

Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Priests and Deacons

For Clergy Engaged in Ministry

A. Preamble

Priests, transitional deacons and permanent deacons in our parishes must uphold Christian values and conduct as they minister to, or work with, the people of God. Imitating Christ, the servant-leader, all who serve in these ministries must employ practices that meet the needs of God's people and promote the highest respect for the dignity of individuals, especially the most vulnerable members of the community.

All who minister on behalf of the Church must recognize that their public and private good conduct can inspire others, and that their misconduct can lead to scandal which could seriously undermine the faith of the people they serve. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the clergy must be constantly aware of the responsibilities that accompany their role in the Church.

This Policy provides clear directives to protect our clergy and those individuals with whom they interact.

B. General Directives

Living Arrangements

1. Residence in rectories and buildings operated by the Archdiocese of Vancouver is limited to pastors, parish administrators, priest associates, retired priests, priests in residence, visiting priests, deacons and seminarians.
2. In very exceptional circumstances, and with the Archbishop's written permission, close family members, housekeepers or other persons may reside in rectories together with the pastor, administrator or associate priest, provided that suitable accommodation which ensures privacy is available.
3. Guests may stay in the rectory for only a brief period. Unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, minors (those under 19 years of age) and vulnerable adults may not stay overnight in a rectory. Women who are not relatives are likewise not to stay overnight unless another adult is present. The Archbishop is to be notified if any residency is longer than two weeks.
4. Celibate clergy residing, even temporarily, away from the parish or other Church owned property should make every reasonable effort to abide in a manner consistent with the directions and values set out in this policy.
5. Married clergy, in accord with their wives, should make every reasonable effort to abide in a manner consistent with the directions and values set out in this policy adjusted as necessary to reflect their state.



Work Environment and Boundaries

Clergy are to provide a work and ministerial environment that is free from physical, sexual, psychological, written or verbal intimidation, bullying or harassment, and are to ensure that the workplace meets or exceeds Archdiocesan Human Resources policy and legislated standards.¹

1. Harassment encompasses a broad range of physical, written or verbal behaviour, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. Physical or mental abuse;
 - b. Belittlement or criticism of personal attributes;
 - 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 favors;
 - g. Display of offensive materials.
2. Harassment can be a single severe incident or a persistent pattern of milder behaviour where the purpose or the effect is to create a hostile, offensive or intimidating work environment.
3. Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate person in the parish or the Archdiocese.
4. Clergy assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all pastoral relationships, including counselling and counselling-related ministry.
5. One-to-one private meetings with persons being ministered to must be held in an area with glass windows or other openings offering unobstructed vision. If that is impossible or impractical, reasonable steps shall be taken to advise a screened adult person prior to or immediately following the meeting and to record the time, date and place and if allowed, the name or a brief description of the other person, together with the purpose of the meeting, in a diary or log. That record shall be permanently kept as a parish or institutional record and reviewed at least quarterly by the pastor, religious superior or parish screening coordinator.

Electronic/Online Conduct

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

1. Clergy using social networking sites and websites, including “blogs,” for personal use, should be aware that any information displayed therein, including links, third-party postings and

¹ This may include contractual and implied employment standards, WorkBC or WorkSafe BC regulations: www.workbc.ca/Employer-Resources/Your-Workforce/Workplace-Rights.aspx and other federal, provincial or municipal requirements.



comments, may be evaluated by readers in light of that priest or deacon's position in the Church.

2. Clergy's personal accounts or sites, such as those on Facebook or other platforms, must not be used for Archdiocesan or parish programs nor to communicate directly with people to whom they minister.
3. Separate official or clearly authorized sites should be created and used to provide parish, Archdiocesan or program information.
4. Clergy should not telephone, text, communicate via instant messages, chat, or email people to whom they minister from a number or account which hides their identity.
5. All pastoral and counselling communication should be through an official account. Necessary records or logs of such communication should be retained per relevant professional or other protocols and policies in place, including privacy legislation.
6. Clergy should have permission from a legal minor's parent or guardian before contacting him or her. All electronic communication should be copied, if possible, to a parent or guardian, as well as to a supervisor. If not possible, for example in the case of telephone calls or if parental abuse is suspected, then appropriate notification of such contact should be given in some manner.
7. Clergy must have permission from a legal minor's parent or guardian before publicly posting pictures, video, and other information that may identify that minor.
8. In electronic communications, clergy should properly identify themselves and not use false or misleading pseudonyms. Clergy should normally write in the first person and not in the name of an organization or program unless authorized to do so. Neither should he claim to represent the official position of an organization or the teachings of the Church unless authorized to do so.

Counselling and Spiritual Direction

1. In counselling and spiritual direction, a priest or deacon must not exceed his competence. He must refer individuals to other professionals when appropriate or necessary. A pastoral counselling relationship should never be considered a clinical relationship or psychotherapy.
2. Interviews, sessions or other conversations of a personal nature should not normally be recorded (either digitally or by audiotape or videotape). If any recording is desired, all parties to that occasion must provide written consent or recorded verbal consent. Written notes, along with a log, may be advantageous but care for privacy is mandatory. If electronic communication (Skype or telephone) is needed, then similar conditions and care are required.
3. To avoid confusion about the nature of the relationship, pastoral sessions (e.g., interviews, formal or informal conversations, counselling) must be conducted in appropriate settings and at appropriate times. The priest or deacon must take measures to limit the length and frequency of such sessions in order to avoid inappropriate attachments or perceptions of the same.



Well-Being of Clergy

Clergy are responsible for their own spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Consequently, they:

1. Should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health;
2. Should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives;
3. Should address their own spiritual needs. Accompaniment and support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended;
4. Should use prudence whenever engaging in activities or behaviours that may become compulsive, addictive or negatively impact their health or welfare;
5. Must avoid all inappropriate or illegal use of alcohol, controlled or non-controlled narcotic or other drugs and substances, and pornography.

C. Financial Directives

1. Ministry is part of pastoral service, and clergy must neither ask for, nor expect, financial compensation other than that outlined in other Archdiocesan policies and protocols.²
2. A priest or deacon must not solicit in any way, directly or indirectly, by word or action, any gift,³ bequest, loan, or endowment for his personal benefit from a person with whom he has, or has had, a pastoral relationship, without the permission of the Archbishop or the Vicar General.
3. A priest or deacon must not act as a financial advisor, take on the responsibility for power of attorney, draw up a will, or serve as the executor or as a witness for a will for a vulnerable adult without the explicit permission of the Archbishop or the Vicar General.
4. Pastors and parochial administrators must manage and maintain Church property and physical assets with prudence and due diligence, including attention to the safety of persons using, present upon or near the same.
5. Clergy who are involved in the financial administration of a parish must review and know the financial and temporal policies of the Archdiocese.
6. With regard to Church goods, clergy must not engage in any form of theft or unauthorized dealing, including misappropriation, intentional misallocation or investment of goods or property.

² RCAV Policy concerning “stole fees” is to be followed.

³ Gifts given customarily during Christmas, Easter, on one’s birthday or at special events are acceptable. Unusual and expensive gifts should be disclosed to the Archbishop.



D. Cleric's Agreement

As a person in a position of trust and authority, I will:

1. Act in accord with the above directives.
2. Treat everyone with respect, integrity, courtesy, dignity, consideration, and cultural sensitivity.
3. Maintain respectful relationships and clear, appropriate and professional boundaries in all pastoral situations.
4. Ensure that all communications including verbal, handwritten and electronic, will be for professional reasons only and never include offensive or suggestive material.
5. Respect the confidentiality of information shared with me unless failure to properly use or disclose the information could pose a threat to the minor or to others (e.g. in the case of abuse or neglect).
6. Maintain the Seal of Confession, which is always inviolable.
7. Maintain an “open-door” policy when alone in a room with a minor or vulnerable adult (i.e. the door must be open, or there must be clear visibility through windows). If a situation arises where this is not possible or is impractical, I will advise a screened or responsible adult and make a written record of the occasion as directed above.
8. Avoid situations when I may be alone with a minor or vulnerable adult, whether during church activities or not.
9. Ensure that minors and vulnerable adults are properly supervised in a safe environment, including compliance with the Archdiocese's Safe Environment Policy.
10. Ensure that all physical contact is appropriate.

Examples of appropriate touch:

- a. affirming someone with a pat on the hand, shoulder, or back
- b. placing a hand gently on someone's hand or forearm
- c. shaking another person's hand in greeting
- d. holding hands in a prayer or song
- e. short hugs
- f. “high fives”

Examples of inappropriate touch:

- a. kissing someone on the lips, or in any way suggestively, or coaxing him or her into kissing you or an inappropriate third party
- b. lengthy hugs or forceful frontal hugs
- c. cuddling



- d. tickling
 - e. piggy-back rides
 - f. lap-sitting
 - g. wrestling
 - h. stroking another person's hair
 - i. touching the breast, buttocks or genital area.
11. Review regularly and familiarize myself with the Archdiocese's Safe Environment Policy and Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Clergy, and act accordingly.
 12. Take immediate action when civil law or Archdiocesan laws or policies are being violated.
 13. Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult.
 14. Have a valid driver's license and insurance and at least one seatbelt and/or car seat per passenger when driving a minor or vulnerable adult. The presence of another suitable adult is required.
 15. Wear appropriate and modest attire.

As someone in a position of trust and authority, I will not:

1. Touch anyone in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
2. Tell sexually suggestive jokes nor engage in sexually orientated conversations unless it is a part of a legitimate lesson in an approved program, in accordance with the Church's teaching.
3. Be under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants at any time while ministering.
4. Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
5. Strike, spank, shake, or slap anyone.
6. Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates anyone.
7. Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade anyone.
8. Make comments relating to anyone's physique or body development.

Moreover, in regard to minors (under 19 years of age) or vulnerable adults, as someone in a position of trust and authority, I will not:

1. Be alone with them.
2. Interact with them in the residential or other non-public parts of Archdiocesan property.
3. Take overnight trips alone with or sleep in the same bed with them.
4. Shower with or in the immediate presence of them.



5. Purchase or provide access to alcohol, drugs, tobacco products, inappropriate videos, media, or reading material to them.
6. Buy gifts for, or accept expensive gifts from, them.
7. Give money to them, except in the case of an unforeseen emergency for immediate necessities or services, or for a purpose approved by the Archbishop, a parent, guardian or other competent authority.
8. Ask them to keep secrets from his or her parents or guardians.
9. Make derogatory remarks about their family.
10. Involve them in personal problems or issues of adults.

The unique family situation of each individual cleric, but especially of married clergy, will from time to time, necessitate personal and professional judgement in the adaptation of certain provisions of this policy while keeping firmly to their spirit. This policy is not intended to apply to a cleric’s appropriate actions with or in regard to members of his immediate family.

When uncertainty exists about whether any situation does or does not violate this policy, the matter is to be referred to the Archbishop or his Delegate.

Any request for exemption from a provision of this policy must be submitted in writing to the Archbishop or his Delegate.

I understand that this policy on pastoral conduct is binding on me as a priest/deacon serving in the Archdiocese of Vancouver.

Signature

Print Name

Date: _____
 YYYY MM DD

Approved: 2017-August-24
Feast of St. Bartholomew

† J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver

**The following policy is hereby abrogated:
Code of Conduct Commitment for Priests issued on March 25, 2015**