



Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Priests and Deacons Engaged in Ministry

A. Preamble

Priests, transitional deacons and permanent deacons (“the clergy”) must uphold Christian values and conduct as they minister to, or work with, the people of God. Imitating Christ, the Servant, 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 in the name of the Church must recognize that their public and private good conduct can inspire others, and that their misconduct can lead to scandal and seriously undermine the faith of the people they serve. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the clergy must be constantly aware of their responsibility to 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, parochial vicars, 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, parish administrator or parochial vicars, provided that suitable and private accommodation is available.
3. Guests may stay in the rectory for no longer than two weeks. Men and 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. Unless accompanied by a parent or guardian, minors (those under 19 years of age) and vulnerable adults may not stay overnight in a rectory.
5. Celibate clergy residing, even temporarily, away from the parish or other Church-owned property should make every reasonable effort to live in a manner consistent with the directions and values set out in this policy.
6. Married clergy and their wives should make every reasonable effort to live 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 *Policy for the Prevention of Workplace Bullying & Harassment* and legislated standards.¹

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Allegations of harassment should be taken seriously and reported immediately to the appropriate person in the parish or the Archdiocese.
10. Clergy assume the full burden of responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear, appropriate boundaries in all pastoral relationships, including counselling and counselling-related ministry.
11. 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 kept permanently as a parish or institutional record and reviewed at least quarterly by the pastor, religious superior or parish screening coordinator.
12. The Archdiocesan *Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Clergy* also applies to a violation of the Cleric’s Agreement which forms part of this policy.

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.



Archdiocesan Technology Equipment Use

13. Computers, laptops, phones, Internet/Intranet/Extranet-related systems, including but not limited to, software, operating systems, storage media, voicemail, electronic mail (e-mails), parish websites, network accounts providing electronic mail, WWW browsing, and FTP (collectively defined as “Archdiocesan Technology Equipment”), are owned by the Archdiocese to facilitate parish or ministry work.
14. Clergy using Archdiocesan Technology Equipment, including laptops and computers, agree and consent that they have no reasonable expectation of privacy.
15. Clergy using Archdiocesan Technology Equipment agree and consent that
 - a. All messages sent, received, composed and/or stored on Archdiocesan Technology Equipment are the property of the Archdiocese.
 - b. All messages sent, received, composed and/or stored on Archdiocesan Technology Equipment are subject to inspection and review at the Archdiocese’s discretion.
 - c. The Archdiocese has domain administration right to Archdiocesan Technology Equipment.
 - d. The Archdiocese retains the right, at all times and without further notice, to investigate, inspect and search all Archdiocesan Technology Equipment for the purpose of determining whether this policy or any other policy of the Archdiocese has been violated; or when an inspection and investigation is necessary for purposes of promoting safety in the workplace or compliance with municipal, provincial and federal laws. These inspections may be conducted during or outside of business hours and in the presence or absence of the clergy member and shall include, but is not limited to, the investigation or inspection of the internet browser history, or downloaded files on Archdiocesan Technology Equipment.
16. Under no circumstances should clergy engage in any activity that is illegal under municipal, provincial, federal or international law while utilizing Archdiocesan Technology Equipment or any Archdiocesan resources.
17. If a clergy member brings or provides his personal computer, laptop, phone or technology device (“Personal Technology Equipment”) to Archdiocesan Information Technology staff for a work-related purpose, repairs or maintenance, that clergy member agrees and consents that they have no reasonable expectation of privacy.



Internet/Electronic Communication

How clergy represent themselves to the public reflects 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.

18. Clergy using social networking sites and websites, including blogs, for personal use, should expect that any information displayed therein, including links, third-party postings and comments, will likely be evaluated by readers in light of that priest or deacon's position in the Church. For this reason, clergy using social networking sites and websites should continue to act or communicate in accordance with this policy and refrain from engaging in any communications on social networking sites, websites or blogging that may harm or tarnish the image, reputation and/or goodwill of the Archdiocese.
19. Clergy personal accounts or sites, such as those on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or other platforms, must not be used for Archdiocesan or parish programs nor to communicate directly with people to whom they minister.
20. Separate official or clearly authorized sites should be created and used to provide parish, Archdiocesan or program information.
21. Clergy must not telephone, text, communicate via instant messages, chat, or email people to whom they minister from a number or account which hides their identity.
22. 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.
23. All communications on the Archdiocesan voicemail, e-mail, and intranet systems are subject to the same policies regarding workplace harassment and discrimination. Offensive language or harassment of discriminatory nature in such messages will not be tolerated.
24. Clergy must obtain permission from a legal minor's parent or guardian before contacting that minor. When possible, all electronic communication is to be copied to a parent or guardian, as well as to a supervisor.
25. If parental abuse is suspected, notification of contact with the minor must be communicated to Child Protection Services of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.²
26. 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.
27. In electronic communications, clergy should write in the first person and properly identify themselves. Using false or misleading pseudonyms is not permitted.

² If you think a child or youth (under 19 years of age) is being abused or neglected, call **1-800-663-9122** at any time of the day or night.



28. Unless authorized, clergy must not to claim to represent the official position of an organization or the teachings of the Church. If there is potential or perceived ambiguity in the communication, the clergy should indicate that “the opinions expressed are my own and not necessarily those of the Archdiocese.”

Counselling, Spiritual Direction, and Accompaniment

29. While clergy are encouraged to offer spiritual accompaniment to those who request it, a clergy member shall not advertise as a “Pastoral Counsellor” or “Spiritual Director” unless accredited in the field through a recognized training program.
30. In counselling, spiritual direction, and spiritual accompaniment, clergy must not exceed their competence. They must refer individuals to other professionals when appropriate or necessary. A pastoral counselling, spiritual direction, or accompaniment relationship should never be considered a clinical relationship or psychotherapy.
31. 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 is used, then similar conditions and care are required.
32. To avoid confusion about the nature of the relationship, pastoral sessions such as interviews, formal or informal conversations, counselling, etc. 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 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:

33. Should be aware of warning signs that indicate potential problems with their own spiritual, physical, mental, and/or emotional health;
34. Should seek help immediately whenever they notice behavioral or emotional warning signs in their own professional and/or personal lives;
35. Should address their own spiritual needs. Accompaniment and support from a Spiritual Director is highly recommended;
36. Should use prudence whenever engaging in activities or behaviours that may become compulsive, addictive or negatively impact their health or welfare;
37. Must avoid all inappropriate or illegal use of alcohol, marijuana, 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.³
2. A priest or deacon must not solicit in any way, directly or indirectly, by word or action, any gift,⁴ 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 deacon⁵ with a business or profession apart from his ministry must neither financially profit from nor appear to financially profit from pastoral relationships. This applies when bringing the Church to someone (e.g., visiting them in their home) or when acting in a ministerial capacity at the parish or some other location (e.g., teaching a class or leading an event). This does not apply to all parishioners, but only those with whom the deacon has a direct pastoral relationship. If such a person makes a direct request for professional help in his area of competence, the deacon may refer the person to a colleague.
4. 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.
5. Pastors and parish 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.
6. Clergy who are involved in the financial administration of a parish must review and know the financial and temporal policies of the Archdiocese.
7. Regarding Church goods, clergy must not engage in any form of theft or unauthorized dealing, including misappropriation, intentional misallocation or investment of goods or property.

³ RCAV Policy concerning “stole fees” is to be followed.

⁴ 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.

⁵ According to Canon 286, “Clerics are prohibited from conducting business or trade personally or through others, for their own advantage or that of others, except with the permission of legitimate ecclesiastical authority.” Permanent deacons are exempted from this canon by other canons, so canon 286 applies only to priests and transitional deacons.



D. Breaches of the Policy or the Agreement

1. Clergy must understand that a breach of this *Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Priests and Deacons Engaged in Ministry* or the *Pastoral Conduct Agreement* will result in an investigation commensurate with the nature of the breach and its consequences to the Archdiocesan community. Such an investigation may range from a simple meeting up to involvement of the Archdiocesan Review Board and an independent investigator for breaches involving sexual misconduct.
2. Depending upon the nature and seriousness of the breach, a note may be made in the cleric's personnel file, and the file reviewed to see if there are any previous breaches that indicate a pattern of behaviour.

Approved: **Memorial of St. Anthony Zaccaria**
July 5, 2023

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Michael Miller CSB".

† **J. Michael Miller, CSB**
Archbishop of Vancouver

The following policy is hereby superseded:
Policy on Pastoral Conduct for Priests and Deacons, effective April 8, 2018



Pastoral Conduct 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. Allow Archdiocesan staff—at the Archdiocese’s discretion—to inspect any computer that I use for Archdiocesan ministry or Archdiocesan business to ensure that the computer contains no illegal content.
6. 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).
7. Maintain the Seal of Confession, which is always inviolable.
8. 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.
9. Avoid situations when I may be alone with a minor or vulnerable adult, whether during church activities or not.
10. Ensure that minors and vulnerable adults are properly supervised in a safe environment, including compliance with the Archdiocese’s Safe Environment policies.
11. Ensure that all physical contact is appropriate.

Examples of **appropriate touch** include, but are not limited to:

- 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” or “fist bumps”



Examples of **inappropriate touch** include, but are not limited to:

- a. kissing someone on the lips, or in any way suggesting, 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.
12. Review regularly and familiarize myself with the *Policy on Sexual Misconduct by Clergy* and the Archdiocese's other Safe Environment policies, and act accordingly.
 13. Notify the Archbishop immediately if a complaint is received of any misconduct by me.
 14. Cooperate fully in any investigation of abuse when a complaint is received, not limited to investigations of abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult.
 15. 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.
 16. 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, marijuana, 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, slap, or take a swing at anyone, or verbally threaten physical harm against 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 adults⁶, as someone in a position of trust and authority, I will not:

1. Be alone with them, except as needed during the Sacrament of Confession or other ministerial situations requiring privacy, in which cases I will observe the “open door” policy as outlined above.
2. Interact with them in the residential or other non-public parts of Archdiocesan property.
3. Take overnight trips alone with them or sleep in the same bed with them.
4. Shower with them or in the immediate presence of them.
5. Purchase or provide access for them to alcohol, drugs, tobacco products, marijuana products, or inappropriate videos, media, or reading material.
6. Buy gifts for them 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 their parents or guardians or make derogatory remarks about their family.
9. Involve them in personal problems or issues of adults.

The unique family situation of each individual cleric, but especially of married clergy, will sometimes call for prudence in the application of this policy while keeping firmly to its spirit. This policy is not intended to apply to a cleric’s appropriate actions with or regarding members of his own 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

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DD

⁶ A vulnerable adult is any person who because of advanced age, physical illness, mental disorder or disability, or because of a significant power imbalance, has a reduced capacity to advocate for him or herself.