



# Presbyterian Church of Victoria

## Safe Church Code of Conduct



The following constitutes the church's Code of Conduct for behaviour for a person in a position of authority within the church:

1. As a person in a position of authority within the church you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position, likely perceptions of the church and the wider community, and the need to acknowledge the real or perceived power given to you as a result of holding this position. You should avoid situations where you are vulnerable to temptation or where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of this Code of Conduct. You will make yourself familiar with the provisions of Safe Church - PCV.
2. You must not fail to take action to prevent to the best of your ability and report as required and of the following:
  - child abuse,
  - a child or young person at risk of significant harm,
  - reportable conduct,
  - sexual misconduct, and/or
  - conduct that breaches the Safe Church - PCV Code of Conduct.
3. Sexualised behaviour is any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed. Sexualised behaviour is only permitted as set out in the Word of God. Except with one's own marriage partner, all sexualised behaviour is forbidden. If you are not married you must abstain from all sexual or sexualised behaviour.
4. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered to be:
  - child abuse,
  - putting a child or young person at risk of significant harm,
  - reportable conduct, and/or
  - conduct that breaches this Safe Church - PCV Code of Conduct.
5. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered to be sexual misconduct, understanding that sexual misconduct is contact or invitation, via any means, of a sexual nature which is inconsistent with the integrity of a person in a position of authority within the church. Sexual misconduct includes any behaviour that could be reasonably considered to be sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, coercion or grooming of an adult or a child or young person.
6. Sexual exploitation refers to any form of sexualised behaviour with an adult, child or young person, whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the behaviour, where that behaviour is contrary to the Word of God. Therefore, you will not among other things engage in or condone any of the following:
  - behaviour or a pattern of behaviour aimed at the involvement of others in sexual acts, including but not limited to coercion or grooming behaviour,
  - sexualised behaviour with a person below the age of consent,
  - sexualised behaviour with a person with whom there is a supervisory, pastoral care, or counselling relationship,
  - the production, distribution, possession of or accessing of pornographic material of any kind,
  - taking advantage of the conscious or unconscious use of sexually provocative behaviour that some victims of abuse display,
  - engaging the services of a prostitute, or soliciting or providing such services,
  - visiting, without legitimate reason, a brothel or any place maintained for the abuse-of-sex industry,

- viewing or reading, in print or otherwise, material of a sexually explicit nature, except for a legitimate purpose,
  - participating in sexually explicit conversation via social media, chat rooms, gaming or any other means, and
  - asking, without legitimate reason, any questions about the intimate details of a person's sexual life or providing details of your own sexual life.
7. Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexualised behaviour, whether intended or not, in relation to an adult, child or young person where that person reasonably feels in all circumstances offended, belittled or threatened. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time. Therefore, you will not, among other things engage in or condone:
- implicit or explicit demands or suggestions for sexual activities,
  - making any gesture, action or comment of a sexual nature to a person or about a person in their presence,
  - making jokes containing sexual references or innuendo using any form of communication,
  - exposure to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material, including but not limited to pornography of any kind,
  - physical contact that is inappropriate to the situation or uncomfortable or confusing for the receiver, including kissing, hugging, touching, pinching, patting or aggressive physical conduct,
  - touching any sexual part of the body, including the "only kidding" or accidental occasions of sexual touch,
  - generating or participating in inappropriate personal correspondence (including electronic communication) in respect of sexual or romantic feelings or in breach of the Code of Conduct,
  - inappropriate giving of gifts, including those of a sexual, suggestive or romantic nature that is in breach of the Code of Conduct,
  - inappropriate or unnecessary discussion of, or inquiry about, personal matters of a sexual nature,
  - inappropriate intrusion of personal space or physical privacy, including being alone in a bedroom or bathroom or allowing inappropriate exposure during activities that require dressing or changing clothes,
  - voyeurism, and
  - persistent following or stalking.
8. Coercion or grooming behaviour refers to physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involved the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable adults, children and/or young people, their carers and others in authority. You will not exhibit any behaviour that could be considered to be coercion or grooming behaviour.
9. With regard to children and young people:
- You will not visit a child or young person in their own home unless a parent is present or you visit with another person in a position of authority within the church with parental permission.
  - You will not conduct a camp or other activity involving overnight accommodation without appropriate "camp parents" (ideally a married couple over the age of 25 years, of known maturity and Christian commitment) approved by the supervising body.
  - You will not provide any form of accommodation for any reason where there is not strict segregation by sex, with the exception of married couples and families.

Supervision of children and/or young people must be provided by a person of the same sex.

- You will ensure that any activity involving children and/or young people is open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate interest
10. With regard to adults, children and young people:
- You will not condone or participate in bullying behaviour, where bullying is the repeated seeking out or targeting of an adult, child or young person to cause them distress and humiliation or to exploit them, including exclusion from a peer group, intimidation and extortion.
  - You will not participate in or allow nude swimming or other such activities.
  - You will not participate in or allow initiations and secret ceremonies.
11. With regard to adults, children and young people, either the Presbytery or Session may make temporary variations in respect to the details of the following. These temporary variations will be formally recorded by the Presbytery or Session and will be made on a restricted basis for individuals in specific circumstances for a specific period of time. Where no temporary variation is formally recorded, the following will apply without change:
- You will take care to ensure an appropriate balance of transparency and confidentiality so that the private concerns of others are not disclosed or revealed improperly. In ordinary circumstances, when you are providing pastoral care to, or working with members of the opposite sex, you will strive to do so in an environment that allows visual surveillance and, where reasonable, have other people within hearing distance.
  - You will not allow a child to sleep in close proximity to an adult, other than a parent or guardian, unless there is a significant separation, and privacy of all parties is respected.
  - You will not allow an adult to share accommodation with one child or young person only unless they are a parent or guardian of that child or young person.
  - You will not drive a child or young person unaccompanied.

Where specified provisions cannot be followed in an emergency, the circumstances of the emergency and the actions taken should be reported to and approved by the supervising body. Where the actions taken are not approved they will be considered to be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct for any reason will be reported to the appropriate supervising body as soon as possible. The supervising body will then report the matter to the Safe Church Unit (SCU).