# Pastoral Ethics Covenant

As ministers of the gospel, our lives give expression to the good news of Jesus we preach. The pastor is called to a holiness, empowered by the grace of Jesus. While this covenant cannot describe all the areas in question, (finances, truth-telling, parenting, neighbour relations, technology, food and drink, medical ethics etc.), what follows are some central postures that will affect the rest of life. The full definition of these commitments is described in the EMC Minister’s Manual.

## Accountability

As a pastor with the EMC, I commit to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity. I commit to faithfully following Jesus Christ, demonstrating a lifestyle of devotion to God, integrity of Christian character, and humble service. I will be accountable to God and the Scripture, to the Church board and congregation, and to the Conference Ministerial.

## The use of Power

I am aware that as a pastor I hold a position of power within the Church and will take care to not misuse it. I will commit to expressing a selfless love to those in the congregation and community. I will model servant leadership in my relationships, preaching and meetings. I will seek to humbly empower other leaders and members in the congregation.

## Dual Relationships

In my personal relationships with church members (family, friends, etc.) I will use wisdom and care to maintain healthy boundaries. I will take precautions to ensure that appropriate accountability and protocols are followed and refer to other professionals when needed.

## Confidentiality

I will not disclose confidential information, shared directly or indirectly, by those under my care. Limits to confidentiality include severe threats of harm, or legal obligations. In these cases, I will consult with appropriate professionals or the Conference Pastor.

## Sexual ethics

I will demonstrate a healthy perspective and practice of sexuality in my life. If married, I recognize that marriage is a life-long, committed covenant with one person of the opposite gender. If single, my life will be a life of celibate relationships. In relating to congregants, I will commit to create an atmosphere of safety and professionalism. I will teach and model a biblical vision of sexuality in my ministry of discipleship in the church.

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*Pastor’s Signature Date*

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*EMC representative signature Church Representative Signature*

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Source: Minister’s Manual

# The Holiness of a Minister

As ministers of the gospel, our lives give expression to the good news of Jesus we preach. As ministers it is our calling to be a living picture of the allegiance to Christ we vow in our baptism and recommit to in the Lord’s Supper. The apostle Paul can say to the young Timothy “you observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me. . .” (II Tim. 3:10-11). The pastor is called to a holiness empowered by the grace of Jesus. However, holiness is not a strange life lived on a pedestal. It is a well-functioning, ordered, healthy human life offered to God. A holy person has the strength to do what needs to be done at the right time and in the right way. Ministers will sin and need forgiveness as all Christians do. The pastor will portray a repentance, humility and daily casting of oneself onto the grace of God.

This manual cannot describe all the various areas (finances, truth-telling, parenting, neighbour relations, technology, food and drink, medical ethics etc.). However what follow are some central postures that will affect the rest of life.

## Accountability

By virtue of their office and responsibility in the church, ministers have authority. However, there can be no godly authority that is not supported and nurtured by godly accountability. The minister’s accountability to God and the Scripture, which are ultimate, is expressed by a humble willingness to be accountable to the congregation and the conference.

The minister’s accountability to the congregation happens formally by submitting to a job description, periodic evaluations, working cooperatively with the church board, and regular reporting at congregational meetings. Informally, this accountability is an eagerness to receive constructive feedback, an availability for meeting, and a demeanour of being willing to learn and change. Ministers do not design their own “vision” or plan for the congregation. The minister works with the congregation and its leaders to develop a vision that they together bring about. The minister will refer to the church as *our* church, not *my* church. The minister’s work is evaluated according to this congregational vision.

The minister’s accountability to the conference takes the form of accepting ordination in situations where this is expected. It involves accepting and teaching the EMC Statement of Faith which is the doctrine the conference holds to be central to the gospel. Conference accountability is demonstrated by attending EMC Ministerial events and regional ministerial gatherings. Pursuing friendships with other EMC ministers is another way of being showing accountability.

In cases where the covenant between the minister and the congregation has been broken through grievous sin or false teaching, the EMC has a discipline process that is described in the EMC Constitution (Sec. B, 6)

## The use of power

To be a minister in a congregation is to have a measure of power. This power is stewarded and held in a sacred trust and not abused. Ministers are aware of their power and do not seek to deny it. This power is operative in every encounter the minister has with the church and its individuals. In all things ministers will use their position within the church to further the mission the congregation has together determined as their calling.

The minister will be careful to respect congregational decision-making and will be both a facilitator and a guide to these processes. The minister will bring a theological perspective to these discussions and will lead the church to pray and search the scriptures for wisdom.

The minister will naturally have strong opinions about some congregational decisions. It is appropriate to let these opinions be known in a spirit of modesty, but there will be no attempt to do “politics”, marshalling support groups, using the sermon to swing decisions, or anything that resembles manipulation. The minister is only responsible to accomplish what can be achieved through godly, gentle witness in the congregation.

An appropriate stewarding of the minister’s position utilizes power to create healthy congregational dynamics. Unnoticed or suppressed voices in the church can be highlighted. Scriptural wisdom can be brought to the fore. Opponents can be invited into face-to-face conversation. The church can be motivated and inspired to tackle daunting challenges. In these ways, and many others, the minister’s power serves the well-being of the church.

## Dual Relationships

A minister’s relationships in the congregation are complex. For example, the minister’s brother-in-law may be the church board chair. The minister’s wife may be the Sunday School Superintendent. A pastor may have a supervisory role over a good friend. These “dual relationships” need much wisdom and care in order to be healthy. It is important that the minister have forthright conversations with these people, so that the difference between being a family member or close friend, and being a co-worker in the church is made explicit and articulated. The minister will take precautions to ensure that the normal accountability and protocols are followed, regardless of the dual relationship. The minister will avoid discussing church business at family gatherings or other places where this dual relationship needs to be separated.

## Sexual ethics

Ministers are sexual beings like all humans and long for the intimacy, companionship, and procreation that God has intended for the sexes to discover with each other. These desires are powerful currents in our lives and need to be directed to their God-given ends. When they are mis-directed they cause heartache, confusion, and the ruin of community.

Ministers will demonstrate a healthy perspective and practice of sexuality in their lives. Marriage is a life-long, committed covenant with one person of the opposite gender. Singleness will be a life full of celibate relationships with all people in the church. In relating to congregants ministers will seek to create an atmosphere of safety and professionalism. The minister will also teach the biblical vision of sexuality in discipling young people, preparing couples for marriage, helping troubled marriages, and proclaiming the biblical vision from the pulpit.

Sexual misconduct constitutes a serious break in the pastor/church covenant. The Sexual Misconduct Policy in the Ministerial Handbook describes the processes we agree to follow when allegations are brought against a minister.

## Confidentiality

A minister is given privileged access to the personal lives of congregants and how this information is handled builds trust in the church and creates an environment where healing and guidance can happen. Confidentiality is not about keeping secrets, but rather about allowing people to maintain control over the life-details they share. If the minister feels the need to consult with others or share sensitive information, permission should be sought from the person who shared this information.

There are instances where a minister is under obligation not to keep a secret and must report information to the appropriate legal authorities. When the minister has come to believe that someone is being harmed, or is in danger of being harmed, there must be a report to the authorities. Also, when a minister comes to believe that a person is in danger of harming themselves there is an obligation to report to authorities. These are often complex situations and it will often be difficult to know when confidentiality must be broken. In situations where there is a questions, a wise minister will quickly consult with counsellors, social workers, or the Conference Pastor to determine what the right course of action is.

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Source: Office Handbook

1. Ministry Integrity

As a Christian organization, the EMC requires all its employees to observe the highest standards of ethics and integrity. The Employer has a reputation for upholding these values, and all employees are expected to hold and observe them.

a. EMC Office staff will be faithful, personal followers of Jesus Christ, demonstrate a lifestyle of devotion to God, humble service, and integrity of Christian character.

b. As an employee of the EMC, you have a duty of loyalty to the Employer. In all your activities, you must act in the best interests of the Employer.

c. The Employer values its many excellent relationships with donors, volunteers, and other supporters. You agree to support those relationships.

d. You agree to follow all organizational rules set down by the Employer from time to time. If you have any questions about those rules or their application, please contact the Executive Director.

e. During your employment with the EMC, you shall not engage in any activities (either during or outside of working hours) that create a conflict with the interests of the Employer.

f. You agree that you must not disclose any of the Employer’s confidential information including, without restriction, information relating to donors, employees, and clients. We trust that given the nature of our organization you understand that this confidentiality obligation is important.

g. Staff members will be in full agreement with the EMC Statement of Faith and Statement of Church Practices and seek to direct their lives by these principles.