

# CARING FOR YOUR PASTOR

*A code of best practice  
for churches*



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**HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR PASTORS AND  
SUBMIT TO THEIR AUTHORITY, BECAUSE THEY  
KEEP WATCH OVER YOU AS THOSE WHO MUST  
GIVE AN ACCOUNT. DO THIS SO THAT THEIR  
WORK WILL BE A JOY, NOT A BURDEN, FOR  
THAT WOULD BE OF NO BENEFIT TO YOU.**

**HEBREWS 13:17**

## **THE AIM OF THIS CODE**

Churches that thrive spiritually are led by pastors who are thriving spiritually. Yet it is a sad irony that those with the responsibility of feeding others are sometimes the least well-nourished and cared for people themselves.

The pastoral well-being of pastors and their families is a key responsibility of the church. Sometimes it seems as if secular organisations are more committed to the care of their employees than churches are to the care of those who serve them. Not only is that contrary to Scripture, but it's a poor witness to the world and an obstacle to the spread of the gospel. Churches should be shining lights when it comes to caring for pastors.

One factor that can help the spiritual vitality of a pastor is the terms agreed with the church as the basis for their relationship. The highest possible standards should apply to the way in which the terms of appointment for pastors are determined and implemented. Pastors who are unburdened by anxieties

over terms and circumstances of ministry are more able to concentrate on the work of the gospel and leading the church in the joy of the Lord. Any lack of clarity or agreement can lead to a breakdown in the relationship between a pastor and their church, which is always devastating to both.

This Code of Best Practice exists to promote positive, grace-filled relationships that reflect the gospel, foster a culture of spiritual health throughout the church, and bear a good testimony to the world around us.

The Code lays out a number of core scriptural principles and values to help promote good practice. Each church and each pastor is responsible for agreeing the terms and conditions which will ensure pastors are well-nourished and sustained in grace-filled service.

We use the generic “pastor” throughout this code. However, the spirit of the code applies to all paid church leaders and church-based gospel workers, whether locally referred to as “pastor”, “minister” or by some other title. In the same way, all references to “leadership team” mean church officers, elders, or the equivalent leadership body within the church.

**Important:** *This document is published by FIEC to encourage churches and church pastors to maintain high standards of pastoral care and the spiritual health of those involved in church leadership. It does not constitute legal advice. It is important that legislation, in particular, employment and charity law, is considered alongside the application of this code.*

## FIVE CORE AREAS OF BEST PRACTICE

Good practice includes at least these five areas for the well-being of church pastors:

1.



a covenant of care between pastors and congregations;

2.



terms and conditions of employment that honour gospel workers and lead to sustainable and spiritually healthy patterns of life;

3.



personal support and opportunity for ministry development;

4.



open and honest consultation and communication; and

5.



a mutually agreed dispute resolution process.

## USING THIS CODE

On the following pages, each of the five core areas is addressed by:

- > a **statement of ideals** which churches and pastors are encouraged to adopt and formally agree together; and
- > a number of specific **proposals** are then set out for each area of well-being, which a church may wish to consider adopting or adapting as an expression of good practice.

It is for each church to tailor its own policies under each set of specific proposals in order to meet its own needs. Not all will be equally applicable to all situations. The important issue is that each church and each pastor shape and agree their own arrangements to meet the spirit of the statement of ideals covering each of the five areas of well-being. The Code is intended to affirm the need for biblical attitudes and standards to govern our relationships in ways that reflect the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We strongly recommend that each church prays about mutually agreeing policies with their pastors in all these areas regardless of whether they are needed at the present time but at the bare minimum adopting some version of the Covenant of Care laid out in Section 1.

In establishing and maintaining the relationship between congregations and their paid ministers, we recognise that there is a judicious blend of the legal and the spiritual. It is our conviction that these two in no way conflict.

This Code of Best Practice should be read in conjunction with its companion leaflet, *Calling Your Pastor*. Along with these leaflets, Edward Connor Solicitors has prepared separate draft policies on the subjects of disciplinary, grievance and dispute resolution procedures.

1.



## TO ENCOURAGE

**> a biblical vision for healthy relationships between the local church and its pastors.**

**> churches and pastors to mutually own the need for pastoral care of pastors as well as the flock.**

## STATEMENT OF IDEALS

*As the pastors and the people of [church name], we willingly enter into this Covenant of Care for the glory of God's name, the well-being of Christ's Church, and the mutual welfare of the pastors, their families, and of the congregation.*

*We accept that the fundamental nature of the relationship between pastors and people is that of a mutual covenant, rather than an employment contract, a formal agreement or an authority arrangement. It is a partnership for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ.*

*On this basis, we recognise that we have mutual responsibilities of care and accountability, each to the other, for the common good.*

## PROPOSALS FOR MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- a.** We acknowledge that the church belongs not to the pastors, nor to the people, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not "our" church but "his" church;

- b.** We accept that we each have a responsibility towards each other – in intention, attitude, behaviour, and word – to follow Christ’s fulfilment of the law, which is love (Romans 13:10);
- c.** We agree that in matters of conflict we will submit ourselves to the principles of biblical wisdom as expressed in Matthew 18:15-20, Matthew 5:23-26 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and as expressed in the church’s dispute resolution procedures;
- d.** We aim that our communication with each other will be honest, transparent and candid (2 Corinthians 4:1-2). We reject gossip, innuendo, suspicion and manipulation;
- e.** We agree to ongoing, annual review of how this Covenant of Care is working out, in practice and reality, across the life of this congregation; and
- f.** We accept the responsibility to pray for and seek practically each other’s good.

## **PROPOSALS FOR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PEOPLE TO THE PASTORS**

- a.** We affirm that our pastors are called to lead this congregation, and to equip its people for the work of mission and ministry;
- b.** If any of them are employed by the church, we accept our legal and spiritual responsibility to honour them by providing appropriately for their physical, emotional and financial needs and those of their families in order that they may follow God’s calling without undue concern for



these matters;

- c.** We agree to respect appropriate boundaries of time, space and emotional demands, with regard to our pastors' family and personal lives; and
- d.** If we have issues about our pastors or their ministry, we will take them first directly to them, or use appropriate channels within the leadership team to deal openly and honestly with our concerns.

## PROPOSALS FOR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PASTORS TO THE PEOPLE

- a.** We acknowledge that our role individually and collectively is to pastor this congregation through prayer and the ministry of the word and to lead it in following Jesus' call to make disciples; it is our responsibility to serve and equip the believers, not to lord it over them (Acts 6:1-7; Mark 10:35-45; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Ephesians 4:11-16);
- b.** We agree to hold ourselves appropriately accountable to our fellow leaders in the church for our lives and ministries;
- c.** If we have issues or disagreements with a fellow church leader or member of the congregation, we will speak directly to that person; and
- d.** We accept that our position as pastors brings with it various kinds of authority. We will use this authority, under God, to serve and bless not to abuse this congregation.

2.



## TO ENCOURAGE

**> diligent and careful attention to the practical sustenance, needs and life-patterns of pastors.**

## STATEMENT OF IDEALS

*We recognise that the joint terms and expectations attaching to a pastor's ministry should be such as to free them from anxieties which might detract from their joy in the ministry of the gospel. Terms and conditions should be consistent with an attitude of mutual love, respect, generosity and wisdom, and are designed to create a relationship of love and trust, grace and mutual support between fellow pastors and with the congregation.*

## PROPOSALS

- a. That before a ministry begins, every pastor and church leadership team should draw up and agree in writing the terms and expectations of his appointment. The more care is taken in establishing clarity from the start the less opportunity there is for confusion and conflict later on.
- b. That a joint written statement or memorandum of understanding should also be provided summarising the key areas of our pastors' responsibilities and the division of responsibilities and accountability among the ministry teams

within the church. All employees are additionally legally entitled to receive a statement of their main employment particulars. See Appendices 2 and 3 for more details.

- c. That if a pastor is married, any specific role expected of his wife (either by the church or by the pastor and spouse) beyond that of being a faithful wife and committed church member should be clearly stated and agreed. Ministry wives should be encouraged to contact FIEC's Women's Ministry Coordinator to find out how FIEC can best support them: **women@fiec.org.uk**
- d. That the church should seek to ensure access to high quality pastoral support for the pastor and family as a normal matter of course.
- e. That safeguarding procedures should be in place with reference to the work of the pastor. For instance, they should keep a Disclosure check up-to-date and agree to conform to the church's safeguarding policy etc.
- f. That the pastor should be encouraged to apply to join and contribute fully to the life of the FIEC Pastors' Network; this will offer accreditation, accountability and access to peer support.



Find out more about the Pastors'  
Network at **fiec.org.uk/pn**

3.



## TO ENCOURAGE

- > the ongoing discipleship walk of pastors.
- > the church and pastors to agree a framework for personal, spiritual and ministry development of pastors.

## STATEMENT OF IDEALS

*We acknowledge that any pastor, however gifted or experienced, benefits from every opportunity their church provides for the development of ministry. No pastor has all the attributes and gifts which would benefit a church, and those they have will always be capable of being developed. Any opportunity to extend or develop gifts will be a stimulus and encouragement to the pastor, and will result in blessing to the church, since it is always rewarding to observe the fruits of gifts and resources being shared with the wider body of Christ. Therefore, in accordance with the gifts and aptitudes of the pastor, and the circumstances of the church, we will consider how best we can provide for the development of our pastor's ministry, whether through appropriate training or by the extension of ministry opportunities within or outside the church.*

## PROPOSALS

- a. In addition to holiday entitlement, pastor(s) should be encouraged to undertake

ministry (including an agreed number of Sundays) outside the church;

- b.** They should be encouraged and enabled to attend appropriate conferences (including the FIEC Leaders' Conference) and other appropriate training and development opportunities (e.g. mission events, courses, overseas trips, ministry support groups, academic study), such as will develop ministry and gospel usefulness. The number and nature to be agreed;
- c.** Arrangements should be considered for agreed periods of study leave at appropriate intervals;
- d.** The church should consider the principle and practical implications of giving regular periods of sabbatical leave.

4.



## TO ENCOURAGE

> clear  
grace-filled  
communication  
in the church.

> transparent  
and godly  
processes in  
all matters  
that materially  
affect pastors.

## STATEMENT OF IDEALS

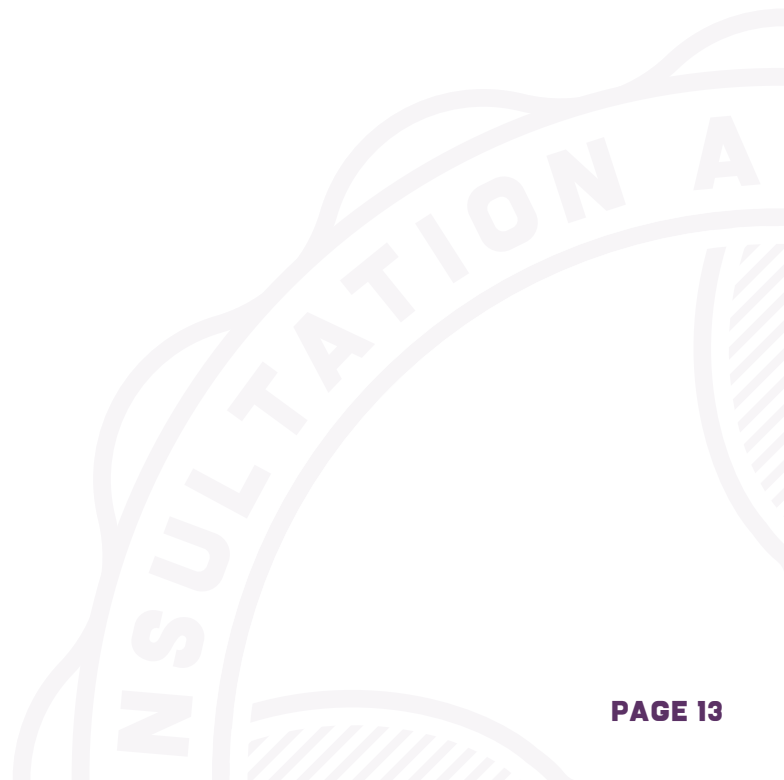
*As a church, we commit ourselves to the way of transparency and integrity, recognising that policy decisions should always be considered in a climate of openness and honesty, and be subject to discussion, consultation and prayer. For this reason, pastors and church officers will consult together over vision and significant areas of policy, in order to ensure that the church is led by a united leadership. Pastors will always be informed of matters which affect them or their ministry personally, and will always be consulted on all matters which have a bearing on their ministry, their personal interests, or the life of the church.*

## PROPOSALS

- a. While there may be rare occasions when the leadership team of a church may need to meet in the absence of our paid pastors, they should not normally do so without their knowledge;
- b. Where leadership teams are required to meet without paid pastors (e.g. when

reviewing remuneration or any other terms and conditions), the decisions taken should be relayed to them in person and as soon as practicable;

- c.** The leadership team should conduct an annual appraisal process with the paid pastors in order to review their personal walk with the Lord Jesus, their own ministry within the church, regular hours and patterns of work, and the impact of ministry upon family and home life;
- d.** In addition to this annual appraisal process, regular opportunities should be provided for the paid pastor(s) or staff team to meet with the leadership team to review the life of the church, as this will enable any concerns to be expressed by any party in a low-key way;
- e.** Our pastors should always be made aware of any information which is communicated to other members of the church if it affects the life of the church.



5.



## TO ENCOURAGE

**> clear and supportive processes in situations of conflict, misconduct, discipline or grievance.**

## STATEMENT OF IDEALS

*The relationship between the pastors and the church functions best when rooted in an attitude of mutual support, esteem and care. However, even where best practice is being followed, disputes can occur. We therefore commit ourselves to resolving any disputes which do arise in a spirit of fellowship and goodwill. Recognising that disputes can have multiple causes and can bring untold harm to the life, work and witness of the church, we will make every effort to settle them promptly, effectively, and in accordance with the Bible, so as to maintain the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus, the integrity of our pastor and the unity, confidence and morale of the church.*

## PROPOSALS

- a.** In the event of a dispute arising, this should be addressed without delay at a meeting between the pastor and the leadership team;
- b.** In the discussion of any matter in dispute, the honour of the Lord Jesus' name and the



well-being of his church should be the primary aim of all parties;

- c. Opportunity should be given for all parties to be heard who have a legitimate view about or interest in the matters under dispute;
- d. Matters of concern should be faced prayerfully and honestly, not ignored or papered over. Without this attitude of openness, issues will never be resolved and will inevitably grow and become a hindrance to effective work and harmonious relationships;
- e. If a dispute becomes seriously damaging and incapable of resolution, a third party should be invited to assist in arbitration. This party could be an individual (e.g. a senior or retired pastor in the local area), or a body (FIEC has established a Pastoral Support Team under the leadership of the Pastoral Ministries Director, and information can be found on ***fiec.org.uk*** by searching for 'pastoral support team').
- f. The general arrangements for dispute resolution should be summarised in writing in conjunction with the policy statements produced by Edward Connor Solicitors. For details, contact Edward Connor Solicitors:

***info@edwardconnor.com***



## **APPENDIX 1: BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR THIS CODE**

The goal of churches and pastors should be to maintain the highest standards of biblical practice. Below are some of Bible passages which support the intentions of this Code. It is not our intention to proof text every detail, but to highlight those Bible passages which have a bearing on these matters.

### **INTEGRITY**

1 Timothy 3:1-7  
Titus 1:6-9  
1 Peter 5:1-3  
1 Thessalonians 2:3-12

### **PASTORAL CARE AND RESPECT**

1 Corinthians 9:7-14  
1 Thessalonians 5:12-13  
1 Timothy 5:17-20  
Hebrews 13:7-17

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Matthew 5:23-26  
Matthew 18:15-20  
1 Timothy 5:19-20

## APPENDIX 2: THE LEGAL STATUS OF CHURCH PASTORS



The nature and legal status of church pastors will be variously defined and regulated by the church's constitution, church rules or handbook.

In some cases pastors will be considered office-holders rather than employees. Unlike employees, office holders are free to organise their affairs as they see fit in fulfilling the functions of their office. This means that neither the church nor the charity trustees are the pastor's employer, and therefore the pastor doesn't have employment rights. In this case, it is for the pastor to determine the hours they need to work to fulfil the functions of their office and the amount of holiday that they should take. The terms of appointment will normally therefore be set out in a joint memorandum of understanding. This document is drawn up to share understanding and is not intended to create or reflect a contractual arrangement between the pastor and the church.

In other cases, the church and the pastor agree to adopt an employer/employee relationship regulated by a contract of employment. Both parties may see this relationship as an example of how all Christian employers and employees should conduct themselves in a workplace situation.

If the church's governing documents do not

specify that any paid pastor will be an office-holder, employment case law makes it very likely that they will be regarded as an employee.

These terms of appointment should be made clear and agreed before the pastor takes up their ministry.

Churches should always consult policies, procedures and up-to-date employment information provided by Edward Connor Solicitors. For further information, an up-to-date employment pack and/or office-holder pack is available from ECS. This pack includes a model contract of employment and various policies and procedures together with explanatory notes. For more information visit **[edwardconnor.com](http://edwardconnor.com)** or email **[info@edwardconnor.com](mailto:info@edwardconnor.com)**.



## **APPENDIX 3: WRITTEN STATEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT PARTICULARS**

### **What is a written statement of particulars?**

Sections 1-7 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Employment Act 2002 sets out the essential elements of the written statement of employment. Some information must be included in one document; the other information can be delivered in instalments.

All employees are entitled to receive a statement of their main employment particulars within two

months of starting work. This is a minimum statement concerning employment, it is generally issued before employment commences and whilst quicker to produce it is not a substitute for a full set of terms and conditions.

The statement is a legally binding agreement between the employer and employee. The statement must contain certain information such as pay, holiday entitlement, etc. Other information such as sick leave and grievance procedures may be contained in other documents or in an electronic format.

### **What must the written statement contain?**

- > *Name of employee and employer*
- > *Date employment commenced and continuous employment started*
- > *Job title or brief description of work*
- > *Hours of work*
- > *Pay rate and when it will be paid*
- > *Job location and where the employee is permitted to work*
- > *Holiday entitlement including Bank Holidays*
- > *Notice period*
- > *Details of any collective agreements that affect the employee*
- > *How long the employment is expected to continue if not permanent*

The letter offering the job or the employment contract could contain the information but for simplicity and for existing employees a Statement of Main Particulars should be attached.

### **What other information could be provided?**

The following must also be provided but this may be in an accompanying document, staff handbook or electronically:

- > *sick leave and sick pay entitlement*
- > *disciplinary and grievance procedures*
- > *pension arrangements*

The written statement of employment particulars should also cover the following matters:

- > *the provision of accommodation (if applicable);*
- > *the provision of special leave for other purposes (e.g. caring responsibilities, paternity);*
- > *the provision of relocation costs for new pastors;*
- > *the reimbursement of expenses – including mileage at HMRC approved rates;*
- > *the reimbursement of an annual book allowance;*

- *assistance with training and development – including attendance at conferences and the provision of study and sabbatical leave;*
- *the nature of any appraisal/review process; and*
- *all the practical arrangements to be applied on the termination of ministry.*

For further guidance, an employment pack containing a statement of particulars and full terms and conditions of employment is available from Edward Connor Solicitors:

***info@edwardconnor.com***  
***01858 411568***

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*The Code is adapted with permission from the **Living Leadership** Caring for Church Leaders Code of Best Practice: [livingleadership.org](http://livingleadership.org)*