



Diocese of Nelson

Ethical Guidelines

Introduction

- A. These guidelines are offered for stipendiary and licensed clergy, non stipendiary ordained ministers, stipendiary and voluntary lay staff. The guidelines should be accepted by a parish vestry to be applied to their lay people in ministry as they see fit (e.g. Home Group Leaders, Sunday School teachers, Youth Leaders, Pastoral Visitors etc).
- B. The guidelines are offered for all who minister in the Diocese not just for the ordained. The term "minister" will be used to include both lay and ordained.
- C. These guidelines are a guide for ethical behaviour between ministers and those to whom they minister. They are not intended as a statement of Christian moral teaching. The purpose of Christian ministry is to serve people at their point of need in the selfless way in which Christ serves. These Ethical Guidelines are offered in support of this service.
- D. These guidelines indicate acceptable ethical behaviour. It is recognised that all who minister will at times fail to live up to all aspects of the guidelines. Those who minister and those to whom they minister are called with all Christians to offer each other forgiveness and reconciliation when appropriate.
- E. These guidelines deal explicitly with pastoral ministry. However they are applicable wherever there is a ministry relationship between two or more people.
- F. Ministry covers a wide range of activities - from informal pastoral care schemes to structured counselling situations. Ministry situations are more complicated than are other helping situations in that ministers do not just meet those they serve in counselling sessions. Ministers and those they minister to meet regularly in many different settings.
- G. A ministry relationship cannot be "terminated" as can a counselling relationship. Ministers normally have ongoing ministry relationships with those they serve.
- H. It is often difficult in ministry to distinguish between "professional" and "personal" relationships. This can make it very difficult to establish appropriate boundaries in ministry relationships.
- I. People sometimes expect information shared informally to be as confidential as information shared in a formal counselling / confessional situation. The variety of networks within parishes and the information sharing between them make the ethical issues more complex.

PRINCIPLES

1. Every human being has infinite worth and unique value as created in the image of God, irrespective of origin, ethnicity, sex, age, beliefs, social or economic status, contribution to society or present psychological, physical or spiritual state.
2. Each individual has the God-given right of self-fulfilment and maximum development of their potential to the degree that it does not encroach upon the same rights of others.
3. Those who minister have the responsibility to devote objective and disciplined knowledge and skill to aid individuals within the church and wider social setting in their progress in the faith and in the development of their God-given potential as human beings.

4. All activities of ministry regardless of their form, should serve the best interests of those who receive them.

1. Responsibilities To Those Being Served:

1. We maintain the right of the people to whom we minister to a relationship of mutual trust, to privacy and confidentiality and to the responsible use of information. All information divulged by people is the property of those people and their informed consent must be sought if it is to be passed on to any person or organisation. This includes passing on information within the ministry team. When people request us not to discuss them with others, we will honour this request unless they or others are in danger.
2. We acknowledge that under the guise of caring and sharing, information which is incorrect or not public property is often passed on within the church. We recognise the need to guard against careless talk and to beware of accepting second-hand information at face value.
3. Those we minister to should be informed beforehand about the limits of confidentiality.

Information given in the course of a confession is confidential (in keeping with the rubrics on page 750 of A New Zealand Prayer Book, He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa and the Evidence Amendment Act 1980, section 31) unless the person gives us permission or encourages us to reveal the information.

However confidentiality must be breached when there is clear danger to the safety of the person or to any other individual or group. Those we minister to should be advised of this beforehand.

4. We will not abuse our position by taking advantage of those we minister to for purposes of personal, institutional, political or financial gain.
5. Those we minister to should be free from the possibility of sexual exploitation or sexual harassment of any kind. It is recognised that those exercising ministry are in a position of power relative to those to whom they minister which they should not abuse.
6. We will encourage those to whom we minister to move towards taking appropriate responsibility for their own lives under God.
7. We will acknowledge the limits of our competence and refer those to whom we minister to others when this proves necessary or desirable.

2. Responsibilities To The Church:

1. We recognise our membership of the Body of Christ, the Church.
2. We will contribute our unique professional expertise (lay or ordained) to the development of the ministry and policies of the Church of which we are a member.
3. We will uphold professional standards of practice in ministry and work for their advancement.
4. When offering care to others, we will not discriminate on the grounds of colour, race, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, religious or political belief.
5. We will be professional in the time we give to the ministry of the Church, guarding against both over-commitment and avoidance of responsibility.

3. Responsibilities To Other Ministries:

1. We will treat colleagues with respect, consideration, fairness and good faith.
2. We will recognise the abilities, expertise and views of our colleagues in ministry and value the contributions they make.
3. We will respect the professional confidences of colleagues.
4. We will seek mediation when important conflicts with colleagues or others require to be resolved. Legal procedures are provided within the Church's structures where this is deemed necessary.
5. When appropriate we will work and cooperate with colleagues and social service agencies of the church and society to serve the best interests of the people to whom we minister.
6. We will respect the time constraints of those (ordained and lay) who minister in a non stipendiary capacity.

4. Responsibilities To Ourselves:

1. We will acknowledge that there are limits to the ministry we can properly provide and that respect for our own health in ministry relationships and appropriate self-care should be upheld.
2. We recognise our own need for recreation, refreshment and renewal for which at times we will need to call on the support and expertise of other ministers and professionals.
3. We will accept supervision for review, learning, personal and spiritual growth to maintain a high standard of ministry.
4. We recognise that our knowledge need to be continually extended and enhanced. In addition to personal study, we will regularly attend courses, retreats, lectures, seminars and schools of ministry to learn and be encouraged in our ministry.