

Staff Ethics for Employees and Pastors

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Viroqua, Wisconsin

As followers of Christ, we are called to live lives of integrity and faithfulness. All employees and Pastors of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church are expected to live exemplary lives that reflect our faith in Jesus Christ. This document provides a vision of guiding principles essential to those who serve in leadership at Good Shepherd.

It is the responsibility of GSLC's employees and pastors to adhere to these ethics. When these ethics are not followed, the community is damaged and the integrity of the church suffers. Violation of these ethics will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

General Ethics

Staff members of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church are expected to lead ethical lives that model the vision of God's intention for the world. The following are examples of ethical behavior expected by all members of GSLC's staff:

- Exhibiting a deep commitment to Christ
- Tending to the disciplines of the faith: worship, prayer, scripture, service, relationships and generosity
- Maintaining a high level of integrity and competence in one's particular field
- Conducting oneself in an honest and open manner, free from deceit or corruption
- Setting and maintaining high standards for quality of work and ministry
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of others
- Continuing to advance one's skills and knowledge through on-going self-guided learning

The following are examples of conduct unbecoming of leaders in this church:

- Teaching content and/or proclaiming a message contrary to the Lutheran witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Neglecting to worship regularly
- Theft and/or dishonesty
- Promiscuity, and/or infidelity to one's partner
- Drug abuse, drunkenness, and/or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Physical, sexual or emotional abuse of another
- Undermining the pastors and/or the leadership of the congregation
- Practices and/or speech that is harmful to others, especially those that exhibit racism, sexism, ageism or any other practice that denigrates other people
- Accessing and/or transmitting confidential materials about members of the staff and the people we serve
- Accessing and/or transmitting of pornography on church computers

Interpersonal Relationships

Good Shepherd Lutheran is a community that seeks to follow the vision of Christ in the way we speak about and with one another. This vision is first made explicit in the eighth commandment: *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*. This simple commandment, as explained further in *Luther's Small Catechism*, gives us direction for daily life. It reminds us that

We are to fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light. (Luther's Small Catechism, explanation of the 8th Commandment)

Members of the Good Shepherd Staff are expected to practice a stewardship of relationships that reflects this understanding of the eighth commandment.

When there is conflict between staff members or between a staff member and a member of the congregation, staff members are expected to address grievances with one another directly. Reconciliation is always to be sought. If, after seeking resolution between each other, there continues to be conflict, then staff members are encouraged to talk with their supervisor. In times of conflict, staff members must not spread this conflict to others by sharing anger, anxiety, or disappointment with other staff members or members of the congregation. These guidelines are proven models for healthy living in community. They also follow the admonitions of Jesus in Matthew 18.

Forgiveness is an essential action of every Christian community. It is expected that members of the GSLC staff will also model forgiveness and other acts of reconciliation with one another and with other members of the congregation.

Confidentiality

Staff members of Good Shepherd may at times learn privileged information about the people of our congregation, other staff members, and other people in the community. Staff members are not to discuss information learned as a result of employment at Good Shepherd with members of the congregation or others outside of the congregation.

Examples of information that could become known by an employee of Good Shepherd that must remain confidential include:

- health conditions
- hospitalizations
- visits made to or by pastors
- financial gifts
- staff relations
- life transitions of members or other staff members

On occasion, people may ask for information about others. Good Shepherd staff members are not to be sources of knowledge about others. An appropriate answer when such questions come could be, "I'm not sure," or "I'm not at liberty to discuss this..."

Sexual Harassment

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is committed to providing a professional work environment free of discriminatory intimidation or harassment. In keeping with this commitment, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church maintains a strict policy prohibiting sexual harassment. This policy applies to all employees, as well as Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's pastor(s), all ministry leaders, all members and constituents. Furthermore, it prohibits harassment in any form, including verbal, physical, and visual harassment.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, making unwanted sexual advances and requests for sexual favors where either (1) submission to such conduct is made an explicit or implicit term or condition of employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decision affecting such individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. The pastor(s), employees, ministry leaders, lay members or constituents who violate this policy will be subjected to discipline.

Any person who believes he or she has been harassed by a pastor, co-worker, ministry leader, member, constituent or any representative of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church should promptly report the facts of the incident or incidents and the names of the individuals involved to the Executive Committee. Allegations involving any person rostered in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be reported to the synod. Concern and complaints should be lodged without fear of reprisal. The Executive Committee will investigate all such claims and take appropriate disciplinary action.

Leaving Well

Good Shepherd hopes that all members of its staff will have a long, productive and satisfying tenure. When it is time for a staff member to depart, it is important to remember that how a staff person leaves greatly impacts the congregation. For this reason staff members are encouraged to think about departure issues carefully.

Regardless of the reason for departure, there will be grief and anxiety within the staff and the congregation over the end of a staff member's employment. When there are hard feelings that lead to or accompany a departure these feelings can easily cause people to say and do things that can be quite harmful to the congregation. For this reason, when a staff person is leaving, it is important for all employees, especially the staff member departing, to carefully tend to the climate they affect within the congregation.

Should the time come for your departure, please practice the following:

- Announce your decision to depart only after you have submitted a letter of resignation in person to your supervisor and the two of you have had opportunity to discuss your departure face to face.
- In announcing your decision to depart, claim it as your own decision and find ways in which to talk about your reasons for leaving in positive terms that will continue to help build up the congregation.
- Find ways to express gratitude for the position you have held.
- For the sake of the congregation, allow the community to formally thank you for your service, if such an opportunity is presented to you.
- Should you be departing under difficult situations, please do not use your departure to "air grievances" you may have. In your departure, as in your tenure, you are responsible for contributing to and fostering a healthy climate within the congregation. Expressions of dissatisfaction are never helpful for the congregation.
- If you are leaving with "hard feelings," do not use these feelings as motivation or justification to do harm to others through actions or harmful talk. Such actions cause damage within the congregation.

Final Things

It is important for all staff members at Good Shepherd to work hard on creating a climate that is positive and upbeat. By working together to be colleagues in Christ we can accomplish this. Modeling servant-leadership and attending to the ways in which we interact, we can help foster a climate within the congregation that will serve Christ’s mission at GSLC very well.

With my signature, I indicate that:

- I have read *Staff Ethics for Employees and Pastors*
- I understand what is laid out in *Staff Ethics for Employees and Pastors*
- I have received a copy of *Staff Ethics for Employees and Pastors*
- I will conduct myself in keeping with the standards and spirit of the ethics laid out within *Staff Ethics for Employees and Pastors*
- I understand that not living according to the ethics of *Staff Ethics for Employees and Pastors* may lead to disciplinary action up to and including discharge

Staff Member’s Signature

Date

Supervisor’s Signature

Date