

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BUNBURY CODE OF CONDUCT

PREAMBLE

The Second Century North African Theologian Tertullian (ca 160-220CE) once said “see how these Christians love one another” (*Apology*) such was the attractive character of the Christian community at that time. However, the church founders also urged Christians to live “commendable” lives.

Jesus himself promotes being “poor in spirit”, “mourning”, “meekness”, “thirst for righteousness”, “mercy”, “purity” and “peace-making” as a “blessed” way of life (See the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matt 5:1-10)). Furthermore, Paul in many places urges believers to live sound and blameless lives. For example:

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’ No, ‘if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom 12 9-21, NRSV).

Also, James points out:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world (James 1:27, NRSV).

Such texts are early forms of Codes of Conduct where appropriate behaviour of church members is described. Sadly, today, the need for such codes is still with us and although we may express our codes a little differently, they stand in the tradition of the early church.

In the Bunbury Diocese, we are drawn to Paul’s exhortation to be a community that brings forth the ‘fruits of the Spirit’: *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Gal 5:22). In our community these fruits urge us to celebrate our diversity. They also urge us to heal relationship breakdowns, positively, with confidence and helpfully so all may flourish. We are also aware our behaviour is accountable at all times to each other, to God and to ourselves. **This is a Code of Conduct focussed on our behaviour as individuals and in community in relationship with each other and with God. It affirms our priority is to restore our relationships through the fruits of the Spirit.**

Our Code of Conduct Values:

- Helpful Communications
- Accountable Safety
- Generous Service
- Abundant Love
- Transformative Living

Helpful Communications

As a community, we value helpful, generous, clear, accountable and courageous communications, whether verbal or non-verbal, written, spoken and shared in social media. As God shares in our being together, we commit to:

- Honest
- Ethical and
- Respectful communications.

Accountable Safety

As a community we value everyone's safety and are accountable to each other. We commit to:

- Working as a team
- Upholding our individual accountability to act safely
- Learning safe practices for our activities
- Maintaining safe practices in our activities.

Generous Service

As a community, we value generous service. We commit to:

- Welcoming everyone regardless of background, race, gender, sexuality and beliefs
- Appreciating the diversity of our people and their thoughts
- Being concerned for our neighbour's well-being.

Abundant Love

As a community, we value the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:12): *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*. We commit to:

- Finding opportunities to share these fruits with one another
- Enabling one another to flourish in Christ.

Transformative Living

As a community, we are committed to sharing the transforming love of Jesus. We commit to:

- Being Christ's difference in the world
- In solidarity with those suffering and bearing witness to the injustices in the world (*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled; Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (Matt 5:6, 9)*)
- Being involved in the world and doing the work of God's kingdom
- Making God's kingdom visible through our action.

How we ensure helpful communications

As Individual and as Our Church	
<p>Our speech, behaviour and presence as we communicate is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful • Thoughtful • Honest • Inclusive • Clear • Timely • Courageous • Generous • Appropriate <p>Our written words including those on social media are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful • Not harmful • Not shaming • Not embarrassing others. <p>We maintain appropriate confidentiality by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping confidences • Refraining from gossip • Refraining from uninformed speculation. <p>When in difficulty with another person, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen carefully • Resolve it “face-to-face” before writing letters or using social media. • Reflect on our own actions, words or behaviour that has contributed to the problem • Offer repentance and forgiveness generously and when needed • Resolve it promptly and not hold grievances • Approach the matter thoughtfully and generously • Restore the relationship to a positive, new standard • Learn from the experience. • Accept the consequences • Speak and act out the message of God’s love for all creation. 	<p>We accept responsibility for our words and actions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being accountable for what we say and do • Accepting the consequences of our words, actions, and poor decisions • Listening to others deeply and with self-control • Being patient with each other. • Accepting our responsibilities to keep good order <p>We do not hold grudges by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinging unnecessarily to hurts of the past <p>And, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look to the future with the hope of God that is in us. <p>We offer our information in a way that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely • Open • Accessible • Accountable • Correct • Up-to-date (as far as possible) • Inclusive in style • Gender neutral. • Respectful • Capable of being a good example to others. <p>We ensure those who are affected by our decisions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made aware of the implications in a timely, inclusive manner • Told of the consequence respectfully and helpfully to enable appropriate decisions to be made.

How we ensure Safety is Accountable

As Individuals and as Our Church	
<p>We actively make sure individuals and groups are kept safe from all forms of abuse, risks and harm and are positively able to flourish, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Seniors • Vulnerable individuals and groups <p>We speak up and ensure we are heard when we see or suspect someone is treated wrongly.</p> <p>Where a wrong is committed we rectify it and learn from it and make sure our policies, practices and systems are updated.</p> <p>We treat all people the way we would like to be treated.</p> <p>We work together.</p> <p>We don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gossip • Shame • Embarrass others • Deliberately ignore others <p>Our decisions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made in consultation • Transparent • Accountable • Without personal gain • Without conflict of interest. <p>We accept the responsibilities and consequences of our decisions, words and actions.</p> <p>We understand the use and misuse of power and do not let power or positional authority overwhelm our responsibility to ensure accountable, helpful, supportive safe environments and appropriate individual behaviour.</p>	<p>We actively and promptly report incidents and suspicions of inappropriate conduct words or decision, or possibilities of danger to the appropriate authorities.</p> <p>We participate in reviews and provide feedback pro-actively to prevent unsafe behaviour. We value and actively promote positive preventative behaviours.</p> <p>We treat people equitably by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being kind • Being helpful • Being appreciative • Protecting the vulnerable • Assessing risks and minimising harm • Understanding and respecting boundaries • Not offering special favours • Not creating dependency. <p>We accept, recognise and promote our Duty of Care* requirements.</p> <p>Our leaders are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitably skilled • Approachable • Agreeing with our values • Supervised, supported and kept accountable. • Good examples • Able to accept the consequences of their decisions, word and actions. <p>We maintain clear professional and personal boundaries.</p> <p>We don't tolerate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullying • Harassment • Coercion or • Aggressive behaviour <p>in any form whether individually, in our community or in social media environments.</p>

Duty of Care Definition: *Duty of care is to do everything reasonably practicable to protect others from harm.* This is based on Jesus' request to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

How we demonstrate Generous Service

As Individuals and as Our Church	
<p>We show concern for others by offering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Dignity • Mercy • Charity • Consistent, equitable, non-discrimination • Discernment. <p>We speak-up and act when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wrong must not be ignored • Injustice is perceived • Christ's prophetic voice needs to be proclaimed to and with the community. <p>We honour differences in people and their thinking. We do not judge to exclude others who are different to ourselves.</p> <p>We seek to make a positive difference in our community and society.</p> <p>We follow and honour the doctrines, statutes and policies of our Church to the extent they promote the well-being of all God's children.</p>	<p>We lead with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Dignity • Loving service • A warm welcome • Clear professional and personal boundaries • Confidentiality • Accountability • Honesty • Trustworthiness • Responsible ethics. <p>We commit to do as we are asked by Jesus in his two great commandments: to love the Lord your God with all your heart...and your neighbours as yourself'.</p> <p>We uphold the right of all people to be treated as a <i>creature</i> made uniquely in the image of God.</p> <p>We welcome everyone, regardless of background, individual circumstances, race, gender, sexuality and beliefs</p>

How we demonstrate Abundant Love

As Individuals and as Our Church	
<p>We are generous in our support of others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physically• Emotionally• Spiritually• Intellectually• In the use of time• With prayer• With our involvement. <p>We are welcoming, generous and inclusive.</p> <p>We seek active peace by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resolving our differences positively• Respecting others' opinions• Giving a voice to the vulnerable• Identifying injustices• Promoting non-violent responses to injustice• Being servants of one-another.• Refraining from aggressive behaviour. <p>We care for God's creation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being good stewards of our resources• Reducing our misuse and abuse of our resources and God's creation.	<p>Our pastoral care and service embraces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trust• Empathy• Individual needs• The fruits of the Holy Spirit. <p>When we get it wrong we apologise and make good through repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. We change our behaviour and accept the consequences of our wrongdoing.</p> <p>We celebrate diversity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treating all people equally• Including all people with joy• Not discriminating on the basis of background, individual circumstances, gender, sexual orientation or beliefs• Not excluding and scapegoating others.• Being non-judgemental and discerning in our relationships <p>We limit our negative impact on the earth by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using resources carefully• Limiting waste• Recycling• Being conscious of the well-being of all God's creation (the Earth and all that is in it.)

How we demonstrate Transformational Lives

As Individuals And as Our Church	
<p>We are committed to co-operating with the work of God's Kingdom in the world by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting transformational social justice by being Christ's difference in the world • Showing courage, and standing in solidarity with those who are suffering • Offering witness to the injustices and violence of the world • Working actively to change such injustice and violence to a just, equitable and transformed world • Being merciful • Being equitable • Being inclusive • Celebrating the diversity of God's creation • Being repentant of our mistakes • Being willing to offer and receive forgiveness • Working towards a world where all may live fulfilling lives. <p>Our public and private lives will be consistent and have integrity.</p>	<p>We speak the Gospel prophetically and with courage into the church and the community knowing it may be counter-cultural.</p> <p>We are willing to embrace change so God's hopeful "new thing" may become visible to others and ourselves.</p> <p>We seek to make God's Kingdom more visible in the world by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and practicing non-violent actions against injustice • Speaking up and bearing witness against injustice and violence and despair • Being mourners, witnessing to and alongside those who are suffering • Teaching others to work for justice • Being persistent, consistent and loving in the face of injustice. • Being peacemakers in God's Kingdom <p>We learn from Jesus' response to despair, deprivation, discrimination, violence, suffering, torture, death and resurrection as our model and inspiration.</p>

Appendix 1 Updating this Code known as ‘Our Best Selves’

The Code of Conduct provides us all with a clearer understanding of how we can expect ourselves and others to behave in relationship with each other. It is a simple, easy to follow and understand document to be shared and used daily.

The Diocese encourages ongoing, active discussion to assist understanding about the intention of the Code and its implications for yourselves individually and as a community. It is a Code to which we all commit as Anglicans as it is approved by the Bishop-in-Council and Synod; while understanding we may need to clarify its contents and seek help on occasion to apply it in practice, locally and with the Diocese.

A Code of Conduct is referred to in our Diocesan legislation and it applies to both clergy and laity in our parishes. It stands alongside the document known as Faithfulness in Service to which this Diocese aspires and which is named in Canons by the Anglican Church of Australia. In addition, we have the Diocesan Tribunal which works on specific disciplinary matters for clergy, and the Professional Standards which apply to both clergy and laity in leadership positions in matters dealing specifically with child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct.

This is a ‘living’, active document, so will be updated as we continue to be given feedback about the meaning of words, people’s shared understanding of its purpose and what is helpful and works in practice. The Code stands together with our Grievance and Feedback Policy and Practice to help and assist in resolving matters when our Code has not been followed.

Appendix 2 Reflecting on Diversity and Being Inclusive

Celebrating diversity and being inclusive in our welcome to all visitors and members in our church community is evident in our practices, policies, events and activities, our teaching and learning opportunities, the physical layout of the church buildings and even our written signs, seating arrangements and access to helpful information. This brief incomplete list highlights a few opportunities in our Christian communities where we can encourage inclusive behaviour and experiences for all who come to our churches. These are behaviours commonly practiced in our Australian society and culture, and equally so in the Anglican Church.

This welcome is offered to all individuals in our parishes. We hope in each parish, each person is individually known and welcomed. We hope each person genuinely feels like they belong to their new Christian family and have come home just as Jesus highlights to us in Luke 14.

As we discussed in our meetings on this matter, these are some of the words said in discussion:

“Such words and practices about our differences and our desire for inclusion are really important to emphasise with those of us who commonly feel excluded. This happens regularly for those of us who live with disabilities; for a person like me who is from another race or faith; where English is not my first language; where my culture is different; where being a woman and my gender places me as a second class citizen; where people turn away from me because of my sexuality; where I am not included because of my age both young and old; or because I am single and isolated; or because of my mental health illness; past abuse; or because I am poor; homeless; imprisoned; or less well educated. Any of these, together with other social barriers that impact on my ability to be welcomed elsewhere, means I am consistently excluded and rejected because of my difference in our world today.”

These experiences of exclusion should not be happening in our church communities. Our Anglican Church and our own Christian behaviour turns these experiences upside down as each person, uniquely created by God is honoured, respected, welcomed, known and included because you and I matter. We know God made each of us differently. This difference is honoured, respected and reflected in God's love for us individually, as we live together in God's Church and in our love for each other.

In the Anglican Church of Australia, we also know we live, work and share community with people in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, as well as with our Constitution, canons, ordinances, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal and we are reassured this commitment is not discriminatory.

Thank You