

GUIDELINES FOR COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH, WHEN IMPLEMENTING THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LAY LEADERS

The following guidelines are offered to Councils of the Church with oversight of lay leaders.

Types of breaches

i) Minor:

Everyone is capable of sin but can repent and be forgiven (1 John 1:8-9). It stands to reason then, that the code can be breached. When this happens in an area that is not a breach of civil or criminal law, leaders should be approached by a member of the Council responsible for their oversight. This behaviour should be explained to the leader, who will be expected to simply cease the conduct. In some cases it may be necessary to stand a person aside from their duties whilst this takes place. It is crucial to deal with such matters confidentially and sensitively.

ii) Unknowing violations:

Not all leaders will understand 'unacceptable' behaviours. Even after explaining the code some may be unaware they are exhibiting unacceptable behaviours. Leaders need to be open to correction and humble enough to modify behaviours so as to not discredit the gospel. As above, standing a person aside from their duties may be necessary.

iii) Constant or consistent violations:

There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law, but still unacceptable behaviour. Where a leader has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:

- a) the Chair of the council responsible for the leader's oversight meets with the person for behaviour review meetings and communicates required behaviour change, up to a maximum of 3 meetings.
- b) If behaviour continues, a small group of Church leaders are to arrange a meeting to address the behaviour. Standing aside is appropriate at this point.
- c) If the behaviour(s) continues beyond this meeting, then respectfully, and upholding confidentiality, the person will be stood down for a set period. They will be offered help in changing their behaviour via counselling if they are willing. (ref Reg 5.2.1 and 5.3.1 for implementing)

NOTE: Written notes of all meetings to be carefully taken and a copy given to all parties.

iv) Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse:

Are to be referred to the appropriate government authorities, in line with Uniting Church processes. The General Secretary of the Synod must be contacted at this point.