

POLICY: CODE OF CONDUCT

Forward

The Code of Conduct (Code) outlines ministry appropriate boundaries. It applies to all church leaders and helpers, both volunteer and paid.

The Code should be read in conjunction with the *Safe Church Policy*, and:

- *Procedure for Staff & Volunteers*
- *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns*
- *Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers*
- *Procedure for Conflict Resolution*

We acknowledge that everyone who attends our church needs to be confident that they will be cared for, nurtured and encouraged as they grow and at the same time, protected from spiritual, physical, & emotional harm.

OUR STANDARD OF CONDUCT:

1. Stay Connected

- a. Make every effort to maintain a strong personal relationship with God.
- b. Attend church regularly even when not serving on a ministry team.

2. Be Faithful

- a. Maintain a healthy balance between ministry and family time.
- b. Minister in accordance with the stated Mission, Vision, Values and Core Beliefs of New Vine Lakes Church.
- c. Endeavour to pray regularly for the church, its leadership and the people to whom you minister.
- d. Be faithful to roster and ministry commitments, training requirements, team meetings and policy requirements.
- e. Endeavour to live a life of good character, being faithful in marriage and living free of substance abuse, and from the love of money.
- f. Act with sexual purity, meaning you will:
 - i. Not access any type of pornographic material and, if you struggle with this addiction, you will seek professional help.
 - ii. Not initiate or become involved in a relationship of a sexual or inappropriate nature with any person (including children) to whom you are not married (inappropriate nature means a level of conduct and intimacy with a person that goes beyond the bounds of friendship).

1. "Marriage" is as defined by the Marriage Rites of the Baptist Union of Australia, i.e. "the union between a man and a woman, to the exclusion of all others..."
2. If you are unwilling or unable to commit to this requirement, church leaders may choose to endorse you as a volunteer for non-leadership roles.
- iii. Ensure romantic interactions are meaningful and consensual.
- iv. Give consideration to any power imbalances in intimate relationships.

3. Bring Honour

- a. Conduct yourself in such a way that sets a good example for others and represents the church and Christ well, both inside and outside church programs.
- b. Dress modestly, wearing "decent and appropriate clothing, not draw attention to oneself" (1 Timothy 2:9), and respecting self and others.
- c. Speak well of the church, its leadership, and congregation members. Do not make false, misleading, or deceptive statements.
- d. Endeavour to deal with personal issues that may affect your ability to lead others.
- e. It is not acceptable to be the perpetrator of verbal, emotional, physical or sexual abuse / harassment. This includes violence or intentionally provoking violence.
- f. Treat all people with dignity and respect regardless of age, sex, religious affiliation, sexual orientation or personal circumstances; paying special care to include those who may find it difficult to participate.
- g. Avoid engaging in any illegal activity or assist persons engaged in illegal activities.
- h. Be a co-operative team member and follow directions given by the Ministry Leaders and/or Pastor (except in the situation where their directions were to directly contradict our stated policies).
- i. Do not use property belonging to others without express consent, including intellectual property (copyright).
- j. Acknowledge when you are out of your depth and do not possess the required skills in difficult pastoral situations (such as, helping a victim of abuse; or a person who needs professional counselling), and seek help from the Safe Church Team.
- k. Act with financial integrity, including:

- i. Having accountable and transparent systems in place for financial matters; and
- ii. Not seeking personal advantage or financial gain from our position (other than in wages, recognised allowances and deductions).

4. Confidentiality

- a. Do not disclose any confidential information without the consent of the person providing the information; except where there is a legal or ethical obligation to disclose.
- b. Permission must be obtained for any public use of photography or video footage, and the choice of images used must be respectable and honouring.
- c. Photos or video obtained for use with the church cannot be used for personal use, unless consent is granted.

5. Ministry Representation

- a. Any personal social media posts are done in such a way that respects the church's values and beliefs, remembering that you may be seen as representing the church, even in your private posts.
- b. Outside of the established ministry activities, you should maintain accountability for your interactions with others that may be perceived as 'church' related or endorsed. Specifically, this requires you to abide by the following:
 - i. Do not organise any 'official' church event, activity or outing without prior approval from the appropriate source (This is usually a ministry leader or pastor).
 - ii. Except in the case of parents arranging activities for their children and their friends, do not organise any unofficial children's or young person's event, activity or outing involving children without consultation with the children's or youth ministry leader or pastor.

6. Abide by the following:

- a. **Screening Check Questionnaire** – Disclose all relevant information; including if you have been investigated for any criminal offences or have any knowledge of serious unlawful activity within the church context as soon as practicable.
- b. **Safe Spaces** – All ministry team members who work with children (not including incidental contact) must have a WWCC. (Ministers however must have a WWCC).
 - i. Uphold, support and abide by the *Safe Church Policy*.

- ii. Report any concerns about serious misconduct and/or abuse to the Safe Churches Team.
- iii. Where there are children present in a Life Group they are the responsibility of their parents. If they are supervised in another room by an appointed person then that person must have a current WWCC and provide the number to the Life Group Coordinator.
- c. **Health & Safety** – All ministry environments, including where a Life Group is conducted in the home, are expected to consider the safety of those attending by taking reasonable measures to provide a safe environment, removing any possible hazards, keeping walkways clear etc.

7. Working with Young People

- a. Endeavour to not be alone with a young person of the opposite sex, in the car, or other isolated place. If unavoidable, ensure you communicate everything you do, with parent's consent and awareness.
- b. Never become romantically involved with a young person participating in Youth programs, under the age of 18.
- c. Transportation for ministry purposes must be licenced with Green P's or above; driving in a safe and legal way. If the ministry team member has had a driving offence, it shall be at the discretion of the ministry leader.
- d. When meeting outside of programmed events, meet only in group settings, where you are involved with parental permission. One-on-one meetings are only appropriate with youth in Year 10-12, with members of the same gender, in a public place.
- e. Avoid favouritism or any form of special treatment.
- f. All messaging through text, Instagram, messenger, or similar, to a young person, is to be done in group settings, or showing transparency. When messaging one-on-one, include the parent / guardian as a group text. All messages/emails should be retained for accountability.
- g. Don't use electronic communications for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged or that require a back-and-forth conversation. In those cases, it's much better to have a conversation in person.

8. If you are a Pastoral staff member, you:

- a. Agree to uphold and be bound by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Code of Ethics and Conduct*;
- b. Understand that a breach of the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Code of Ethics and Conduct* will be considered a breach of this *Code of Conduct*; and

- c. Agree to participate in, and be bound by the outcomes of, any process initiated under the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT *Procedures for Handling Allegations*.

9. When the Code is Breached

- a. **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, simply cease the conduct. If this is difficult, the person should see their team leader or supervisor about receiving help (e.g. counselling). In some cases, it may be necessary to step a person aside from their duties whilst this takes place. It is crucial to deal with such matters confidentially and sensitively.
- b. **Unknown:** Not all leaders or volunteers will understand 'unacceptable' behaviours. Even after explaining the code some may be unaware, they are exhibiting unacceptable behaviours. Leaders and volunteers need to be open to correction and humble enough to modify behaviours so as to not discredit the gospel. As above, stepping a person aside from their duties may be necessary.
- c. **Constant:** There are breaches that are not a breach of civil or criminal law, but still unacceptable behaviour in a ministry context. Where a leader or volunteer has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:
 - i. the ministry coordinator meets with the person for behaviour review meetings. Communicate required behaviour change (no more than 3 meetings).
 - ii. If behaviour continues, a small group of church leaders are to arrange a meeting to address the behaviour. Stepping aside is appropriate at this point.
 - iii. 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.
- d. **Major:** concerning a serious misconduct and/or abuse (including child sexual abuse), the Church may ask you to step aside from your duties while the complaint is being considered; and/or it will be reported to relevant government authorities in accordance with relevant legal requirements.
- e. **Written Records:** Written notes of all meetings concerning a breach of the Code to be carefully recorded on a *Meeting Notes Form*, and a copy given and signed by all parties.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE OF CODE OF CONDUCT

Acceptance of Code of Conduct:

- i. I have received a copy of the 'Code of Conduct for Leaders and Volunteers' and I accept and agree with its contents. With God's help, I will endeavour to fulfil my role to the best of my ability and to abide by the rules outlined in this code.
- ii. I have no undisclosed criminal convictions in Australia or overseas
- iii. Should I breach the Code in a Major misconduct, I agree to participate in any process initiated under *the Procedure for Resolving Conflict, Procedure for Handling Complaints against Staff and Volunteers* and/or *Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns* and agree to be bound by the outcomes of any such process, which may include termination of your employment/engagement as a staff member or volunteer with the Church.

Name:			
Signature:		Date:	

Trainer Details:

I have received training in and discussed the Code of Conduct for Leaders and Volunteers with:

Trainers Name:			
Position:			
Trainer comments:			
Signature:		Date:	

Note: The Church must retain the signed and dated copy of the Code of Conduct for at least 45 years (preferably 100 years).

Revision History:

Version	Description of change	Date	Next Review date
1	<i>Implement new policy</i>	<i>August 2019</i>	<i>27 March 2025</i>
2	<i>Adopt changes recommended by the Baptist Association</i>	<i>8 April 2025</i>	<i>8 April 2026</i>
3	<i>Adjust wording about criminal convictions, page 6</i>	<i>12 June 2025</i>	<i>12 June 2026</i>
2	<i>Review completed – no changes made</i>	<i>28 April 2026</i>	<i>28 April 2027</i>