

# Code of Ethics for Elders

## Preamble

The Code of Ethics for Elders is designed to edify the body of Christ. We pray it will be embraced by all elders of the church serving in any and all congregational or administrative responsibilities. The code is intended to be a living document that helps shape our character as we constantly seek to make it better reflect Christ's will for us as elders in his church.

Ethics provides a framework for how people make decisions and judgments and how we act on them. Decision-making for the Christian is ethical when it is firmly grounded in the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit, for it is only in these that we find a basis for understanding the will of God.

As church leaders, we must submit ourselves to the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the application of ethical principles of Scripture. Our Christian conduct must be based on the life and teachings of Jesus, the teachings of biblical writers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament calls for the highest standard of reputation, ethics and conduct for us as elders.

As Christian leaders, we recognize that Jesus Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit. We ask him to change us so that the reality of his resurrected life is evident in our thoughts and actions. The ethical guidelines and principles in this Code of Ethics for Elders are set forth to tie in the realities of our ministerial activities with this transcendent reality of our Christian lives.

Therefore, as elders in the body of Christ, we must endeavor to conduct our lives according to the spirit of the ethical guidelines and principles set forth in this Code of Ethics for Elders.

## Responsibility to God

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the living Head of the church, I will strive to conduct myself in a manner that brings glory to him. This means I will strive to:

- be a responsible servant of God.
- exercise faithful stewardship in my devotional life through the use of spiritual disciplines, the gifts of the Spirit and acts of service.
- exercise faithful stewardship of financial, physical and intellectual resources.
- accept accountability for all my actions and avoid situations that could reflect negatively on the name of Jesus Christ.
- maintain sexual purity.
- exercise Christ's servant-leadership.

## Responsibility of denominational leadership to elders

In the spirit of Christian brotherhood, denominational supervisors are responsible to provide support as well as just and fair treatment for elders. This means if I am in a supervisory position, I will strive to:

- be accessible and promptly respond to requests from elders.
- provide sound and clear spiritual, ecclesiastical and administrative leadership.
- openly and respectfully communicate to elders any serious complaints brought against them.
- provide reasonable time for feedback to requests for information from elders.
- handle sensitive and confidential information about an elder in a responsible manner.
- be sensitive to the personal and family needs of elders.

## Responsibility to the denomination

As an elder of Grace Communion International, I have a responsibility of loyalty to ecclesiastical supervisors. This means I will strive to:

- patiently and prayerfully study all doctrinal materials presented by the denomination.
- support and carry out all administrative decisions and policies of ecclesiastical supervisors. If I cannot in good conscience do this, I will immediately notify my supervisors.
- cooperate with, and seek assistance from ecclesiastical supervisors, peers and members of my congregation(s) in order to acquire information and to receive training that is relevant to my assignment as an elder.
- respect my denomination and be responsible and respectful in discussions about fellow leaders—past and present.
- support and promote the global mission of the church.

### **Responsibility to family**

I will place my family responsibilities at the highest level of my priorities, second only to my relationship to God. This means I will strive to:

- spiritually, emotionally and physically support my family.
- be faithful to my spouse.
- be a responsible and dedicated parent to my children.

### **Relationship with the congregation**

I will lead with justice and mercy, striving to express proper balance between strength and gentleness in all situations. This means I will strive to:

- provide sound and clear pastoral, spiritual leadership.
- help members develop spiritual gifts and mentor spiritual leaders in the congregation.
- give sermons that are biblically based, in theological agreement with the church and relevant to the life of the church.
- be committed to prompt reconciliation of interpersonal conflicts. I recognize that I must have personal courage, exercised with appropriate tact in facing opposition. I will encourage members of my congregation to seek help from my peers and/or ecclesiastical supervisors if necessary.
- be trustworthy in all areas of confidentiality, except as I am legally bound to disclose. I will not betray the trust of a member by disclosing personal information about that person to others without that person's knowledge and consent.
- be fair and consistent in my dealings with parishioners.
- honor and respect other cultures, genders and races.

### **Responsibility to fellow elders**

As an elder of Grace Communion International, I have a responsibility to respect and honor my colleagues. I will strive to cooperate with and support my fellow elders as we work together to further the work of Christ in the church. This means I will strive to:

- respect my fellow elders and will not speak against them publicly or privately, considering them partners in the work of God.
- respect the administrative boundaries of another elder's area of responsibility.
- treat the office of an elder in a manner so as not to be competitive or enhance my own status or position.
- serve my colleagues with counsel, support and personal assistance.

### **Responsibility to the greater body of Christ**

Elders and members of Grace Communion International are a part of the greater Christian community. This means I will:

- avoid recruiting members out of other churches.
- seek to work in harmony with other Christian leaders and programs to strengthen the body of Christ and advance the kingdom of God.
- uphold the theology and doctrine of Grace Communion International without slandering Christians who hold other views.

## **Responsibility to the local community**

The local church is an integral part of the society in which it resides. An active, appropriate role in the community serves as a Christian example of love and is a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means I will strive to:

- be a responsible member of my community.
- accept reasonable responsibilities for community service, recognizing this is a function of my public ministry.
- encourage the involvement of the congregation in appropriate community events.
- comply with the laws of my government as long as they do not conflict with the teachings of Jesus.
- take care not to allow political issues to create polarization within the congregation, or to be a focus in sermons, Bible studies, or other church meetings.