

Pastoral Ethics*

The exhortation of the Apostle Paul, "... set an example for the believers ..." (1 Timothy 4:12, NIV), is one that every minister must take seriously. Moral integrity must never be compromised by lack of complete honesty; breach of vows to spouse, family, church, and country, nor by indiscreet actions toward the opposite sex. Debts are to be paid when due. The pastor must be self-disciplined, not allowing even the appearance of evil. Actions speak louder than words. The strongest sermon ever preached is in the life lived. Even thoughts need to be cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

You and your fellow pastors make up the conference team. Your colleagues deserve your support. Be affirming. Let no lay-person ever hear from your lips critical comments concerning another pastor.

Be ready to help new and younger pastors who come to your conference. Respect and honor those who are older and have given years of their lives for the ministry.

One of the strongest encouragements to conference unity is the practice of pastors praying one for another on a daily basis. Apply the Golden Rule in your relationships, endeavoring always to treat fellow pastors as you would have them treat you.

As you accept the responsibilities of a new congregation, speak affirmatively of your predecessor, acknowledging contributions and strengths. Closest friends of the former pastor will soon be your supporters. Build your ministry on your own strengths.

When leaving a congregation, make the transition as easy for your successor and spouse as possible. Introduce them personally to the leaders of the church and community. Do not return to your former pastorate except when absolutely necessary.

Avoid conducting funerals and weddings where you have previously served without full knowledge and consent of the incumbent pastor. If it becomes necessary, always involve the present pastor in the service. If for some reason you are going to be in the community, inform the pastor of your presence. Let the people know you are not there in a pastoral role.

Paul continues: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16, NIV).

CODE OF ETHICS

for Ministers of the Free Methodist Church

Personal Standards

I will endeavor at all times to be conscious of the sacredness of my calling.

I will endeavor prayerfully to deepen my commitment to Christ and constantly live this commitment before all in perfect love.

I will endeavor to give adequate time in developing my intellectual capacities, in keeping abreast of current thought, and in preparing my messages.

I will endeavor to keep my body physically fit.

I will endeavor to give full-time attention to my ministerial duties.

I will endeavor to maintain a high moral standard in speech and conduct, and be decorous in manners and dress.

I will endeavor to act above reproach in all business and financial matters, and incur no debts that would embarrass me or my church.

I will endeavor to present a balance of truth tactfully and constructively.

I will endeavor to acknowledge the influence of others upon my life and ministry, and give due credit to resource materials used.

I will endeavor to regulate the demeanor of my own family.

Pastoral Standards

I will accept a pastorate as a sacred obligation and faithfully perform all my duties until released.

I will be a spiritual shepherd of all my people and endeavor to be a shepherd to those who do not have one.

I will preach the gospel of salvation and entire sanctification with love and patience.

I will endeavor to act above reproach in the performance of my personal duties.

I will regard my service as primary, my remuneration as secondary.

I will keep confidences inviolate.

I will represent the Free Methodist Church in my community and be a messenger of good will and unity in the spirit of Christ.

I will leave the church records and property in good order when my responsibilities are terminated.

Professional Standards

I will respect the pastorate of another minister and render service only in emergencies or with the consent of the assigned minister.

I will seek to enhance the work of another minister.

I will deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.

I will be enthusiastic about and promote the mission of the Free Methodist Church.

In the event of a change in my doctrinal position or if for any other reason I find myself no longer in harmony or sympathy with the Free Methodist Church, I will voluntarily withdraw from the conference and church in the spirit of Christ endeavoring to protect the best interests of both the local and general church.

PASTOR'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____