



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

Professional Guidelines for Ordained Ministry
Revised 2016

The Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) offers the following Guidelines for Ministry to assist and support ordained ministers in maintaining the integrity of relationships in which they offer ministry. These relationships can become complex, and in some cases seriously impaired. **It is the cleric's responsibility to maintain the integrity of** such relationships. To that end, it is expected that all ordained clergy and lay leaders in the diocese will be familiar with and follow these guidelines. These guidelines do not include all ECCT policies or contingencies. An attempt has been made to refer to additional ECCT policies where appropriate. Clergy are welcome to contact their bishops as they seek to follow these guidelines, particularly if they are encountering struggles in so doing. In addition, clergy may also call on members of the **bishops' staff for consultation and assistance.**

Clergy in the diocese of Connecticut are expected to:

1. *Treat themselves with dignity and respect by taking good care of themselves. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:*
 - a. **Self-care:** Regular and consistent incorporation of wellness and self-care practices in their life.
 - b. **Accountability:** Clergy are strongly encouraged to have groups and individuals to whom they are accountable, with whom they confer as a matter of ordinary course (e.g., colleague support groups, spiritual directors, psychotherapists, supervision). For new clergy and for clergy in transition to new calls, ECCT offers Recently Ordained Clergy and Fresh Start groups. ECCT staff is available for consultation on how to form other cohorts.
 - c. **Boundaries:** Setting appropriate limits with parishioners as to when clergy are available and boundaries in the relationship. If a parishioner violates boundaries by going beyond what is appropriate in the clergy-parishioner relationship (e.g., seeking to romanticize the relationship, demanding inordinate amounts of attention, seeking to meet with clergy alone, sending clergy too many and/or inappropriate email or text messages, or does anything that makes clergy feel uncomfortable or unsafe), firmly and clearly communicate what behavior is acceptable and what is not. Some parishioners do not change their behavior in spite of a cleric's efforts to explain why change is needed. In such cases, clergy are welcome to seek **consultation by contacting a bishop or a member of the bishop's staff.**
 - d. **Conflict-resolution:** Addressing conflicts that may arise between an ordained minister and a parishioner, or a group of parishioners or lay leaders, in healthy ways. Addressing conflicts includes seeking to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships, communicating clearly and directly to those with whom you are in conflict, seeking nurture and support for yourself outside the congregation, and possibly seeking assistance from someone trained in conflict resolution. Clergy who are struggling with conflict in your congregation or ministry may seek consultation by contacting **the bishop or a member of the bishop's staff.**

2. Comply with ECCT policies and behavioral standards regarding ministry with children and youth. In Connecticut, clergy are mandated reporters of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and youth (anyone under the age of 18). In addition, ECCT has a comprehensive policy regarding ministry with children and youth (*Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*). It sets forth behavioral standards for all adults engaged in ministry with children and youth throughout ECCT. This policy also sets standards for screening and selecting staff and volunteers who work with children and youth, monitoring programs for children and youth and responding to concerns. The policy also sets out in detail the behavioral standards for youth and adults participating in ECCT sponsored youth events. Ultimately, ordained leadership in each congregation is responsible for compliance with this policy within the congregation. This policy is available on the ECCT website at www.episcopalct.org. While behavioral standards are outlined in the policy, ECCT cannot emphasize strongly enough that it requires its ordained and lay ministers to adhere to a high standard of conduct. These behavioral standards, which apply to all adults, ordained and lay engaged in ministry with children and youth, are:

Neither ordained nor lay ministers shall:

- a. provide children or youth with illegal drugs, pornography, or non-sacramental alcohol;
- b. consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs, or misuse legal drugs at any **children's or youth event**;
- c. be under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or misused legal drugs at any **children's or youth event**;
- d. engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior;
- e. engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit or secretive relationships or conduct with any child or youth; or
- f. discuss their own sexual activities or fantasies with children or youth.

In addition, whenever an adult is offering any type of ministry or engaged in any type of church related activity with a child or youth there shall be at least two unrelated adults present. These Behavioral Standards for Ministry with Children or Youth are included in the ECCT *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*.

3. *Comply with legally mandated reporting requirements* regarding the suspected abuse and/or neglect of children, the elderly and vulnerable adults. In Connecticut, clergy are mandated reporters of suspected abuse and/or neglect of children, elderly and vulnerable adults (adults ages 18-59 with cognitive disabilities). This is not a choice, but a legally enforceable responsibility. ECCT clergy shall be familiar with state law. The legal obligation of mandated reporting requires clergy to disclose information to the appropriate state agency in specific situations, except when the cleric learns the information within the bounds of the sacrament of confession. If you have any questions about mandated reporting, please contact the Canon for Mission Integrity and Training.
4. *Refrain from dual relationships*. Dual relationships in a ministerial setting occur when clergy attempt to relate to a person on two levels at the same time. This can happen when clergy attempt to relate to an individual both personally and professionally (i.e., as cleric and parishioner, and at the same time in some other role such as supervisor and parish employee.) Dual relationships diminish the effectiveness of ministry.

To avoid dual relationships:

- a. Discourage hiring parishioners to serve in paid staff positions. If such an arrangement is unavoidable, the clerics and lay leaders should understand the risk to all relationships involved and take steps to mitigate the risk. The employment decision must be ratified by the vestry, there must be clear guidelines for separation spelled out in the letter of agreement, and alternate arrangements must be made for pastoral support of the employee.
- b. Discourage clergy spouse, partner or family member from serving on parish staff as a lay employee, or as a parish officer or vestry member in the congregation where the related clergy person serves.
- c. Avoid intimate personal relationships with parishioners and others to whom you minister.
- d. Do not sexualize any relationship with parishioners or others to whom you minister.
- e. Develop personal relationships with people outside of the congregation to whom you do not offer ministry.
- f. Cultivate good habits of mind. It is necessary to cultivate certain habits of mind that help prevent the misuse or abuse of clerical privilege and authority.

These habits include the following practices.

- i. Self-questioning: Am I conscious of my role as an ordained person in this situation?
 - ii. Recognizing danger signals:
 - a. rationalizations, such as finding excuses for pushing back the usual boundaries; **this may be encapsulated in the rationalization: "People put this burden of perfection on me, but I'm only human;"**
 - b. the need to be needed—getting a personal thrill from pastoral functions; or
 - c. failure to attend to any obsessive attachment to a pattern of fantasy (sexual, financial, self-aggrandizing, etc.).
 - iii. Cultivating consciousness of possible problem situations in which your own history may make you particularly vulnerable.
 - iv. Cultivating a framework of containment: appropriate behavior, including physical, emotional, advisory; finding a stopping place.
 - v. Adopting the perspective that while both cleric and the protected person are **engaged in the "good work" of responsible Christian living, it is nevertheless the cleric's role that puts the burden of responsibility on him or her** — particularly with regard to maintaining boundaries.
5. *Accept only token gifts from parishioners and others to whom you minister.*
 6. *Decline to accept loans of any kind from parishioners and others to whom you minister.*
 7. *Decline to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a parishioner's will or that of anyone to whom you minister.*
 8. *Maintain confidentiality of information shared in the pastoral relationship. This means that clergy will not tell others personal information a parishioner shares unless that parishioner*

gives permission. However, the legal obligation of mandated reporting requires clergy to disclose information to the appropriate state agency in specific situations, except when the cleric learns the information within the bounds of the sacrament of confession.

9. *Refer issues of mental health, and substance and domestic abuse issues to licensed, insured or certified health providers.* The line between pastoral care and more specialized care can sometimes be blurry. Clergy are advised to develop their own list of referrals for mental health and substance abuse or domestic abuse problems and rely on these experts for support and referral. Clergy who are licensed or certified are not to treat anyone who is a member or attends a parish in which the cleric is serving. Clergy should refrain from meeting with parishioners more than three times before referring them for specialized care. The exception to this guideline is pre-marital counseling. Please consult with a **member of the bishop's staff if you need clarity in making decisions to refer.**
10. *Comply with the responsibilities of being an employer* if in charge of paid staff, wardens, members of personnel committees and similar positions. Clergy are expected to conduct personnel matters in fair, impartial, and compassionate ways in accordance with legal requirements. This includes making decisions regarding hiring, supervision, record keeping, and termination, either for cause or due to financial constraints. It also includes responding to any and all allegations of misconduct by employees in a timely and appropriate manner.
11. *Comply with financial practices* as set forth by ECCT and The Episcopal Church. This includes conducting an annual audit of all accounts, including clergy discretionary and special ministry funds, and ensuring that the financial systems within your congregation, such as money counters and those authorized to sign checks, are in accordance with the internal practices recommended by the ECCT and The Episcopal Church —

Discretionary funds: discretionary funds are never to be used for personal gain or benefit; diocesan and parish guidelines must be strictly followed.

- a. Any money given to a cleric either must be reported as income (as prescribed by the IRS) or deposited in a discretionary fund. (If the congregation or other organization has a rule against gifts, this does not apply.)
 - b. Any contribution or gift in excess of \$500.00 must be reported to the treasurer of the congregation or organization. No cleric or lay leader should use his or her influence with members of the Church for personal financial gain, or engage in an enterprise which would derive benefit from his or her connection with the Church (e.g., selling the parish list). (See The Diocese of Connecticut Parish and Financial Reporting Requirements and the Episcopal Church Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs.)
12. *Comply with the affirmative obligations included in Title IV of the Canons.* This includes cooperating with any Title IV process and investigations as well as reporting to an Intake Officer **"all matters with may constitute an offense."** (IV.1 (f)). An Offense must **"be material and substantial or of clear and weighty importance to the ministry of the Church."** (IV.3.3)
 13. *Bring resolution to relationships with parishioners when ordained ministry at a parish ends.* When it comes time to leave a parish, it is expected that clergy will bring resolution to relationships with all parishioners in a manner that is healthy for the cleric, **the cleric's**

family, as well as the parish. It is expected that once a cleric's service at a parish ends, he or she will no longer perform any clergy functions for any members of that parish or others affiliated with the parish, and will not worship at that parish. For more re information, consult "Leaving Well Policy," available on the website or through the Canon for Mission Leadership.

14. *Foster collegiality and accountability by participating in diocesan leadership opportunities and ECCT Events.* It is expected that clergy will attend ECCT conventions and other regular ECCT events such as Clergy Days and Clergy Conferences. Newly ordained clergy and clergy in new cures are required to attend Recently Ordained Clergy and Fresh Start groups provided by ECCT. Participation in ordinations and celebrations of new ministry are strongly encouraged.