congregation.

DECLARATION OF INTENT

By God's grace and for God's glory we will endeavour to live out these responsibilities in our daily lives.





Section 2: Honourable and healthy terms, conditions and expectations

TO ENCOURAGE:

- Diligent and careful attention to the practical well-being and life-patterns of leaders

STATEMENT OF IDEALS

We recognise that the joint terms and expectations attaching to a leader's ministry should be such as to free them from anxieties which might detract from their joy in the ministry of the gospel. Terms and conditions should be consistent with an attitude of mutual love, respect, generosity and wisdom, and are designed to create a relationship of love and trust, grace and mutual support between fellow leaders and with the congregation.

PROPOSALS

- a. That before a ministry begins, every leader and church leadership team should draw up and agree in writing the terms and expectations of their appointment. The more care is taken in establishing clarity from the start the less opportunity there is for confusion and conflict later on;
- b. That a joint written statement or memorandum of understanding should also be provided summarising the key areas of our leaders' responsibilities and the division of responsibilities and accountability among the ministry teams within the church. All employees are additionally legally entitled to receive a statement of their main employment particulars. See Appendix 3 for more details;
- c. That if a leader is married any specific role expected of their spouse (either by the church or by the leader and spouse) should be clearly stated and agreed;

- d. That the church should seek to ensure access to high quality pastoral support for the leader and family as a normal matter of course;

- e. That safeguarding procedures should be in place with reference to the work of the leader. For instance, they should keep statutory checks up to date and agree to conform to the church's safeguarding policy, etc;



Section 3: Personal Support and Opportunity for Ministry Development

TO ENCOURAGE:

- The discipleship walk of leaders
- The church and leaders to agree a framework for personal, spiritual and ministry development of leaders

STATEMENT OF IDEALS

We acknowledge that any leader, however gifted or experienced, benefits from opportunities for the development of ministry. No leader has all the attributes and gifts which would benefit a church, and those they have will always be capable of being developed. Opportunities to extend or develop gifts should be a real stimulus and encouragement to the leader, and result in blessing to the church. Therefore, in accordance with the gifts and aptitudes of the leader, and the circumstances of the church, we will consider together and mutually agree how best we can provide for the development of their ministry, whether through appropriate training or by the extension of ministry opportunities within or outside the church.

A key question for a church to consider is: does your leader (and spouse) have the necessary regular spiritual input and encouragement that will ensure their health and growth as disciples of Jesus? If the answer is "no" what does the church need to do to help and to love them better?

PROPOSALS

- a. Recognising the need for leaders to have a healthy spiritual walk, they should be enabled to experience community of depth and encouragement, uninterrupted sabbath rest and worship. They should be encouraged in their meditation on the Scriptures and prayer. The church should honour their need for fellowship and friendships of depth and encourage them to find input that is specifically tailored to the unique needs of those who lead others;

- b. In addition to holiday entitlement, they should be encouraged to undertake ministry (including an agreed number of Sundays) outside the church, sharing gifts and resources with the wider body of Christ;
- c. They should be encouraged and enabled to attend appropriate conferences and other training and development opportunities (e.g. mission events, courses, overseas trips, ministry support groups, academic study), such as will develop ministry usefulness. The number and nature to be agreed;
- d. Arrangements should be considered for a mentor with the cost to be covered by the church;
- e. Arrangements should be considered for agreed periods of study leave at appropriate intervals;
- f. The church should consider the principle and practical implications of giving regular periods of sabbatical leave (described in some churches as ministerial development or refreshment leave)



Section 4: Consultation and Communication

TO ENCOURAGE:

- Clear grace-filled communication in the church
- Transparent and godly processes in all matters that materially affect leaders

STATEMENT OF IDEALS

As a church, we commit ourselves to the way of transparency and integrity, recognising that policy decisions should always be considered in a climate of openness and honesty, and be subject to discussion, consultation and prayer. For this reason, leaders and church officers will consult together over vision and significant areas of policy, in order to ensure that the church is led by a united leadership. Leaders will always be informed of matters which affect them or their ministry personally, and will always be consulted on all matters which have a bearing on their ministry, their personal interests, or the life of the church.

PROPOSALS

- a. While there may be rare occasions when the leadership team of a church may need to meet in the absence of paid leaders, they should not normally do so without their knowledge;
- b. Where leadership teams are required to meet without paid leaders (e.g. when reviewing remuneration or any other terms and conditions), the decisions taken should be relayed to them in person and as soon as practicable and backed up in writing;

- c. The leadership team should conduct an annual appraisal process with the paid leaders in order to review their personal walk with the Lord Jesus, their own ministry within the church, regular hours and patterns of work, and the impact of ministry upon family and home life;

- d. In addition to this annual appraisal process, regular opportunities should be provided for paid leaders or staff team to meet with any wider leadership team to review the life of the church, as this will enable any concerns to be expressed by any party in a low-key way;

- e. Leaders should always be made aware of any information which is communicated to other members of the church if it affects the life of the church



Section 5: Dispute Resolution

TO ENCOURAGE:

- Clear and supportive processes in situations of conflict, misconduct, discipline and grievance

STATEMENT OF IDEALS

The relationship between leaders and the church is at its best when rooted in an attitude of mutual support, esteem and care. However, even where best practice is being followed, disputes can occur for all kinds of reasons. We therefore commit ourselves to resolving any disputes which do arise in a spirit of fellowship and goodwill. Recognising that disputes can have multiple causes and can bring untold harm to the life, work and witness of the church, we resolve to settle them promptly, effectively, and in accordance with the Bible, so as to maintain the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus, the integrity of our leader and the unity, confidence and morale of the church.

PROPOSALS

- a. In the event of a dispute arising, this should be addressed without delay at a meeting between the leader and the leadership team;
- b. In the discussion of any matter in dispute, the honour of the Lord Jesus' name and the well-being of His church should be the primary aim of all parties;
- c. Every effort should be made to ensure matters under dispute are handled with process that is fair, reasonable and honourable to all parties;

- d. Opportunity should be given for all parties with a specific and legitimate concern in matters under dispute to be heard and to communicate relevant views;
- e. Matters of concern should be faced prayerfully, openly and honestly, not ignored or hidden. Without this, issues will never be resolved and will inevitably grow and become a hindrance to effective work and harmonious relationships;
- f. If a dispute becomes seriously damaging and incapable of resolution, a mutually acceptable third party should be invited in to assist in arbitration. This party could be an individual (e.g. a senior or retired leader in the local area), or a body (a wider denomination or grouping which would appoint one or more suitable people to assist). Every effort should be taken to ensure that the third party is mutually agreed and acceptable to all and not imposed;
- g. The general arrangements for dispute resolution should be summarised in writing in conjunction with the policy statements produced by any wider denomination or grouping to which the local church is affiliated



Appendix 1: Biblical Support

The goal of churches and leaders should be to maintain the highest biblical practice within the local church. Below are some passages which support the intentions of this Code. It is not our intention to proof text every detail, but to highlight those Bible passages which have a bearing on these matters.

1. PASSAGES WHICH CALL FOR THE HIGHEST BIBLICAL INTEGRITY BY THOSE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY INCLUDE:

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

2. PASSAGES WHICH COMMAND THE HIGHEST CARE, SUPPORT AND RESPECT FOR THOSE IN PASTORAL MINISTRY INCLUDE:

1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and 1 Timothy 5:17-20 and Hebrews 13:7-17.

3. PASSAGES WHICH DIRECT BELIEVERS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION INCLUDE:

Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20.



Appendix 2: The Status of Paid Church Leaders

The nature and legal status of Church leaders will be variously defined and regulated by the church's constitution, denomination, church rules or handbook.

In some cases leaders will be considered office-holders rather than employees. Unlike employees, office holders are free to organise their affairs as they see fit in fulfilling the functions of their office. This means that neither the church nor the charity trustees are the leader's employer. In this case, it is for the leader to determine the hours they need to work to fulfil the functions of their office and the amount of holiday that they should take. The terms of appointment will normally therefore be set out in a joint memorandum of understanding. This document is drawn up to share understanding and is not intended to create or reflect a contractual arrangement between the leader and the church. However it is nevertheless critical that appropriate accountability structures are in place.

In other cases, the church and the leader agree to adopt an employer/employee relationship regulated by a contract of employment. Both parties may see this relationship as an example of how all Christian employers and employees should conduct themselves in a workplace situation.

If the church's governing documents do not specify that any paid leader will be an office-holder, employment case law makes it very likely that they will be regarded as an employee.

These terms of appointment should be made clear and agreed before the leader takes up their ministry.

Churches should always consult policies, procedures and up-to-date employment information provided by their denomination, grouping or other supportive bodies to which they are affiliated.



Appendix 3 Written Statement of Employment Particulars

WHAT IS A WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PARTICULARS?

Care should be taken to ensure that all employment/office holder relationships comply with the current legislation when making an appointment.

At the time of writing, Sections 1-7 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Employment Act 2002 set out the essential elements of the written statement of employment. Some information must be included in one document; the other information can be delivered in instalments.

All employees are entitled to receive a statement of their main employment particulars within two months of starting work. This is a minimum statement concerning employment, it is generally issued before employment commences and whilst quicker to produce it is not a substitute for a full set of terms and conditions.

The statement is a legally binding agreement between the employer and employee. The statement must contain certain information such as pay, holiday entitlement, etc. Other information such as sick leave and grievance procedures may be contained in other documents or in electronic format.

WHAT MUST THE WRITTEN STATEMENT CONTAIN?

- Name of employee and employer
- Date employment commenced and continuous employment started
- Job title or brief description of work

- Hours of work
- Pay rate and when it will be paid
- Job location and where the employee is permitted to work
- Holiday entitlement including Bank Holidays
- Notice period
- Details of any collective agreements that affect the employee
- How long the employment is expected to continue if not permanent

The letter offering the job or the employment contract could contain the information and Statement of Main Particulars.

WHAT OTHER INFORMATION SHOULD BE PROVIDED?

The following must also be provided but this may be in an accompanying document, staff handbook or electronically:

- Sick leave and sick pay entitlement
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Pension arrangements

The written statement of employment particulars **should** also cover the following matters:

- The provision of accommodation (if applicable);
- The provision of special leave for other purposes (e.g. caring responsibilities, paternity);
- The provision of relocation costs for new pastors;
- The reimbursement of expenses, including mileage at HMRC approved rates;
- The reimbursement of an annual book allowance;
- Assistance with training and development – including attendance at conferences and the provision of study and sabbatical leave (referred to in some churches as ministerial development or refreshment leave);
- The nature of any appraisal/review process; and
- All the practical arrangements to be applied on the termination of ministry