

Ministerial Code of Ethics Summary

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The *Ministerial Code of Ethics* of the Disciples of Christ is more than a list of rules - it's a covenant for living and leading like Jesus. It begins with a simple, powerful confession: *"Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and proclaiming him Lord and Savior of the world, I reaffirm my vows as a minister"* (TFPCOM, p. 41). From that commitment four key areas of responsibility flow.

1. Personal Conduct

Ministers are called to let their lives tell the same story their sermons do. This means *"witnessing to the ministry of Jesus Christ"* in daily life and dedicating "time, strength, vitality, and energy for effective ministry" (p. 42). Personal growth doesn't just happen - it's cultivated through *spiritual disciplines, study, continuing education, and service*. Integrity also shows up in how we treat our families - honoring their need for privacy and time - and in how we steward God's gifts: managing time, talents, and finances "responsibly and generously." Our code calls ministers toward physical, emotional, and spiritual health, avoiding "substance abuse and other abusive behaviors," using power "in non-exploitive ways," maintaining "high moral standards in... sexual behavior," and treating *all persons with equal respect and concern*.

2. Relationships to the Church I Serve

Serving a congregation isn't about status - it's about partnership. Ministers commit to "nurturing and offering my gifts for ministry" while also "calling forth and nurturing the gifts of others... for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ" (p. 42). Truth matters! Therefore, preaching and teaching must be done *"without fear or favor... in love"*. Sacraments and services are administered with integrity, never for personal gain. Financial dealings, both personal and corporate, require transparency. Confidentiality is critical - only sharing what's necessary, with those who need to know, at the right time. Ministers are to act when abuse is suspected, participate in regular evaluations, and seek counsel when tensions threaten church unity.

3. Relationships to Ministry Colleagues

Ministry isn't a solo sport - it's a team effort. Our commitment calls for *"covenantal relationships... which involve nurture, discipline, family support, vigorous dialogue, mutual teaching/learning, and spiritual formation"* (p. 43). Ministers support one another without exploiting crises. Respect for boundaries is key: pastoral services in another congregation happen only by invitation, and ministers avoid undermining predecessors or successors. Upon retirement or departure, ministers clearly communicate they are no longer the pastor and will not perform services unless requested by current leadership.

4. Relationships to the Community and Wider Church

Ministers are representatives of Christ beyond church walls. This means participating *"responsibly in the life and work of my community,"* bearing prophetic witness, and working for justice. They engage faithfully in all expressions of the Disciples of Christ, seek to understand diversity, and strengthen unity in the larger Body of Christ. Christian ethic envisions ministers as bridge-builders - *"responsible representatives of the one church of Jesus Christ"*- who help advance its unity, mission, and witness (p. 43).

This code of ethics blends personal holiness, healthy relationships, and public witness. It's not just a document to sign—it's a life to live, so that in every arena, from family to pulpit to community, the gospel is both proclaimed and embodied.