

## Our Code of Ethics

Did you know that the ICCC has a code of ethics for professional church leaders? The code reads:

*Having been called by God to be a minister in the Church of Jesus Christ, I will seek to be faithful to that calling in my witness, in my preaching and teaching the gospel without fear or favor, and by speaking the truth in love.*

*I will recognize the priesthood of all believers within the Church, and I will seek to nurture the gifts of others and join their gifts with mine for the sake of the mission and health of the Church.*

*I will pray for and seek to promote the unity of the Church throughout the world and participate in those activities which strengthen its witness and mission.*

*I will seek to understand, support and interpret the diverse ministries of the International Council of Community Churches and I will not accept a position in a church affiliated with the Council unless I am in accord with its traditions and practices; nor will I use my influence to alienate a congregation from its relationship and support of the Council. If my convictions change, I will resign my position.*

*I will seek to grow in faith, knowledge and the practice of ministry by disciplined prayer, study and devotion, endeavoring to maintain wholesome relationships, sexual integrity, financial responsibility, continued professional development, and by seeking to maintain good health habits.*

*I will hold in confidence any privileged communication received by me during the conduct of my ministry. I will not disclose confidential communications in private or public except when in my practice of ministry I am convinced that the sanctity of confidentiality is outweighed by my well informed belief that the parishioner/client will cause imminent, life-threatening or substantial harm to self or others, or unless the privilege is waived by those giving the information.*

*I will, upon my resignation or retirement, sever my professional leadership relations with my former parish or center, give due regard and respect to my successors, and not make professional contacts in the field of another professional church leader without his/her request and/or consent.*

*I will regard all persons with equal respect and concern and seek justice for all who experience discrimination.*

*I will seek to support colleagues in ministry by building constructive relationships wherever I serve, both with the staff where I work and with colleagues in neighboring churches.*

*I will seek to serve God with purity, integrity and truthfulness.*

The recently re-written manual for pastoral search/pulpit committees [Searching for Pastoral Leadership](#) suggests that when an ICCC church or center calls a new pastor, that person should be required to subscribe to the code. As independent churches and centers, Council members may or may not decide to follow the suggestion. But in my opinion, they should.

A code of ethics has a "shelf life." Though principles are eternal, terminology and definitions have a way of being understood differently from one generation to the next. As you read the code, would you want to change some of the wording to make its meaning clearer? Do changed circumstances call for a new sentence or two? For example can we find an elegant way to pledge that "I will not goof around playing computer games in my office all day instead of doing the work of ministry?" Do we need such a promise about managing our time wisely?

Since its founding the Council has been a leader among Christian communions. I thank God that we have led in spiritual integrity. I hope that we can find time together to discuss our code, and perhaps to update its language. And to respond to the obvious question: yes I agree that the walk is more important than the talk. But in this case the talk (the code of ethics) can help the wider church and community know that we are serious about the walk.

May God bless you in your walk of Christian integrity and truth.

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