

OPP 1.5 – ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONAL CONDUCT

PURPOSE: Represent to the congregation of Round Rock Christian Church the general expectations and guidelines for the ethical conduct of members.

RESOLUTION OF THE CONGREGATION

We, the members of Round Rock Christian Church, desire to uphold the covenantal relationships we share with one another, our church officers and leaders, our minister(s), our community and country, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the church universal regarding ethical conduct and behavior within the guidelines outlined in this document.

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR CONGREGATIONAL CONDUCT

In Our Relationship as Members to One Another, We, as a body of Christ, will:

- Treat one another with courtesy and kindness while seeking to maintain an attitude of Christian love in all our relationships.
- Welcome the expression of differing viewpoints as we seek to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence that encourages free discussion.
- Seek to keep confidences and refrain from gossip, seeking in all we do and say to strengthen character and dignify personality.
- Give evidence of our sincerity and reflect upon the good name of the Church, the Body of Christ by our personal conduct.
- Work within the framework of the constitution and by-laws of this congregation. These guidelines do not supersede our own church's constitution and by-laws.
- Follow a policy of receiving and using special gifts, memorials, trusts, and endowed funds with procedures and practices consistent with Christian stewardship. Reception of a gift entails a consideration of its appropriateness and also gives consideration to when an item outlasts its usefulness.
- Reaffirm this document at least triennially and review these guidelines whenever we are in the process of calling new pastoral leadership.

In Our Relationship as Members to Our Church Officers and Leaders, We, as a body of Christ, will:

- Select our church officers intentionally and impartially on the basis of commitment, competence, compassion and maturity in the faith. We are committed to having men, women and youth serve in the various responsibilities of the congregation.
- Endeavor to distribute our offices among many persons and be appreciative of the services of every member.
- Provide opportunities for training skill development and faith formation. We provide the resources needed for members to be effective leaders.
- Nurture through encouragement and prayer our officers, committees, classes, auxiliary groups and the board of the congregation.
- Expect church officers to manifest Christian principles in their conduct.

- Offer constructive support, feedback, appropriate praise and appropriate recognition to our officers and leaders.

In Our Relationship as Members to Our Minister(s), We, as a body of Christ, will:

- Maintain and conclude all pastoral relationships in a spirit of Christian love, because the congregation is a priesthood of believers that ministers to one another (pastor to congregation and congregation to pastor), and affirm our relationship in the church as covenantal as well as contractual.
- Grant our minister(s) responsible freedom of the pulpit and the right to present Christian convictions without fear.
- Respect and cooperate with our minister(s) spiritual and intellectual leadership.
- Encourage and assist our minister(s) through constructive feedback, appropriate praise, constant prayer and faithful participation with him or her in ministry.
- Cooperate with our minister(s) to best utilize our congregation's talents in fulfilling the mission of the church.
- Provide our minister(s) with the necessary facilities and equipment for their work and respect study hours. We are considerate of the need for rest and relaxation and are sensitive to the need for time with family.
- Call on our present minister(s) for weddings, funerals and other special services. Our former minister(s) or others unconnected with the congregation may be invited to participate in such services only when appropriate and at a present minister(s) invitation.
- Inform our minister(s) when pastoral services are needed.
- Support our minister's reasonable participation in Cluster, Area, District, Regional and/or general activities of the denomination, as well as civic and ecumenical activities.
- Respect the time and talents of the minister's family members and recognize that we have no greater expectations of them than of other lay people.
- Be sensitive and voluntarily finds specific ways to go the second mile in ministry with love, compassion and trust in the event of personal and/or family crisis, illness of the minister or minister's family, a death in the family, psychological or emotional difficulties or other extenuating circumstances.
- Continually monitor, with an active Pastoral Support Ministry, the relationship between our minister(s) and the congregation, and covenant to call on the assistance of the regional staff before any conflict situation grows into a crisis.
- Follow our denominational guidelines, work through the Regional Office, and conduct all negotiations with integrity, courtesy and orderly procedure when seeking a minister.
- Review and evaluate ministerial compensation in our denomination through information supplied by the pension fund of the Christian Church and by the Regional Office and support our ministers with salary, housing, a pension plan, health insurance, necessary expense funds, vacation and the time and financial means for continuing education consistent with the demands and resources of our congregation.
- Observe similar appropriate principles with all other professional staff of our congregation.

In Our Relationship as Members to Our Community and/or Country, We, as a body of Christ, will

- Accept our missional responsibility for the moral and spiritual development of our community, agreeing to live in a manner consistent with our Christian convictions.
- Recognize that our Christian convictions set the standard for our citizenship as individuals. Our faith leads us to be informed to respect the law and vote our conscience.
- Be attentive to the moral and ethical implications of every project we are asked to support.
- Maintain a good credit standing in the community and expect our staff to do the same.
- Respect the rights and privileges of persons living near the church and endeavor not to inconvenience our neighbors nor harm their property.
- Avoid establishing barriers that might prevent anyone from worshiping with us in accordance with our Christian convictions.
- Work in a complementary way with community service agencies and organizations to most effectively serve and improve our community.

In Our Relationship as Members to the Churches in Our Community, We, as a body of Christ, will:

- Seek to understand the beliefs and practices of others. While we may be constructively critical of their doctrine, we refrain from unkind remarks about people who differ from us.
- Encourage unity and harmony among the various communions of Christian peoples giving evidence of our sincerity by and through participation at appropriate local, state, national, and/or world levels.
- Witness in a manner not injurious to others. We will not be part of proselytizing members from other congregations in our community, nor will we exploit the problems or crises of other congregations.
- Consider the necessity, purpose, and community need in offering the use of our facilities.
- Respect the privilege of borrowing from other congregations.

In Our Relationship as Members to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), We, as a body of Christ, will:

- Seek to know and to understand the various points of view within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and respect the opinions of those whose interpretations differ from our own.
- Recognize our covenantal relationship with the Disciples by giving generously and prayerfully supporting our programs at home and overseas.
- Endeavor to know, claim and live our identity as set forth in the Preamble for the Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and strive to be knowledgeable about the actions of the Cluster, Area, District, Regional and General Assemblies.

- Use Mission Gifts received by our congregation for the intended purpose and recognize that budget commitments for world outreach causes are as binding as those secured for our local obligations.
- Encourage our minister(s) and our members to serve beyond the local congregation in the Cluster, Area, District, Regional, and/or General manifestations of Disciple work.

In Our Relationship as Members to the Church Universal, We, as a body of Christ, will:

- With the church universal, proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of the world, in his name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people.
- Acknowledge that we are bound to God and one another through covenant. We are made one with the whole people of God through baptism.
- Express the unity God bestows by ecumenical study, dialogue, cooperation and expression.
- Cooperate with other church bodies in living the Christian witness, because all Christians in the church universal have the obligation to uphold the Christian life in the face of the evil forces of our day.
- Support acceptable agencies of Christian cooperation in local national and global manifestations of the Church's life.
- Remember that our LORD invites his believers to the Lord's Table in the spirit of Christian love and unity, and establish no barriers that might prevent any of Jesus' followers from communing with us.

Procedures for Conflict Resolution

We embrace Jesus' words in Matthew 5:23-24 regarding conflict resolution:

“²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”

Jesus modeled effective steps to handle conflict. Living in covenant as a body of Christ we commit to following in Jesus' footsteps regarding conflict management and resolution by the following steps:

- Stop, Think, Pray and Listen (Matthew 17:5)
- Accept personal responsibility and engage the person in a one-on-one discussion. (Matthew 18:15)
- When a one-on-one discussion does not resolve the conflict, seek the assistance of an Elder. The Elder establishes a meeting with the individuals or parties. (Matthew 17:16)
- When the aid of an Elder does not result in conflict resolution, the church is authorized to provide support. Both individuals and parties appear before the Guiding Board to seek resolution. (Matthew 17:17)

In most cases, using this process with biblical standards results in reconciliation and a relationship has the opportunity to grow stronger because of the time and energy put into to seeking the resolution.

REFERENCES

- *Holy Bible*, NRSV.

- *Ethical Guidelines for Congregational Conduct*. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), adopted by the General Assembly, August 2, 1989. Disciples Home Missions website: <http://www.discipleshomemissions.org/files/SC-EthicalGuidelines.pdf>

- *The Design for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)*. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), updated 2005, website: <http://www.disciples.org/Portals/0/PDF/TheDesign.pdf>

- *OPP 1.1 – Vision, Mission and Core Values*, Operating Policy and Procedures Manual, Round Rock Christian Church. RRCC website: <http://www.rrdisciples.org/OPPs.html>

- *OPP 4.1 – General Workplace Standards of Conduct*, Operating Policy and Procedures Manual, Round Rock Christian Church. RRCC website: <http://www.rrdisciples.org/OPPs.html>

- *OPP 4.7 – Personnel Policy for Ministers*, Operating Policy and Procedures Manual, Round Rock Christian Church. RRCC website: <http://www.rrdisciples.org/OPPs.html>

- *Conflict Resolution Guidelines*, Conflict Resolution Workshop, Round Rock Christian Church, pgs 12-19. RRCC website: <http://www.rrdisciples.org/xxx.html>

AUTHORITY: *Section IV of the Constitution of Round Rock Christian Church. The congregation shall manage its affairs under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, respecting each individual member's right to interpret the gospel and demonstrate voluntarily mutual concern for the nurture, mission and witness of the whole church.*

EFFECTIVE DATE

August 11, 2011

LAST REVISION DATE

August 11, 2011

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