

*Partners in Ministry:
Ethical Conduct for
Professional Church Workers*



**Michigan District
Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod
2010**

LETTER FROM PRESIDENT MAIER



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is a great day to be alive in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Indeed, it is a great day when we remember that we are living in the light of our Lord's Easter victory with all of its resplendent blessings. It is a great day when we are continually renewed and transformed by the Word of God and can pass its life-changing truths to others ... in word and deed. It is a great day when we can recognize our own short-comings and failures and through the Holy Spirit's guidance run to the cross and rejoice in the forgiveness that is ours. It is a great day when we contemplate the gift of eternal life that is freely given and received by grace through faith in Jesus because of His suffering, death, and resurrection as perfect payment for all sin.

It is a great day to be a child of God!

As professional church workers of our District, Ordained and Commissioned Ministers of Religion, we have a high calling. We are blessed to be in full time service in our church. We know and recognize the importance of our role and the privilege we have to serve God's people in so many ways. While our tasks differ, our ministry is the same – to provide a clear proclamation of the Good News of Salvation, reaching out in Christian love to His present children ... and those yet to be.

The document that you are about to read has been prepared to assist us in examining our ministry and to help us remain focused on the important work before us. It is designed to remind us of our obligations and our responsibility to the Lord, ourself, family, and community. It is designed to underscore good practice and to help us guard against actions which might interfere with our ministry. You are encouraged to personally explore the issues raised in this document and if necessary, to adjust your life accordingly.

May our Lord continue to bless our congregations with faithful workers. It is our prayer that this document will help each one of us be more effective in communicating Christ crucified, risen, and returning.

Serving the Lord in a great day,

Rev. David P. E. Maier

Rev. David P. E. Maier, President
Michigan District of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

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Ethical Conduct for Professional Church Workers

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I. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

Overview:

What do you think of when you read the words, “Ethical Conduct”?

Study:

1. What is the source for the principles laid out in this document?
2. Can the principles in this document be ignored? Why or why not?
3. How can the church worker use the principles in his/her daily life?
4. How can the church worker use this guide as a tool for personal growth?

What do you think?

Pastor Art feels that no one but God has the right to tell him how to live his life. He further explains that he doesn't need to study the principles of conduct. He states that he depends on God's grace – God's power- to live his life, hence, to follow anything that man develops is contrary to God's will for him.

Teacher Bill is a 35 year veteran of the classroom. He states that he has seen many so-called “Codes of Conduct” come and go in his tenure. He feels that all he has to do is stay faithful to his Call and everything will work out OK. He feels that it will be a waste of his time to read, let alone study, the Ethical Conduct document. He believes that the Michigan District has no right to tell him how to act out his Call. He believes that only his Board of Education has a right to question his conduct.

What would you say to Pastor Art and Teacher Bill?

A Look in the Mirror

1. Is it possible that I can grow in my conduct as a Professional Church Worker?
2. How can I grow – or why can't I grow?
3. Is there a time in my career that a code of conduct would have helped me?

II. BASIC FOUNDATIONS FOR ETHICAL CONDUCT

Overview:

What is the purpose of a foundation? What foundational blocks are most important to you?

Study:

1. The first foundational building block the Ethical Conduct guide is built on is _____.
2. How does the second foundational block build on the first?
3. In the Installation Vows, the Professional Church Worker vows to be faithful to _____ and _____.
4. What is the only foundational building block that may change?

What do you think?

Chloe accepted the Call to serve as the second grade teacher at OLOPS Lutheran School. She encourages her students to live as children of God. She attends church and Bible class each Sunday. She struggles on how to teach second grade science class.

She attended a conference through her local public school. The topic was “How to make fired up second grade scientists.” She was inspired. The speaker gave her many tips on how to improve her instruction. The curriculum guaranteed that her students would raise their science scores on the achievement tests by over 2 grade levels. She was so taken by the material that she purchased it with her own money.

She implemented the materials immediately. After two weeks her students were excited, enthused and eager to learn science. Her students begged to stay indoors at recess so they could study more science.

One day a parent called Chloe to talk about the science curriculum. The mother complimented Chloe on the improvement in the children's science scores. However, the curriculum taught that the earth was millions of years old. The mother was wondering how Chloe was going to answer that issue. The mother thought it might be better to use science materials that taught Creation, rather than the ones she was using, no matter how much the children were excited about science class.

Chloe became very defensive. She thanked the mother for her concern and commented on how she had been called to be the teacher, so she should know what is best for the children.

Is there a conflict with any of the foundational building blocks in her behavior?

A Look in the Mirror

1. Am I familiar with my:
 - Baptismal vow?
 - Confirmation vow?
 - Installation vows?
 - Call?
2. Do I need to review and study any of these foundational building blocks?

III. PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

III.A. THE PROFESSIONAL WORKER IS COMMITTED TO PERSONAL AND CORPORATE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Overview:

What does it mean to model the Servant's role, following the example of Jesus?

Study:

1. Time needs to be spent in personal _____ and _____.
2. Commitment must be to _____ and the _____.
3. The worker must be faithful in _____ worship and _____ study.

What do you think?

Pastor Don is a very active pastor in a small rural congregation. He is faithful in leading the members in outreach, evangelism and worship. He spends long hours in preparations of sermons, Bible classes, Confirmation classes, and shut-in calls.

He feels that his time is stretched to the point that he must sacrifice an activity. He chooses to sacrifice his personal Bible study using the rationale that he is already being fed in the Word thorough his worship/ministry preparations.

Elvis is the eighth grade teacher at OLOPS Lutheran School. He shines in front of his students. He is very outgoing and animated when he teaches. However, he is very shy in front of adults. He has a hard time having attention drawn to him. Because of this, he sits in the back row of the balcony when he attends church services. He is faithful in attendance, but very few members see him in the back row. He bolts from the service, avoiding as much contact as possible.

One Sunday he is cornered by a member of the Board of Education who comments on how good it is to see him in church. The board member continues on how just last meeting they were discussing the fact that Elvis was never in church and how could he ask the children to attend if he doesn't.

What would you advise Pastor Don about his decision to sacrifice personal Bible study time?

What would you advise Elvis about his visibility at church services?

A Look in the Mirror

1. How do I rationalize my lack of personal Bible study?
2. When was the last time I studied the Lutheran Confessions?
3. In what ways does being a public Minister mean I have to be more public in my life?
4. Am I content being a servant or do I look to be the Master?

III. B. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO HIS/HER SPOUSE AND FAMILY

Overview:

How do you define your family? Can family include more than relatives? What does it mean to be committed to your family? Is it possible to be more committed to the “church family” than one’s personal family?

Study:

1. What does it mean to “be above reproach”?
2. Marriage is viewed as a _____ and _____.
3. What type of parent should the professional church worker be?
4. What can the professional church worker give to his/her family to reinforce the view that family is a God-given responsibility?
5. Where can the professional church worker get help for marriage or family problems?

What do you think?

Pastor Fabio has scheduled every Monday as his personal time with his family. He turns his phone off and takes his wife on a date. They leave the house at 9:00 a.m. and return in time to spend the evening with the children after school. Their evenings are spent in family activities – reading, homework, games, and devotions.

One Sunday afternoon the chairman of the congregation calls to say that he was going in for surgery the next day. He continues to ask Pastor if he would be there for him and his family. The surgery is scheduled for 9:00 a.m. and is expected to last until noon. Although he is aware that this is Pastor’s day off, he would really consider it a personal favor if Pastor Fabio could be there, just like he was there for Pastor at the last Voter’s meeting.

Mrs. Gagen is the Kindergarten teacher at OLOPS Lutheran School. She is very dedicated to her pupils – always finding extras that make learning fun. She has taught for 40 years and is looking to many more years. She could not imagine life without her class.

She spends upwards of 60 hours a week in preparation for the classes she will teach. Her husband understands her dedication to her pupils and has taken on the role of housekeeper, meal maker and laundryman. They have drifted into sleeping in separate rooms so as not to disturb each other – she preparing for classes – he sleeping.

DCE Hal has successfully established a Youth Ministry for his congregation. He has activities scheduled for every night of the week. His events are always very well attended – the youth appreciate his efforts, his humor, his spirit. Many of the youth that attend the activities are unchurched, brought by their church member friends. Hal’s outreach is well know throughout the district.

Hal’s wife spends her time raising their two preschoolers. She recently became depressed over the amount of time Hal was spending away from the house. Her depression turned to anger. She hired a babysitter to watch the children as she enrolled in an evening course at the local junior college. She has started having coffee with Fred – one of her classmates – after classes.

What would you advise Pastor Fabio about an intrusion into his family time?

What would you say to Mrs. Gagen regarding the amount of time she spends at school?

Do you see problems for Hal?

How would you respond to any of the workers if they us the rationale that they are serving Jesus and the family has to be second?

A Look in the Mirror

1. How does your calendar indicate your commitment to your family?
2. Do you find yourself rationalizing your decisions to spend time away from your family? What drives the decision?
3. What boundaries have you established to protect family time?
4. How often do you talk to your spouse? Are the conversations designed around questions or are they real discussions seeking opinions, information, and connection?
5. How would your spouse answer question 4? Can you see some dangers ahead for your marriage?

III.C. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

Overview:

What is the distinction made between the Office of Public Ministry and the Universal Priesthood of all Believers?

Study:

1. What is the role of the pastor?
2. What is the role of the professional church worker when it comes to dealing with those entrusted to his/her care?
3. How should disagreements between Professional Church Workers be resolved?
4. When is it proper to reveal confidential information? Who should be contacted before confidential information is revealed?
5. What should the professional church worker do when he/she has direct knowledge of a colleague's incompetence?

What do you think?

Pastor Koenig has angered his elders and most of the church council. He had been ministering to a convicted child molester and openly welcomed him back into church upon release from prison. He has him reading the Old Testament lessons on Sunday mornings.

Louie slammed his fist down on the keyboard. The children in the choir loft jumped. Soon they heard Louie yell, "I am the music director, you are the principal. I know about music. I don't know what you know. You think you know something, but you don't. I told you – we are not going to sing Bach. I don't care of he was your grandfather – he is old, passé, we sing only hip songs at OLOPS! I am paid to direct – let me direct! I don't tell you how to skulk around the school – don't you dare tell me what songs to sing, play, or perform. I was here before you and I will be here long after your memory fades. So go back to the hole you call an office and let me do some real work."

Marvin had been a lay minister for three years, happily performing his duties. The congregation called an assistant pastor. Soon Marvin was finding his duties being taken from him. He was confused and brought his concern to the Senior Pastor. Pastor informed him that he was going to be phased out of the ministry plan, because the church council wanted real ministers, not laymen pretending to be ministers.

What advice do you have for each of the church workers? Do you see issues for the ministry in their behaviors?

A Look in the Mirror

1. How do you understand the role of the pastor as spiritual leader? Is the pastor a dictator or a facilitator?
2. Is it humorous to tell jokes about ethnic groups or is it disrespectful? Is it permissible to tell “blonde” jokes?
3. How do you handle disagreements among colleagues? Can you support the office while disagreeing with the person in the office?
4. If one would ask those members you serve, would they describe you as a master or a servant?
5. How do you keep confidential matters confidential?

III.D. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO RELATIONSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY AND WIDER CHURCH

Overview:

What do you think of when you read the word “Community”? How does the document define “Community”? What do you think of when you read “Wider Church”?

Study:

1. What creates the unity among professional church workers?
2. Whom should the professional church worker consult before making a decision that has the potential to affect the public witness of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod?
3. Who calls the worker?
4. Does the church worker have an obligation to honor the commitments made through District or Synod conventions?
5. Who serves as the doctrinal oversight authority in every congregation?
6. Should a professional church worker be involved in the greater community to the point where time is taken from performance of congregational duties?

What do you think?

*Pastor Nough opened the Proceedings from the last Synodical convention. As he started to read he became angry. The more he read, the angrier he became. He finally threw it across the desk and fumed, “How long, Oh Lord? When will *those* people come to their senses? Am I the only one that can discern what these decisions mean to the Kingdom?”*

He then opens up his computer, fires off some pointed e-mails. As he writes, he decides that he will preach a sermon series on how the Synod has it all wrong. He smiles to himself as he thinks, “At least one congregation will have it right.”

Olive retired after 45 years of service. She spent all of her years at OLOPS Lutheran School, the last 10 years as principal. She never married, her career was marriage enough. She used to remark, “Why should I settle for a few children when I can have hundreds?”

After her retirement, she offered her services to the new principal. He was just starting out and he seemed to need some help, so she volunteered to come to school one day a week to help him adjust.

Since her house was nearby, she could walk to school. She also appreciated all of the visits from her former students. They kept her informed of what was happening. The parents would often call her for advice, especially after the new principal insisted that

he wanted the newsletter to go home on Mondays and not Wednesdays as it had for 45 years.

Paul was the “thorn in the flesh” for his principal. He never seemed to be on time, he couldn’t make decisions, he was always behind in his lesson plans, and he never was able to find what he needed. Paul had been called to the office again. He decided that he was being treated unfairly and wasn’t going to take it any more.

He took out his cell phone and called the District office. He would complain to the School Superintendent and that would get his principal in trouble. He then dialed the Pastor from the next congregation; he would give him words to use. He then called his former Principal. He would listen and take his side. As he was making his calls, he spotted a friend from the staff walking by. He stopped her and was able to tell her enough so she shared his “righteous wrath” at the Principal. She agreed to go to the meeting and put the Principal in his place.

The email started out innocent enough, “Lets stand up for Jesus,” declared the message. As Pastor Quinn continued reading, he realized that it was another “call to action” from the group that wanted to return the Synod to its foundational roots. He read the email, not sure what he would do about it. The message made some good points; however, he was not ready to involve the congregation in another fight. He barely survived the last meeting when the Voter’s decided to use the “Blue” hymnal, by only two votes. He didn’t think the congregation needed another polarizing issue.

Yet, the message bothered him. Who could give him advice?

DCE Ralph was excited; he was just named the Jaycee Young Man of the Century. He would receive a paid trip for two around the world. He would travel for one month, stopping at key Jaycee cities around the globe to proclaim the Jaycee message. His wife would be able to attend and they were both excited!

As he reported the news to his board, some members seemed to react less than enthusiastically to the news. He asked them if there was a problem. They replied that they were happy for him, but he would be gone for the big youth group super-seminar that had been planned for two years. He would also miss the spaghetti dinner and puppet show planned for the community. His wife would miss a month of teaching her fourth graders at OLOPS Lutheran School. They were happy for him, but had concerns.

What advice does the Principles of Conduct give to each of these workers?

A Look in the Mirror

1. Do I strive towards unity among all workers or am I glad when those with whom I disagree have problems?
2. Do I seek the council of my fellow workers on the tough decisions or do I prefer to run my own ministry as a “Lone Ranger”?
3. How easy is it for me to give advice to those not from my congregation or ministry? Do I discourage people asking for my opinion or do I encourage it?
4. Do I support every decision from the District or Synod? If not, how do I express my opinion? Am I too public?
5. Do I see the Pastoral Office as the ecclesiastical supervisor? How do I show this belief?
6. Am I using good stewardship of time in my commitment to community duties? Am I even involved in the local community?

III. E. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO APPROPRIATE SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Overview:

What comes to mind when you read the words “social behavior”?

Study:

1. Where is the ultimate gift of sexual expression found?
2. How can one avoid pornography in today’s world – especially if one watches TV or attends movies or other public performances?
3. How can a church worker create problems when dealing with children?
4. Is it ever appropriate for a homosexual to be in public ministry?
5. What behavior could be defined as one that is not sin, but cause offense?

What do you think?

Pastor Simon was in his office working on his sermon. His secretary asked if he was available to see Mrs. Little. She was waiting in the lounge. She was very distressed and wanted to see him. Pastor said to send her in.

Mrs. Little dried her eyes with a crumpled tissue as she entered the office and closed the door. She was dressed in a very tight mini-skirt and a low cut blouse and had fresh make-up. She looked younger than 35 years old.

Pastor sat at his desk and asked her to be seated. She pulled a chair around to his side of the desk and sat very close. Pastor could smell her perfume.

He asked, “How can I help you?”

She explained that she had just come from a meeting with her husband. He had informed her that they were getting a divorce. He was leaving her that afternoon and didn’t want to see her again. She would be able to have anything she wanted from the house; he just wanted to be free from her. He didn’t love her any more. He was in love and was leaving her – for another man.

She then leaned in close to Pastor, her knees brushing his as she asked him, “Am I an attractive woman?”

Thor was a very successful fifth grade teacher at OLOPS Lutheran School. His children learned. They looked forward to his classes. They did their assignments.

Thor was not married. His pupils were his life. He would take each child’s picture and make a collage to hang on his living room wall. He had pictures of his classes from each of the ten years he taught. He would buy gifts for their birthdays and sometimes would treat them to a special lunch. He liked to give them hugs, knowing that children need affection. He would stay late to help his pupils study. The parents appreciated all of the extra time he spent with their children.

Eunice would give music lessons to congregation members at church after school. As Music Minister for the congregation, she wanted to insure that there would always be enough organists available to play services. She would take each child and place them at the organ bench. She would guide their hands over the keys. Often she would sit next to them on the bench. There was usually no one else in the building when she gave her lessons.

Pastor Laurel and Principal Hardy were walking together through the church. They were talking about the movie they had just seen – “Superman Reloads the Matrix.” The movie was rated “R.” They were commenting on how the story was worth listening to the foul language and watching the skimpy costumes.

The custodian was dusting the pews and overheard the conversation. He was going to go home and share the news with his uptight wife that Pastor and Principal saw the movie, so it was OK for him to see it – in spite of the “R” rating.

What advice can you give each of these workers about their social behavior?

A Look in the Mirror

1. What tempts me to break the sixth commandment?
2. Am I putting myself into positions that would be hard to defend? Am I ever alone in a room with a child? How can this be done appropriately?
3. Is divorce ever an option for a professional church worker?
4. Do I ever cross the line with inappropriate touching, speech or dress?
5. How do I live out a life as a “public citizen”? What would I do differently if I were a “private citizen”?

III.F. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO APPROPRIATE SPEECH AND ACTIONS

Overview:

What does it mean to put the best construction on everything? How can a worker’s speech cause problems?

Study:

1. Is there ever a time when it is appropriate to divulge confidential information?
2. When and how is it appropriate to share information with a spouse?
3. Is it ever right to tell “Blonde” jokes?
4. Who should be called “Sweetie”?
5. When would silence indicate approval?
6. Is there ever any “good” gossip?

What do you think?

Pastor Value is a second career pastor. He retired from the Marines and went to the Seminary. As a Marine, Pastor was a drill instructor. His job was to “break” the recruits and “remake” them as Marines. He used any means necessary to accomplish his task. He was used to using “colorful” language, ethnic and racial references. He was outstanding in his job.

As a Pastor, he often finds himself falling into old habits. He has developed a network of ex-servicemen and meets with them regularly. They talk about their service days using their former language to describe their current circumstances. Pastor feels comfortable around these men and cherishes his time with them.

Teacher X'Ray loves Fridays. On Fridays, his buddy from grade school sends him a joke. Sometimes it is about dumb women, sometimes it is about a particular ethnic group, sometimes it is about homosexuals. They reminisce about their days growing up in the city and bemoan the state of the union today. Lately they have exchanged a number of humorous e-mails regarding illegal immigrants.

Deaconess Young just heard that Patty was pregnant. She was very happy for her and her husband Jake. Patty and Jake were special to her. She had met them at the Coffee House and invited them to church. Soon the dating couple was married and asked Deaconess Young to be the Maid of Honor. Now they were expecting a baby and all was happiness. That is until Patty let slip her due date. Simple math confirmed that she was pregnant three months before the marriage. Patty asked Deaconess Young if it was OK for them to go back to their home town, have the baby, and delay the announcement for three months. That way no one in the church would know about their sin.

Pastor picked up the podium and threw it across the room. He yelled at the startled Confirmation class and told them they were the most disrespectful, unchristian group of sinners he had ever taught. He shouted, "I don't care if you do your memory work or not, just be quiet. Shut up and give me peace."

He told them they must all write the Athanasian Creed 50 times or they wouldn't be confirmed.

Ricardo sat in the cafeteria drinking a cup of coffee and reading the newspaper. Professor C. B. Sieving came up and sat next to him. "I understand you have the Call to teach at OLOPS Lutheran School."

"Yes," Ricardo replied.

"Well, you know that all of the commandments are important, but you want to guard against the sixth and the eighth when you are at OLOPS."

"Why is that?"

"Because it is a small town and everybody is related. You never know who is related to whom."

What does the Principles of Conduct have to say to each church worker?

A Look in the Mirror

1. Do I like to gossip and share confidential information? Do I share too much with my spouse? Is it possible to not share enough?
2. Do I try to mask my use of vulgarity with euphuisms? Is my "darn it" only a rationale for breaking the second commandment?
3. Do I keep my temper in check in public? In private?
4. How guilty am I of using inappropriate language in my humor? Do I respect the line, step on the line or ignore the line of good taste and ethical behavior?
5. Can I pray for those who persecute me?

III.G. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO STEWARDSHIP OF HIS/HER OWN BODY

Overview:

What comes to mind when you read the words “stewardship of his/her own body”?

Study:

1. How does one define proper attire? Can Pastors preach wearing shorts and Hawaiian shirts? Can Kindergarten teachers teach wearing skirts? Can principals wear jeans and tennis shoes everyday?
2. Can a drug ever be harmful if a doctor prescribes it?
3. What type of activities can lead a worker to neglect his/her calling?
4. How is “workaholic” defined? Can a worker be a “workaholic” and still be faithful to the family?
5. Is it wrong to smoke?

What do you think?

Pastor Aaron has a large congregation. He has 75 shut-in calls to make every month. He spends many hours in the car driving to make his calls. There are four hospitals that his members use and he has at least three members in the hospital every week. He doesn't have time for himself. He has asked the congregation for help, but the budget is tight and they can't afford another worker.

Pastor is very sensitive to the needs of his congregation members and wants to be there for each one. The congregation loves him for the way he is so faithful in visiting all of the shut-ins, hospitalized and those who mourn. He will spend hours at each person's side, offering conversation, comfort and care.

Pastor's teenaged daughter just began to drive. She was pulled over for speeding. She had been to a party and had been drinking.

Bridget was the Office Manager for her church. She needed to be at the office early in the morning. She struggled to raise her children after the divorce. She worked nights at the local grocery store to help pay the bills. She often felt tired and depressed.

Her doctor gave her a prescription to help her feel better. As long as she took the medication, she was able to function. But soon the pills didn't seem to work as well for her.

She went to a different doctor to see if he could prescribe something stronger. When he inquired about her medical history, she failed to mention her previous visits and her current prescription.

Caleb loved his chicken nuggets. He would go to the fast food restaurant and order three meals, then proceed to eat them all himself. His wife was tired of letting his pants out and asked him to get in shape.

He snapped back at her, “I am in shape – round is a shape. Just deal with it. If you would fry more foods in grease, I wouldn't have to go out to eat.”

What would you advise each worker based on the Principles of Conduct?

A Look in the Mirror

1. Who is affected when I choose not to be professionally dressed?
2. Am I a “workaholic”? Do I understand the principle of “Boundaries” and do I set appropriate boundaries in my ministry?
3. What destructive behavior do I cherish? Do I drink too much? Smoke too much? Eat too much? Exercise too little?
4. Is there some activity that I need to cut back on?

III.H. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO STEWARDSHIP OF TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURES

Overview:

How does stewardship of Time, Talents and Treasures relate to being an effective witness for the Gospel? Is it good and proper for a professional church worker to tithe? What would it take to move beyond the tithe?

Study:

1. Should the church worker’s family have to settle for a different standard of living than those around them?
2. How accurate should the church worker be in reporting income, especially income from sources such as honorariums?
3. Is it ethical for the church worker to use the congregation’s copier, paper, and computer for personal purposes? Isn’t use of the congregation’s resources considered part of the remunerations package for the church worker?
4. Should a professional church worker be authorized to write checks, have access to a congregation credit card, or deposit funds?
5. Is it acceptable for a professional church worker to carry a debt load beyond a house and a car? Isn’t a church worker’s personal finance a matter between the worker and God alone?

What do you think?

Pastor Demetri was very active in the local chapter of Lutherans for Life. He was a good writer and volunteered to write and edit the local chapter’s newsletter. Everyone looked forward to the new issue of the newsletter; it was interesting, informative, and inviting to read.

Recently, the church’s copier needed to be repaired. Pastor asked the congregation’s board of property if he could purchase a color copier instead of just getting the old one repaired. It was a strain on the congregation’s resources, but they agreed to the purchase.

It was an exciting day when the next issue of the Lutherans for Life newsletter was received. The color pictures and borders really made the newsletter exciting to read.

Endora was sad. Her dad was the sixth grade teacher at OLOPS Lutheran School. She was talking with her classmates as many of them just received a new I-Pod for doing so well on their report card. Endora had received straight “A’s” and asked her dad for an I-Pod, like the other girls had. He told her that they were too expensive and that she didn’t need to run her life based on what the other girls did or didn’t do or have.

Principal Franklin was at the grocery store picking up some bread. He ran into Frieda, one of the mothers from the school. She smiled at him and wished him a great day. Suddenly she opened her purse and pulled out a \$10 bill. She handed it to Franklin and asked him if he would credit her lunch account. She was having such a hard time getting to school, what with her parents visiting and the new baby and the sick dog. She left Franklin holding the bill as she walked down the aisle.

The phone rang at the school and Grace answered it, "OLOPS Lutheran School, the place where Grace abounds, Grace speaking, how many I help you?"

Grace's face lost her smile as she listened to the owner of the Pizza place ask if she would ever be paid for the pizzas she provided for the party held after the performance of the school's Operetta. She didn't want to complain, but the bill was over a month old and she was wondering when she could expect a check.

When Grace asked the teacher responsible for ordering pizzas for all school functions, she smiled and said, "Oh, I forgot. You know me. I will take care of that next month. We had to order flowers for Pastor's anniversary celebration and the florist wouldn't charge them. I used the pizza money to pay for the flowers. I will pay for the pizzas when I get the flower money from the treasurer."

Pastor Hugh was just out of the seminary. He was excited to be at his first parish and was looking forward to the birth of his first child. The congregation was also excited to have him. They had been struggling with finances and jumped at the chance to have a first year graduate. Their former pastor had 40 years of experience and the congregation was able to save thousands of dollars on salary and benefits by calling a graduate.

Hugh was distraught, however, when he tried to balance his budget. His school loans were due, the congregation asked him to pay for his spouse's health insurance and he grossly underestimated the amount of miles left on their old car. He wondered how he would manage his obligations and still be an example in tithing his treasure.

He really struggled with his position when the treasurer asked him to place the offering into the church's safe after services, since he would be the only one around after church.

What advice can you give each church worker based on the principles of conduct?

A look in the Mirror

1. How important is it to me to live to the standard of living of the congregation members? Does the congregation pay enough salary for that to be a reality?
2. Do I fairly and accurately report my income to the Federal and State governments?
3. Do I live within my means?
4. How freely do I use the congregation's property for my personal use? Is it OK to use a paperclip – make one copy – call family members – send personal e-mail – borrow from Petty Cash?
5. Do I feel the congregation places me in an unfair position by expecting me to handle money while I struggle with finances?

III.I. THE PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER IS COMMITTED TO COMPETENCY IN MINISTRY

Overview:

How does competency relate to the ministry?

Study:

1. Is there ever a time when a church worker no longer needs to study?
2. Who should evaluate the church worker? What standard or instrument should be used? Who is qualified to evaluate the Pastor?
3. When is it appropriate for the church worker to make referrals?
4. How many hours should a church worker spend in preparation for his/her duties? Is it possible to prepare too much?
5. Is it fitting to perform duties outside of the specifics of the individual's Call?
6. How could one experience a conflict of interest in the ministry?

What do you think?

Pastor Ian graduated at the top of his class. He devoured every journal, every book that came along. He volunteered to lead the Winkle Conference when they were studying the early history of the effects of the Augustine movement on the music of the liturgy. His research was impeccable. His fellow pastors were inspired, enlightened, and enthralled with his presentation.

Pastor Ian was developing a problem, however. All of his reading and research kept him from spending time with his children. So, he made a decision. He would forego reading books, reading journals and attending conferences. He would spend time with his children.

Teacher Jake needed a new car. His old one had seen not only better days, but couldn't even remember what those days were. He looked at the ads, studied the reports and came to the conclusion that he still couldn't afford the car he wanted – a Jaguar XKE.

He was thinking about his dream car while he thumbed through the applications for basketball coach. This was a serious matter. The OLOPS Lutheran School basketball team was known throughout the Synod as the premier basketball team of the nation. Bobby Knight had once coached the OLOPS "Katydid's." The basketball coach was a prized position and many men vied to be chosen.

Jake's eye stopped at the third name of the short list – Guido Buys. He knew Guido from the car commercials. Guido sold Jaguars and recently advertised about a sale on XKE's. Jake thought, "He is qualified. If I help him, he might help me...."

Pastor Lou was an institution at church. He retired 20 years ago and still was filling the pulpit every other Sunday. His sermons were interesting and informative. However, some of the children questioned his sermon illustrations. They would return home from service and ask their parents, "What is a Studebaker? What is Blackjack gum? Doesn't candy cost more than a penny? Did we fight a war in Korea?"

Some of the elders questioned if Pastor was writing new sermons or using old ones.

Pastor Manny was best man for his friend Nigel's wedding. Nigel and Manny graduated from the seminary together and had churches just miles apart from each other. He loved his friend and his bride and would do anything for them. He spent the whole week in helping the couple with their last minute preparations. He was delighted to be asked to help and he eagerly served.

The alarm woke Pastor Manny at 6:30 on Sunday morning. He sleepily hit the “snooze” button and turned over. His wife tapped him on the arm and asked if he was ready to get up. Manny asked, “Why? I got Pastor Lou to fill in for me.”

“Yes, but you promised Nigel you would fill in for him. Did you forget?”

“Oops, I guess I did. Oh, well. I can ask the Holy Spirit to give me words. They will be better than mine anyway. What is for breakfast?”

Shelia was the best First Grade teacher OLPOS Lutheran School ever had. She was always prepared, the students loved her, and recently she had decided to save money by not buying textbooks or workbooks. She was given free samples of a series she liked and figured out it would be cheaper to copy the books instead of buying them. Everyone was excited about her resourcefulness.

What advice can you offer to each of the church workers based on the Principles of Conduct?

A Look in the Mirror

1. How often do I bend the copyright laws? Do I show home videos in a non-home setting? Do I make illegal copies? Do I always credit my sources?
2. Do I frown on attendance at conferences and conventions? Do I look for ways to avoid them rather than ways to attend?
3. Is it possible to learn from reading books written by non-Lutheran authors? Do I read any non-Lutheran authors in order to improve my ministry?
4. Do I rely on my Job Description to determine my duties or do I do what is needed?
5. Am I a self-starter or do I need to be told what to do?
6. How open am I to evaluations? What do I change based on my evaluation?
7. Do I try to fix all the problems or do I know when to refer?
8. How often do I “wing it” and not prepare for the day?

Special Note for Pastors and Teachers

Please refer to the sections found on page 10 for specific guidelines for Ordained Ministers and Lutheran Teaching Ministers. These sections should not be ignored, but studied in a peer setting.

It would be beneficial to evaluate how one currently relates to the guidelines and how one could better follow these guidelines.

So What?

Now that you have studied the Ethical Conduct for Professional Church Workers what difference will it make in your ministry?

1. What will you stop doing?
2. What will you start doing?
3. What will you continue doing?

Special Note About “What do you think?” Examples.

These scenarios are fictitious. Any similarity to any person, living or dead, is purely coincidental, accidental, and not intentional.



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