

CODE OF MINISTERIAL ETHICS

This Code of Ministerial Ethics is for the purpose of maintaining the high character of the Christian ministry. As a minister member of North Alabama Presbytery, you are asked to study this document, sign a copy for the Commission on Ministry records, and keep a copy for your file.

1. **Speech and Conduct**—Like all Christians, the pastor should try to shape their speech and conduct so that it is patterned after Paul’s counsel to think about whatever is honorable, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise. Trying to act as God’s servant, the pastor should speak the truth in love. They should use understanding, tact, and discretion, with a sense of respect for all people, a spirit of fairness and decency, and a concern for Christian brotherhood and sisterhood. The pastor’s motives should be honest and sincere in desiring to build up the body of Christ. In speaking of other pastors it should be remembered that making disparaging statements is destructive of the peace, unity, and purity of the Church. At all times, pastors should strive to share faith, hope, and love in all relationships.
2. **Service for Members of Another Church**—When a pastor is called upon to officiate at a wedding, funeral or baptism for families who are not members of their congregation, the pastor should ascertain whether the family is a member of a different church. If the family is a member of another congregation, the family should be urged to procure the services of their own pastor. If that effort fails, the pastor should seek to inform the family’s pastor to explain the circumstances and secure the concurrence of that pastor whenever possible prior to performing any services.
3. **Calling on Members of Neighboring Churches**—The pastor’s first responsibility is to their own flock, and they should concentrate calling on the members of their own congregation. Normally, the pastor should not call, either in the home or the hospital, on one who is a member of another church unless the initiative and interest shown by such a person requires it as a courtesy, or the circumstances indicate that it would be helpful. A useful guideline is to make only such calls as you would deem appropriate for another pastor to make on a member of your congregation.
4. **Multiple Staff Relationships**—In staff relationships, as in all intra-church relationships, the objective is to work together with a spirit of cooperation in building up the whole church. To this end, the pastors should be understanding toward one another, accept each other as persons, respect the competencies of each other, offer constructive suggestions to one another, forgive misunderstandings, and be tolerant of differences of opinion and style of operation.

A staff member should not aspire to succeed any other person on the staff. Innuendo and gossip should be avoided. A staff member should be encouraged to speak openly and frankly about their differences and problems to the individual with whom they differs, and only to that person. Loyal support for all other staff members is a tremendous help in building and maintaining good working relationships and in edifying the church. As members of the staff do their work with enthusiasm and confidence in each other, a strong team can be formed to carry forward the work of the church. If a person on staff feels unable to manage relationships with other staff members in a creative and

effective manner, then they should give serious consideration to relocating for their own sake and for the sake of the work of the church.

5. **When a Pastor Leaves a Church**—When the relationship between the pastor and the church is dissolved, they should announce publicly that they will no longer be the pastor, and that they will not be available to be called upon for pastoral services. A former pastor may be called upon for services only when unusual circumstances exist. Such an invitation should come only from the current pastor or moderator of the session after consultation with the parties concerned. It is understood that the former pastor would not conduct any services but would offer only to assist the pastor in such services as baptisms, weddings, funerals, or hospital visitation.
6. **The Transitional Pastor**--The purpose of a Transitional Pastor is to prepare a particular congregation for the coming of a new pastor and to provide essential and helpful services prior to the calling of a new pastor. To this end, they will not seek to glorify or to mold loyalties to themselves, but rather loyalties to the office of the pastor and, most of all, loyalties to Christ and to the Church, which is His Body on earth.
7. **The Pastor and Their Successor**—When a pastor is called to another parish or retires, they should exercise due care not to influence, by direction or indirection, by spoken or written word, the selection of their successor or the policies of that successor. The pastor should be especially discreet when visiting their former parish. In such cases, it would be proper to pay their respects and support to the successor. Frequent visits to one's former parish should be avoided.

During the transitional period before a new pastor is called, the former pastor may be called upon to conduct ministerial services. If there is a Transitional Pastor, they should be accorded the same courtesies as the new pastor. If there is no Transitional Pastor, the former pastor may serve as called upon only by the invitation of the session.

When a pastor leaves a church, they should exercise all care to have no further influence upon the congregation either by conversation, correspondence, or other action. They should seek to be supportive as comments are made regarding the new pastor, programs, policies, and activities of the former church.

The former pastor should not attend meetings or services of worship at their former parish except for possible special occasions or by occasional invitation.

8. **The Pastor and Their Predecessor**—The successor also has the responsibility to be courteous to their predecessor. The years may have built up loyalties that are strong, and though a predecessor may do everything possible to discourage a family from seeking their services, it would be gracious in certain instances for the successor to invite the family's former pastor to assist with pastoral care/services. The wise pastor will observe that such an attitude might do more to move people to accept their own ministry than would resistance. In all cases, the desire to minister to persons through the office of the Minister of the Word and Sacrament should take precedence over personal considerations.
9. **Other Pastors**—All pastors who have no pastoral relationship with a congregation should respect

the position of the parish pastors regarding all ministerial functions within the community. Weddings, funerals, hospital visitation and administration of the sacraments should not be accepted by such ministers unless an invitation has been given by the pastor and/or the session of the church involved. Such ministers may fill the pulpit and/or administer the sacraments only at the request of the local pastor or session or by permission of the Presbytery. Such ministers ordinarily should not counsel with nor advise former members concerning problems in their churches but should encourage them to seek the counsel of their pastors or other duly constituted authorities in the Presbytery to which the church belongs.

10. **Questions and Violations**—All questions, concerns, and evidence of violation of this Code of Ethics should be privately submitted to the Moderator of the Commission on Ministry. In so far as it is possible, the Commission on Ministry should exercise pastoral oversight and counsel privately with any persons who may be involved. If a pastor who is a member of another Presbytery is involved, the Commission on Ministry and North Alabama Presbytery should communicate with the Commission on Ministry in that Presbytery.

ACTIONS

1. Presbytery has adopted the “Code of Ministerial Ethics.”
2. The pastors and Commissioned Ruling Elders of North Alabama Presbytery covenant with each other to follow this Code of Ministerial Ethics in a spirit of sibling concern for the welfare and success of each other and in the spirit of Christ.
3. Every pastor and Commissioned Ruling Elder in the North Alabama Presbytery shall receive a copy of the Code of Ministerial Ethics.
4. Every clerk of session in the North Alabama Presbytery shall receive a copy of the Code of Ministerial Ethics and shall read this statement to the session.
5. Each pastor and Commissioned Ruling Elder of North Alabama Presbytery shall prepare and sign two copies. The pastor or Commissioned Ruling Elder shall keep one signed copy, and forward one signed copy to the PRESBYTERY office for the Commission on Ministry files.

Pastor / Commissioned Ruling Elder [print name]

Signature

Date