

Diocese of Pembroke Code of Pastoral Conduct

Promulgated 1 January 2025

Preamble

Priests, deacons, seminarians, and all those called to ministry in our parishes and other institutions must uphold Christian values and conduct as they minister to, or work with, the People of God. Imitating Christ, the servant-leader, we will conduct ourselves in ways that meet the needs of God’s people and promote the highest respect for the dignity of persons, especially the most vulnerable members of our community.

All who accept a responsibility within our Church family must be aware that their public and private conduct can inspire others but may unfortunately also lead to scandal and, therefore, undermine people’s faith. With constant reliance on the help of the Holy Spirit, they must be aware of the responsibilities that accompany their work. It should also be recognized that many of our parishes are deemed to be employers under Provincial Labour Legislation, and as such, leaders of such parishes are required to comply with legislation pertaining to the prevention of discrimination, harassment and bullying in the workplace.

This document is not an exhaustive list, but is intended, rather, to provide clear directives to protect our clergy and all those called to ministry, and those individuals with whom they interact. The document also provides a baseline for what is expected for professional conduct in the diocese. This *Code of Pastoral Conduct* is given in addition to those things contained in Book VI of the *Code of Canon Law* and other promulgated particular laws in the Diocese of Pembroke.

Living Arrangements

- a) Residence in rectories is limited to priests, deacons and seminarians.

- b) Provided that the Bishop is notified in advance, immediate family members may live for a time with the pastor.[1]
- c) Subject to the provisions of this Code, pastors may welcome priests and close relatives as guests in rectories for a brief period of time, not to exceed two weeks. Notification to the Bishop is required for any others needing to be accommodated in rectories for any length of time.

Work Environment and Boundaries

Allegations of harassment must be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate person in the parish or the Diocese. Clergy assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all employment and pastoral relationships, including counselling and counselling-related ministry.

- a) Clergy and staff should be aware of their own vulnerability and the vulnerability of others. They should avoid any conduct that a reasonable person could misconstrue as inappropriate.
- b) Clergy, staff, and volunteers shall provide a professional work environment that is free from physical, sexual, psychological, written, or verbal intimidation, bullying or harassment.
- c) Clergy, staff, and volunteers assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all pastoral relationships, including counselling and counselling-related ministerial relationships.
- d) One-on-one private meetings must be held in an area with glass openings offering unobstructed vision, or in a room with the door open.

- e) Clergy, staff, and church volunteers must not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol that impairs stable functioning or sound judgment in the company of others, especially minors and vulnerable adults.
- f) Use of aggressive, profane, humiliating, threatening, intimidating, sexist or racist language and conduct is prohibited.
- g) Clergy and staff will dress professionally and appropriately while engaged in ministry or other forms of Church-related work.
- h) Clergy, staff, and church volunteers must not engage in physical, psychological or sexual harassment of any person, and must not tolerate such harassment by others serving the Church. Harassment may be a single incident or a persistent pattern of behaviour where the purpose is to diminish, intimidate or exploit another person.
- i) Claims of harassment will be brought to an advisory panel that will be constituted of competent persons to investigate the claims in an independent manner. This advisory panel will then bring recommendations to the diocesan bishop. In some cases, member(s) of this advisory panel may be delegated to act as a mediator between the parties, if this action is deemed appropriate.
- j) Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written or verbal behaviour, that makes a reasonable person feel uncomfortable, humiliated or distressed including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Physical or mental abuse; such as intimidation, bullying or coercion
 - b. Belittlement or criticism of personal attributes, including sexual orientation;
 - c. Derogatory, racial or ethnic comments, “jokes” or insults;
 - d. Sexual advances or touching;
 - e. Sexualized comments or innuendos;
 - f. Requests for sexual or other inappropriate favours;

Electronic/Online Conduct

How clergy and staff represent themselves to the public reflects their identity as Christian disciples in service of the Church. The standards of ethical conduct and personal integrity extend to all forms of written, verbal and electronic communication.

- a) The technological resources of the Diocese may not be used to violate, intentionally or unintentionally, any civil, criminal, provincial, federal or international law, including copyright, trademark and patent laws.
- b) Clergy and staff using social networking sites and websites such as blogs for personal use should be aware that any information displayed therein, including links, third-party postings and comments, may be evaluated by readers in light of that person's position in the Church, and will also affect how the Church herself is viewed. Clergy and staff will ensure that any content posted or communicated online reflects Catholic teaching and values.
- c) Personal accounts or sites of clergy and staff, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other platforms, must not be used for diocesan or parish business or communications.
- d) Clearly identified email (not pseudonyms) and other parish social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other platforms) must be used to provide parish or diocesan information. This is necessary to avoid confusion of roles.
- e) Clergy and staff must not text, communicate via instant messages, chat, or email people to whom they minister from a number or account which hides their identity.
- f) Counselling and accompaniment is most effective in face-to-face encounters. Ideally, counselling and accompaniment should not happen through telephone conversations, private messages, texts or other electronic means of communication. Any such communication that initially might take place should

be retained mindful of professional or other protocols and policies in place, including privacy legislation.

- g) When corresponding with minors and vulnerable adults, all electronic communication is to be copied to a parent or guardian. Private electronic communications are prohibited with minors and vulnerable adults.
- h) If abuse of a minor is suspected, it must be reported immediately to the Children's Aid Society or its equivalent. If abuse of any person is reported through any electronic medium, the Diocese must be notified immediately and a copy of all electronic records must be given to the office.
- i) Clergy, staff or church volunteers must have written permission from a minor's legal parent or from the legal guardian of the minor before publicly posting pictures, video, and other information that may identify that minor.
- j) In electronic communications, clergy and staff must write in the first person and properly identify themselves. Using false names or misleading pseudonyms is not permitted.
- k) Clergy and staff must not have sexual conversations with anyone in text messages, emails, chat rooms, forums, platforms, or any other site. They must not view, post, and/or share pornographic or sexually explicit images, comments or pictures.
- l) The recording of any conversation must be mutually agreed upon by all parties.

Proximity

- a) Physical contact of any kind can be misconstrued. It is to occur only when it is clearly nonsexual and otherwise appropriate. Physical discipline is prohibited.
- b) Discussions of a sexual nature must occur only to respond, if necessary, to a specific question. Any such discussion must use appropriate and professional language.

- c) Should one discover an inappropriate attraction or attention being shown to him or her in a pastoral relationship, one must make every effort to defuse the situation. One must cease the relationship if the attraction or attention continues.

Counselling and Spiritual Direction

In counselling and spiritual direction, one shall not step beyond one's competence. One must refer individuals to other professionals when necessary or appropriate. It is never appropriate that a pastoral counselling relationship be considered a psychological clinical relationship, or psychotherapy.

- a) No interview, session or other conversation of a personal nature should ever be recorded (digitally, audiotape or videotape), unless with the interviewee's permission and in an appropriate context (e.g., an interview for the Marriage Tribunal).
- b) In order to avoid confusion about the nature of the relationship, sessions (e.g., interviews, formal or informal conversations, counselling) must be conducted in appropriate settings at appropriate times that create accountability. One must also be concerned about the number and frequency of such sessions to avoid possible inappropriate attachments.

Financial Directives

Ministry is part of pastoral service. Consequently, one must not ask for, or expect, financial compensation other than that outlined in other diocesan policies and protocols.

- a) It is forbidden for anyone to solicit, in any way, directly or indirectly, by word or action, any personal gift, bequest or endowment from a person with whom he or she has, or had, a pastoral relationship.

- b) It is forbidden for anyone to request or obtain a personal loan, or other financial benefit or consideration, from a person with whom he or she has, or had, a pastoral relationship.
- c) Clergy, staff, and volunteers who are involved in the financial administration of a parish must review and know the contents of Diocese of Pembroke: *Instruction for the Implementation of Financial Law (Canon 537)*, and act accordingly.
- d) Clergy and laity involved in Church finances are subject to the universal laws found in Book VI of the *Code of Canon Law*, including the possibility of financial penalties.

[1] The term 'pastor' includes parochial administrator.

Additional Directives when dealing with Children, Youth and Other Vulnerable Persons

- a) Clergy, staff, and volunteers are encouraged to develop transparent and trustworthy relationships with children, youth and other vulnerable persons while maintaining clear professional boundaries. A team approach should be used when working with minors, and appropriate supervision should be in place to promote safe environments for all.
- b) Particular care and attention must be taken in dealing with vulnerable persons.
- c) A vulnerable person is anyone of any age or gender who might easily be exploited by another.
- d) Children, youth and some adults fall into this category of individuals. Some may be physically or mentally challenged or emotionally susceptible. Others may be socially isolated, in need socially or materially, or unable to communicate adequately, or unable to understand or speak the languages of our area. Others may live in fear, real or imagined, or in awe of authority figures. Others, such as immigrants and refugees, may be disadvantaged in a variety of ways.

- e) Physical contact with a minor or vulnerable adult must be nonsexual and appropriate and only in the presence of other adults.
- f) Clergy and any others while involved in ministry, must not share private overnight accommodations (rectory, bedroom, hotel room, tent, camper, bed, etc.) with any unrelated minor. In situations in which overnight accommodations are in open spaces (gymnasiums, classrooms, camp sites, etc.), action should be taken to provide suitable supervision and create distinct separations between sexes and between adults and minors.

Work Environment and Boundaries

- a) Meetings, rehearsals, liturgical training and other such activities must take place in groups and be supervised by at least two adults who are not related, in a public setting such as the church or parish hall.
- b) Interaction with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons must never take place in the residential part of the church property, or in any priest's private residence.
- c) One must never provide shared overnight accommodation for children, youth and other vulnerable persons where there is not another, unrelated adult present actively engaged in supervision. Under no circumstances shall such accommodation be provided in the residential part of church property.
- d) Where an adult chaperone occupies a sleeping facility with a group of children, youth, or vulnerable persons, the chaperone must always sleep in a separate bed. Accordingly, one must not sleep in the same bed as a child or youth or other vulnerable person.
- e) Priests' family members who are under 18 can be guests in a church residence on the condition that they are accompanied by one of their parents.
- f) During activities organized for children and youth, one shall refrain from the use of alcohol and tobacco products.

- g) One must never purchase or provide access to alcohol, drugs, tobacco products, inappropriate videos, media or reading material for children, youth, or other vulnerable persons.
- h) One must never transport children, youth, or other vulnerable persons in one's personal vehicle without the presence of another unrelated adult. Everyone should be aware of the exclusion clauses in his or her personal insurance policy which may affect coverage in such cases. Every consideration should be given to the use of public transportation or rented vehicles, especially when dealing with groups.
- i) The Sacrament of Reconciliation with those under 18 and other vulnerable persons must be celebrated in an open space which allows both priest and penitent to be in full view of others, or in a confessional in which there is a physical barrier between the confessor and the penitent. Confessional rooms must have a window on the door in a way that the area is clearly visible.

Proximity

- a) One must never be alone with children, youth and other vulnerable persons. A parent or other adult must always be present or in close vicinity. Use a team approach to managing activities.
- b) One must exercise caution in accepting gifts from individual children or youth. Similarly, one must not buy gifts for individual children or youth.
- c) One shall not take overnight trips alone with children, youth or other vulnerable persons. An appropriate number of adult chaperones is to accompany participants in such activities organized through the parish or diocese.
- d) Topics of a sexual nature that could not be comfortably discussed with parents or other adults must not be discussed with children.

Implementation

- a) Responsibility for compliance with this Code rests with the individual engaged in pastoral ministry or service.
- b) Clergy, staff, and volunteers must hold each other accountable for maintaining the highest ethical and professional standards.
- c) Clergy, staff, and volunteers must review and know the contents of the diocesan Sexual Abuse Protocol, which is available on the diocesan web site www.pembrokedioocese.com, and act accordingly.
- d) Allegations of sexual misconduct must be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate authorities in accordance with the Diocese's *Policy and Procedures for the Prevention and Management of Sexual Abuse of Minors and Adults Who In Law Are the Equivalent of Minors* (2021).
- e) When an uncertainty exists about whether a situation violates this Code of Pastoral Conduct, refer the matter to the appropriate authorities mentioned above.
- f) When it appears that a member of the clergy, a staff member or a volunteer has violated this Code of Pastoral Conduct, report the issue immediately to the appropriate authorities mentioned above.
- g) Any request for derogation from the provisions of this Code must be submitted in writing to the Bishop or his delegate.

Reporting Misconduct

- a) Clergy and staff must adhere to high ethical standards and report illegal, unethical or unprofessional behaviour to *the appropriate and legitimate diocesan authority*.
- b) Clergy and staff are required to report to the Bishop any arrest or citation involving conduct that violates the Criminal Code and/or serious misconduct which contravenes the diocesan policies.
- c) Clergy, staff, and volunteers who have reason to believe that a minor is being abused or neglected or has been abused or neglected must immediately report the

basis for their belief to the proper civil authorities, in accordance with provincial legislation and all diocesan protocols.

- d) Child pornography is illegal and criminal. Suspected creation, use, possession, or distribution of child pornography must be referred immediately to law enforcement, the Children’s Aid Society or its equivalent, and the Bishop.

Violations

Violations of the *Code of Pastoral Conduct* will be examined by the Bishop of Pembroke and could possibly include administrative or penal processes as outlined in Book VI of the *Code of Canon Law*.

I hereby acknowledge that I have received and been made aware of the obligations contained in the revised *Code of Pastoral Conduct*.

Name (printed): _____

Signature

Date

One signed copy to be sent to the Chancery Office.

Date received at Chancery: _____

