

Code of Conduct

St Peter's, Colchester

Adopted by the PCC: [tbc]

Review date: [3 years]

Policy owner: The Parochial Church Council

1. Purpose

This Code of Conduct explains the standards of behaviour expected of those who serve, lead, work, govern, volunteer or act on behalf of St Peter's.

The Parochial Church Council has responsibility for the governance and oversight of St Peter's, and PCC members serve as charity trustees. Those entrusted with responsibility in the life of the church should act with integrity, humility, care, truthfulness and proper accountability.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we seek to be faithful in all that we say and do. That includes how we treat one another, use authority, protect the vulnerable, handle information, manage disagreement, steward resources, and represent the church publicly.

This Code is intended to help us serve Christ faithfully, treat others well, protect the vulnerable, use authority rightly, and conduct the life of the church with integrity.

2. Scope

This Code applies, as relevant, to:

- clergy, licensed and authorised ministers;
- employed staff;
- PCC members;
- churchwardens and other elected or appointed officers;
- ministry leaders;
- volunteers;
- those representing St Peter's or acting on its behalf.

Some roles also have additional responsibilities under employment arrangements, charity law, safeguarding requirements, canon law, safer recruitment practice, Ministry Role Descriptions, or other St Peter's policies.

This Code should be read alongside the Welcome, Dignity and Fair Treatment Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Volunteer Policy, Staff Handbook, Conflict of Interest Policy, Social Media Policy, Complaints Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Data Protection Policy, Finance Policy and other relevant PCC policies.

3. Christian foundation

Christian conduct is rooted in the character of Christ. Those who serve in the church are called to act with humility, truthfulness, love, self-control, faithfulness and care for others.

The Apostle Paul writes:

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men.”

– Colossians 3:23, ESV

Service at St Peter’s is therefore not merely a task, office or rota duty. It is a way of serving Christ, building up his church, welcoming others, stewarding what God has entrusted to us, and using responsibility for the good of others.

Those who serve, lead, work, govern or volunteer should seek to act in a manner worthy of the gospel, consistent with Scripture, the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, the charitable purposes of the PCC, and the policies and ministry expectations of St Peter’s.

4. General conduct

Those covered by this Code are expected to:

- treat others with courtesy, patience, dignity and respect;
- speak truthfully and charitably;
- act with honesty, humility and fairness;
- avoid gossip, slander, contempt, mockery and unnecessary suspicion;
- be careful in humour, criticism, public comment and online communication;
- listen before judging or correcting;
- respect personal, pastoral, emotional, physical and safeguarding boundaries;
- use authority, responsibility, knowledge or influence for service, not self-interest;
- work constructively with others, including where there is disagreement;
- raise concerns through proper channels;
- accept correction where behaviour has been harmful, unwise, unsafe, unkind or inappropriate.

St Peter’s will not tolerate bullying, harassment, intimidation, abuse, coercive control, spiritual manipulation, racism, sexism, demeaning language, sexual misconduct, threats, victimisation, dishonesty, or the misuse of position or power.

Disagreement is not the same as misconduct. However, disagreement must be handled with charity, humility and self-control, and must not become personal attack, factional behaviour, gossip, contempt, manipulation, pressure or undermining.

5. Safeguarding and protection of others

Safeguarding is central to the life of St Peter’s. Those covered by this Code must follow St Peter’s Safeguarding Policy and any relevant Church of England, diocesan, parish or statutory safeguarding requirements.

Those serving in roles involving children, young people, vulnerable adults, pastoral care, leadership, teaching, visiting, confidential information, or other positions of trust must comply with the safeguarding, safer recruitment, DBS, training and supervision requirements for their role.

Safeguarding concerns must always be reported through safeguarding procedures. They must not be handled merely as ordinary complaints, private disagreements or informal pastoral matters.

No one should promise absolute confidentiality where there is a safeguarding concern, risk of harm, abuse, coercion, criminal behaviour, or danger to a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Those covered by this Code should take particular care not to:

- place themselves or others in unsafe or inappropriate situations;
- ignore safeguarding boundaries;
- develop inappropriate dependency;
- use pastoral, spiritual or leadership influence to pressure or control others;
- act beyond the authority, training or competence of their role;
- fail to report concerns because of embarrassment, loyalty, fear of conflict or desire to protect reputation.

6. Leadership, authority and trust

Those in leadership, governance, employment, elected office, ministry or volunteer responsibility must recognise that authority in the church is given for service.

They should:

- act within the responsibilities and limits of their role;
- avoid favouritism, manipulation, pressure or misuse of influence;
- respect the difference between pastoral care, friendship, supervision, governance and employment relationships;
- take particular care where there is a power imbalance;
- avoid creating dependency or exercising inappropriate control;
- seek advice where a situation is complex, sensitive or beyond their role;
- step back from decisions where there is a conflict of interest or loyalty.

PCC members have particular responsibilities as charity trustees. They should act in the best interests of the PCC, exercise reasonable care and skill, protect the church's resources, maintain proper oversight, and comply with charity law, Church of England rules, safeguarding duties and the agreed policies of St Peter's.

Staff, ministry leaders and volunteers should recognise the trust placed in them by the church and should use that trust for the good of others, not for personal advantage, status, control or influence.

7. Confidentiality, information and communication

Those covered by this Code may become aware of personal, pastoral, safeguarding, financial, employment, governance or confidential information. Such information must be handled carefully and only for proper church purposes.

They should:

- respect appropriate confidentiality;
- avoid gossip or unnecessary sharing of information;
- use personal data only for proper church purposes;
- follow St Peter's Data Protection Policy, Privacy Notice and Data Retention Policy;
- keep records securely where required;
- avoid sharing confidential documents, messages or discussions without authority;
- take care when using email, WhatsApp, social media, ChurchSuite, Dropbox or other systems.

Confidentiality is important, but it is not absolute. Information may need to be shared where there is a safeguarding concern, risk of harm, legal obligation, serious misconduct concern, pastoral necessity, governance responsibility, or other proper reason.

Communication should be truthful, gracious, clear and proportionate. Those acting for St Peter's should avoid careless, inflammatory, misleading, sarcastic, bullying or aggressive communication, whether in person, in writing, by email, by message, on social media or in meetings.

8. Resources, money, property and conflicts of interest

Those covered by this Code must use St Peter's resources honestly, carefully and only for proper purposes.

This includes:

- money and donations;
- buildings, keys and equipment;
- church records and data;
- staff or volunteer time;
- technology, software and online systems;
- charitable funds;
- confidential information;
- church reputation and influence.

Those handling money, expenses, cards, banking, cash, donations, Gift Aid, contracts, purchasing or financial records must follow St Peter's Finance Policy and financial procedures.

Conflicts of interest, conflicts of loyalty, gifts, hospitality, personal benefit or use of position for advantage must be declared and managed in accordance with the Conflict of Interest Policy.

No one should use their role, access, influence, resources or information at St Peter's for improper personal benefit or for the improper benefit of a connected person.

9. Health, safety and practical responsibility

Those covered by this Code must take reasonable care of themselves and others while serving, leading, working, volunteering or acting on behalf of St Peter's.

They should:

- follow St Peter's Health and Safety Policy and relevant operational guidance;
- follow fire evacuation, first aid, food hygiene, manual handling and risk assessment arrangements where relevant;
- use equipment safely and only where authorised, competent or trained;
- report accidents, injuries, near misses, hazards, defects or concerns promptly;
- not undertake tasks they are not competent or safe to perform;
- cooperate with reasonable steps taken to protect health, safety and welfare.

Those organising activities, events, groups, trips or use of premises should ensure that appropriate risk assessments, safeguarding arrangements, permissions, supervision, training and communication are in place.

10. Social media and public representation

Those covered by this Code should take care in social media, online communication, public comment and any situation where they may be seen as representing St Peter's.

They should follow St Peter's Social Media Policy and should not:

- imply that they speak for St Peter's unless authorised;
- disclose confidential, pastoral, safeguarding, employment, PCC or personal information;
- attack, bully, harass, intimidate or demean others online;
- post material that is defamatory, malicious, discriminatory, sexually inappropriate, abusive or unlawful;
- use church accounts, groups, images, branding or resources without authorisation;
- use their role or connection with St Peter's for improper personal advantage;
- respond to press or media enquiries on behalf of the church unless authorised.

Official St Peter's communication should be authorised, accurate, gracious, pastorally wise and consistent with the church's Christian ethos and policies.

11. Working together and handling disagreement

St Peter's should be a place where Scripture can be taught clearly, difficult questions can be asked honestly, and decisions can be discussed carefully.

Those covered by this Code should seek to handle disagreement with humility, truthfulness and love. They should avoid:

- factional behaviour;
- gossip or rumour;
- pressure campaigns;
- personal attacks;
- public contempt;
- undermining proper decision-making;
- using private information or influence to control others;
- refusing to accept properly made decisions simply because they disagreed with them.

Where it is safe, appropriate and proportionate to do so, concerns should first be raised directly and graciously with the person concerned. Where this would not be appropriate, or where the matter is serious, repeated, involves a person in authority, or relates to safeguarding, it should be raised through the proper channel.

Those who take part in PCC, staff, ministry, pastoral, safeguarding or other confidential discussions must respect the difference between appropriate accountability and improper disclosure.

12. Raising concerns

Concerns may be raised with one or more of the following, depending on the nature of the matter:

- the Vicar;
- the churchwardens;
- the relevant Ministry Area Leader;
- the Church Administrator;
- the Parish Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Team;
- the PCC Standing Committee;
- the Complaints Policy;
- the Whistleblowing Policy;
- the safeguarding procedure;
- the archdeacon, diocesan safeguarding team, or other diocesan officer where appropriate.

Safeguarding concerns must always be handled through safeguarding procedures.

Those who raise concerns in good faith should not be victimised or treated adversely for doing so. Equally, concerns should be raised truthfully, responsibly and without malice.

Where the concern involves the Vicar, churchwardens, staff member, PCC member, volunteer leader or another person in authority, it should be raised with whichever appropriate church officer or external body is not involved.

13. Breaches of this Code

A breach of this Code may be addressed in different ways depending on the nature and seriousness of the matter.

The response may include:

- conversation, clarification or pastoral support;
- apology, correction or mediation;
- training, supervision or change of role;
- restriction, pause or ending of a volunteer role;
- management action under employment procedures;
- referral under safeguarding procedures;
- referral under complaints or whistleblowing procedures;
- referral to the PCC, diocesan officers, statutory authorities, police, Charity Commission or other appropriate bodies.

Action should be taken carefully, proportionately and with appropriate advice, especially where safeguarding, employment, clergy discipline, charity law, data protection, insurance, legal or diocesan responsibilities may be involved.

14. Related policies and documents

This Code should be read alongside, where applicable:

- Welcome, Dignity and Fair Treatment Policy;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- Safer Recruitment arrangements;
- Volunteer Policy;
- Volunteer Agreement;
- Ministry Role Descriptions;
- Staff Handbook and employment policies;
- PCC trustee responsibilities;
- Conflict of Interest Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Social Media Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Food Hygiene Policy;
- Manual Handling Policy;
- Fire Evacuation Plans;
- Data Protection Policy;
- Privacy Notice;
- Data Retention Policy;
- IT Security Policy;
- IT Acceptable Use Policy;
- Finance Policy and financial procedures;

- relevant risk assessments and operational checklists.

15. Review

This Code will be reviewed by the PCC every three years, or sooner if required by changes in law, Church of England guidance, diocesan guidance, safeguarding requirements, parish practice or pastoral need.

The PCC is responsible for ensuring that this Code remains faithful to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, consistent with St Peter's parish convictions, legally responsible, pastorally wise, and practically useful in shaping the conduct of those who serve, lead, work, govern, volunteer or act on behalf of the church.

Code of Conduct

St Peter's is a Church of England church seeking to be faithful to Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures, and the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England.

Those who serve, lead, work, govern, volunteer or act on behalf of St Peter's are expected to act with integrity, humility, care and self-control. They should treat others with courtesy and respect, speak truthfully and charitably, work within proper boundaries, use responsibility for service rather than self-interest, and follow St Peter's safeguarding, conduct, data protection, health and safety, finance and governance arrangements.

PCC members have particular responsibilities as charity trustees. Staff, elected officers, ministry leaders and volunteers also have responsibilities appropriate to their roles.

Safeguarding concerns must always be reported through safeguarding procedures. Confidentiality is important, but it is not absolute where there is risk of harm, safeguarding concern, legal obligation, serious misconduct concern or other proper reason.

Disagreement should be handled with humility, truthfulness and love. Concerns should be raised promptly and appropriately. Those who raise concerns in good faith should not be victimised, and concerns should be raised truthfully and without malice.

Where this Code is breached, St Peter's may respond through conversation, support, correction, training, change of role, employment procedures, safeguarding procedures, complaints or whistleblowing procedures, or other appropriate action.