

CODE OF CONDUCT

For leaders in churches and organizations

In order to keep this document readable, the general term 'leader' is chosen where director, elder, deacon, youth leader, pastoral worker, pastor or group leader could also be read. Where the text says he/his, she/her can also be read.

Why a code of conduct?

The Bible leaves no room for discussion that those in leadership carry a burden of responsibility. In the book of Deuteronomy (17:14-20) future kings of Israel receive strict instructions about how to deal with money, sex and power. In Ezekiel 34 the prophet speaks profoundly about shepherds that take care of themselves instead of their sheep. Also in the New Testament there are clear instructions and warnings to those in leadership like in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-3. It is clear that Christian leadership follows the example of Jesus, who had the attitude of a servant (Philippians 2:5-9).

Anywhere where people can be in a position to abuse power and manipulate, deceive, or treat people or money improperly or sexually harass, we are not blind to this but will do anything we can to stop it.

1. General

- 1.1 The leader is expected to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ and may be corrected based on biblical teaching.
- 1.2 Trustworthiness and integrity must characterize the leader in his relationship with God and all of his personal and public relationships. A leader is expected to be an example in the way he lives.
- 1.3 The leader strives to treat all people with equal respect and care.

2. Relationships in the church

- 2.1 The leader treats the difference between private and functional relationships carefully.
- 2.2 It is the responsibility of a leader, protecting himself and others, to guard his own boundaries and respect those of others concerning what is appropriate within the trust/authority relationship.
- 2.3 The leader honors the personal (physical and spiritual) integrity of the other. He understands the difference in power that comes with his position. He does not misuse the dependency or vulnerability of the person he is in leadership over or who is entrusted to his care.
- 2.4 The leader treats the other with respect, acknowledging the other is personally responsible for his own actions.
- 2.5 Every form of sexual approach or intimidation by the leader to a person under his leadership or care is a very serious and damaging form of unacceptable behavior. In this situation, it doesn't make a difference if the other party is giving consent or even taking the initiative.

Any hints, words or acts of affection aimed to arouse sexual or erotic feelings, sexual activity or intercourse are all seen as sexual approach or intimidation.

- 2.6 The leader will not be bribed, nor accept personal inheritances related to his position. The leader will be reserved when it comes to accepting gifts (resources or privileges) for himself, unless he is dependent on these as a source of income. In this case he will ensure correct responsibility for any gifts or donations. Any gift valued above a reasonable amount may not be personally accepted by the leader, instead such gifts will be handed over to the church. In case of doubt, he will seek advice from those overseeing him.
- 2.7 The leader will be reserved in giving gifts because this can harm the mutual dependency. This excludes a fitting token of appreciation.
- 2.8 The leader will avoid abusing his position, conflicts of interest and the use of manipulation. We understand manipulation to be the conscious or unconscious abuse of another for personal gain. This can happen in both a power play or in more subtle manner.
- 2.9 The leader will consider everything that he hears in the context of his position as confidential information, unless required by law to be reported.

- 2.10 Acting on behalf of a person without his knowledge and consent is only justified to the extent that he is unable to determine his will or if the interests of others are seriously threatened. The decision on this requires consultation with other leaders and / or experts. The leader justifies this action to the other as much as possible. Annexing responsibility of another party is only relevant when it concerns matters that cannot be postponed.
- 2.11 In dealing with conflict in the church or organisation, the leader will pursue the ministry of peace. In resolving conflict, he will strive for a balance in openness and confidentiality by making sure all parties are heard. In his task as mediator, he will seek the council and support of (1) a commission of wise men/women from in and/or outside the church, or (2) the denomination to which the church belongs, or (3) an organization that exists to resolve conflict by mediation. Acting as a mediator in a conflict can only be done by parties that have no part in the conflict or gain from it.

A mediator in a conflict must not have a part in the conflict or stand to gain from the outcome

- 2.12 When the leader is involved in a conflict within the congregation, he will strive for a peaceful resolution. Where necessary, he will seek the council and help of (1) a commission of wise men/women from in and/or outside the church or (2) the denomination to which the church belongs, or (3) an organization that exists to resolve conflict by mediation. A mediator should be impartial. Only when all these paths do not lead to a solution and he remains convinced of unfair treatment, can he seek judicial power.

3. Cooperation

- 3.1 The leader understands the nature and value of those he works with.
- 3.2 When the leader collaborates with others, he only shares data about third parties when they are relevant for realizing the goals of collaboration, keeping in mind point 2.9 and 2.10.
- 3.3 Confidential information gained while collaborating with other parties will remain private and confidential, unless such information is revealed which cannot be dismissed or ignored and demands a response.

(The leader will keep silent about things that he finds out when collaborating with other parties to the extent that it is confidential information, unless there are certain wrongdoings that come into view that cannot be dismissed or ignored and demand a response.)

A decision in this shall be made after seeking the council of the own congregation, organization and fellow leaders.

4. The relationship between the leader and the church or organization

- 4.1 The leader will accept the rules and regulations of the church or organization he commits himself to as the framework for his function.
- 4.2 If the leader has criticism concerning the church or organization, he shall follow internal procedures and regulations unless it involves abuses that justify ignoring these and demand making them public or informing the police.
- 4.3 After ending his function, the leader remains responsible for the personal and confidential information he received during his service.
- 4.4 When the leader and the appropriate overseers are informed that a complaint has been filed against him with the SGL/SEM, then the leader and the appropriate oversight within the church or organization will decide if the leader can continue in function during the investigation.

5. Behavior towards colleagues and other leaders

- 5.1 The leader will be cooperative and collegiate with all who are serving the Gospel and aim to maintain the unity in Christ.
- 5.2 The leader submits to the structures for supervision/intervision set by the church or organization. He is open to feedback and correction from others. When necessary, the leader will ask for (pastoral) counseling or assistance.
- 5.3 The leader will refrain from public criticism about a colleague. He will also be reserved when he hears others criticise a colleague.
- 5.4 When a leader hears about a colleague or fellow leader that has fallen into sin or strayed, he will take responsibility bearing Matthew 18:15-22 in mind.
- 5.5 When the leader steps back from his role, he will leave space for his successor to exercise this role in the way he wants to.