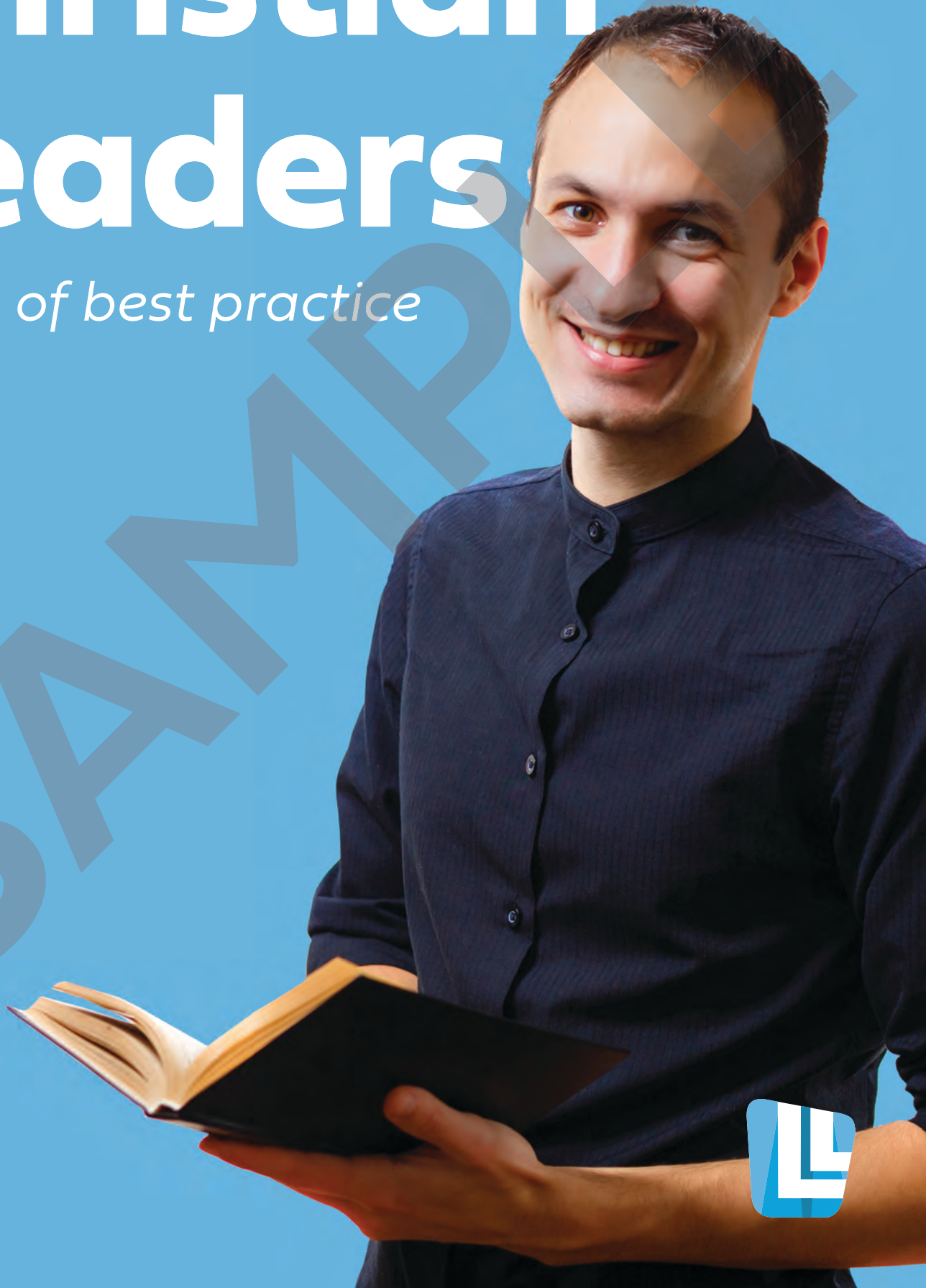


Caring for Christian Leaders

A code of best practice





Living Leadership is a collaborative network of people captivated by the grace of God and committed to growing leaders who live joyfully in Christ and serve him faithfully, because joyful, faithful leaders make joyful, faithful disciples.

We do this by providing training (Formation), support (Refresh), and Resources.

www.livingleadership.org

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

- HEBREWS 13:17 -

Aim Of This Code

This Code aims to promote best practice in the care of leaders in churches and Christian organisations so that they will be well-nourished and sustained in grace-filled service.

Six Foundational Principles

Churches and Christian organisations that thrive spiritually are led by leaders who are thriving spiritually

The well-being of leaders and their families is a key responsibility of the churches and organisations they serve.

Those with the responsibility of feeding others are sometimes the least well-nourished.

Leaders who are unburdened by unnecessary anxieties over terms and circumstances of ministry are better able to concentrate on gospel ministry and to lead joyfully.

Breakdown in relationships between leaders and churches or organisations is always devastating to both, and an obstacle to the spread of the gospel

Churches and Christian organisations should be exemplary in how they care for leaders.

For these reasons, the highest possible standards should apply to the way in which the terms of appointment for leaders are determined and implemented.

Loving Leaders Well

Healthy relationships between leaders and the churches or organisations they serve, are a judicious blend of legal, spiritual, pastoral and practical considerations which need not be in conflict. Some questions to help keep them in balance are:

- How can we so love our leaders that their ministry will be fresh and their hearts encouraged?
- How can we honour our leaders and their families in such a way as they will never want to be anywhere else?

Five Areas of Best Practice

A Covenant of Care between leaders and congregation or organization.

Terms and conditions of employment that honour gospel workers and lead to sustainable and spiritually healthy patterns of life.

Personal support and opportunity for ministry development.

Consultation and communication.

A mutually agreed dispute resolution process.

Each of these five core areas of best practice is addressed in a section of this Code by:

- A statement of ideals which churches and leaders are encouraged to adopt and formally agree together.
- Several specific proposals which a church or organisation may wish to consider adopting or adapting.

Defining Terms

In this Code, 'leader' refers to paid leaders and gospel workers in churches or Christian organisations, whilst recognising that different traditions and denominations use different terminology to refer to their leaders. In a church context, the term 'leadership team' refers to church officers, elders, church wardens or the equivalent leadership body. In an organisation, it refers to whatever body is responsible for the overall leadership of the organisation, whether a Board or team of staff members.

'People' refers in a church context to those who are members of a congregation or regular attendees other than those who are leaders. In an organisation, it refers to those staff or volunteers over whom a leader has authority.

Using this Code

Each church or organisation should tailor its own policies under each set of specific proposals in order to meet its own needs. Not all will be equally applicable to all situations. The Code is intended to affirm the need for biblical attitudes and standards to govern our relationships in purposeful ways.

We strongly recommend that a church or organization prays about mutually agreeing policies with their paid leaders in all these areas regardless of whether they are needed at the present time, but at the bare minimum adopt some version of the Covenant of Care laid out in Section 1.

This Code was developed by a working party on pastoral care of leaders convened by Living Leadership in 2015. The group consisted of church leaders, spouses and others from a variety of denominations who share a practical concern for and experience in the pastoral well-being of the church and its leaders. The Code was streamlined and repackaged in 2021 by Living Leadership staff without changing the essential content.

Our prayer is that the Code will encourage churches and Christian organisations and their leaders to build a grace-filled culture for the spiritual health of leaders and people.

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A Covenant of Care Between Leaders & People

To Encourage

A biblical vision for healthy relationships between leaders and the congregations or organisations they lead, in which leaders accept responsibility to ensure good pastoral care for people and people accept responsibility to ensure good pastoral care for leaders.

Statement of Ideals

As the leaders and the people of _____ [church / organisation name], we willingly enter into this Covenant of Care for the glory of God and the mutual wellbeing of the leaders and their families, and the people of the congregation / organisation.

We acknowledge that the relationship between a leader and people is firstly a covenant partnership in the gospel for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, and only secondarily an employment contract or authority arrangement.

We recognise, therefore, our responsibilities of care and accountability to each other for the common good.

Mutual Responsibilities

- a. We acknowledge that the Church and its mission belong not to the leaders, nor to the people, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not “my” church or “our” church but “His” church; not “my” mission or “our” mission, but “His” mission;
- b. We accept that we have a responsibility towards each other – in intention, attitude, behaviour, and word – to follow Christ’s fulfilment of the law, which is love (Romans 13:10);
- c. We agree in matters of conflict to submit ourselves to the principles expressed in Matthew 18:15-20, Matthew 5:23-26 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and to the dispute resolution procedures within the church / organisation;
- d. We aim for our communications with each other to be honest and open (2 Corinthians 4:1-2) and reject gossip, innuendo, suspicion and manipulation;
- e. We agree to ongoing, annual review of the implementation of this Covenant of Care across the life of this congregation / organisation;
- f. We accept the responsibility to seek each other’s good in prayer and practice.

Responsibilities of the People to the Leaders

- a. We affirm that our leaders are called to lead this congregation / organisation, and to equip its people for the work of mission and ministry;
- b. We accept our legal and spiritual responsibility to honour leaders paid by this congregation / organisation by providing appropriately for their physical, emotional and financial needs and those of their families in order that they may follow God's calling without undue concern for these matters;
- c. We agree to respect appropriate boundaries around time, space and emotional demands, in our leaders' family and personal lives;
- d. If we have issues about our leaders or their ministries, we will take them first directly to them, or use appropriate channels within the leadership team to deal honestly, lovingly and confidentially with them.

Responsibilities of the Leaders to the People

- a. We acknowledge that our primary role, individually and collectively, is to shepherd this congregation / organisation through prayer and the ministry of the Word and to lead it in following Jesus' call to make disciples; it is our responsibility to serve and equip the believers, not to lord it over them (Acts 6:1-7 Mark 10:35-45; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Ephesians 4:11-16);
- b. We agree to hold ourselves appropriately accountable to our fellow leaders in the church / organisation for our lives and ministries;
- c. If we have issues or disagreements with a fellow leader or one of the people of the congregation / organisation, we will speak directly to that person;
- d. We accept that our position as leaders brings with it some degree of authority and power. We will use this authority and power, under God, to serve and bless, not to abuse and manipulate, the people of this congregation / organisation.

Declaration of Intent

By God's grace and for God's glory we will endeavour to live out these responsibilities in our daily lives.

Honourable and healthy terms, conditions and expectations

To Encourage

Diligent and careful attention to the practical well-being and life-patterns of leaders

Statement of Ideals

We recognise that the terms and expectations attaching to a leader's ministry should free them from anxieties that might detract from their joy in gospel ministry. Terms and conditions should express love, honour, generosity and wisdom, and create a relationship of love and trust, grace and mutual support between leaders and with the people.

Proposals

- a. Before a ministry begins, the newly appointed leader and church leadership team should agree in writing the terms and expectations of the appointment. Care in establishing clarity from the start reduces the risk of confusion and conflict later;
- b. A joint written statement or memorandum of understanding should be provided, summarising the key areas of the leader's responsibilities and the division of responsibilities and accountability among ministry teams within the church or teams of staff and volunteers within the organisation. All employees are additionally legally entitled to receive a statement of their main employment particulars (see Appendix 3 for more details);
- c. If a leader is married, any specific role expected of their spouse (either by the church or by the leader and spouse) should be clearly stated and agreed;
- d. The church / organization should seek to ensure access to high quality pastoral support for the leader and family;
- e. Safeguarding procedures should be in place regarding the work of the leader, for instance keeping statutory checks up to date and agreeing to conform to the safeguarding policy of the church / organisation.

Personal Support and Opportunity for Ministry Development

To Encourage

The discipleship walk of leaders within an agreed framework for their personal, spiritual and ministry development.

Statement of Ideals

We acknowledge that all leaders, however gifted or experienced, benefit from opportunities for the development of ministry. No leader has all the attributes and gifts which would benefit a congregation, and those they have can always be developed. Opportunities to extend or develop gifts should encourage the leader and bless the congregation / organisation. Therefore, in accordance with the leader's gifts and aptitudes and the circumstances of the congregation / organisation, we will mutually agree how best to provide for the development of the leader's ministry, whether through training or the extension of ministry opportunities within or outside the congregation / organisation.

A key question for a congregation / organisation to consider: do your leaders (and leaders' spouses) have regular spiritual input and encouragement that will ensure their health and growth as disciples of Jesus? If the answer is "no", what does the church need to do to help and to love them better?

Proposals

- a. Recognising the need for leaders and their spouses to be spiritually healthy, they should be enabled to experience community of depth and encouragement, uninterrupted sabbath rest, and regular worship. They should be encouraged in their meditation on the Scriptures and prayer. The congregation / organization should honour their need for fellowship and friendships of depth and encourage them to find input specifically tailored to the unique needs of leaders;
- b. In addition to holiday entitlement, they should be encouraged to undertake ministry (including an agreed number of Sundays) outside the congregation / organisation, sharing gifts and resources with the wider body of Christ;

- c. They should be encouraged and enabled to attend appropriate conferences and other training and development opportunities (e.g., mission events, courses, overseas trips, ministry support groups, academic study), that will develop their ministry experience and skills;
- d. Arrangements should be considered for a mentor to walk alongside each leader, with the cost to be covered by the congregation / organisation;
- e. Arrangements should be considered for periodic agreed periods of study leave;
- f. The congregation / organisation should consider the principle and practical implications of giving regular periods of sabbatical leave (described in some churches as ministerial development or refreshment leave)

SAMPLE

Consultation and Communication

To Encourage

Clear grace-filled communication and transparent and godly processes in all matters that materially affect leaders

Statement of Ideals

As a congregation / organisation, we commit to transparency and integrity, recognising that policy decisions should always be considered openly and honestly, and be subject to discussion, consultation and prayer. For this reason, leaders and leadership teams will consult with each other and with the congregation or wider team in the appropriate ways as defined by the constitution or regulations governing the church / organisation, regarding vision, significant policies, material changes to church doctrines or ways of working, in order to ensure that the congregation / organisation is led in unity. Leaders will always be informed of matters affecting them or their ministries personally and will always be consulted on matters with a bearing on their ministries, their personal interests, or the life of the congregation.

Proposals

- a. There may be rare occasions when the leadership team of a church / organisation needs to meet in the absence of paid leaders (e.g., when reviewing remuneration or other terms and conditions of employment or when considering some disciplinary or grievance matter), but they should not normally do so without their knowledge;
- b. Whenever a leadership team meets without paid leaders, the decisions taken should be relayed to the leaders in person as soon as practicable and backed up in writing;
- c. The leadership team should conduct an annual appraisal with the paid leaders to review their spiritual wellbeing, ministries within the church, hours and patterns of work, and the impact of ministry upon family and home life;
- d. In addition to the annual appraisal process, regular opportunities should be provided for paid leaders to meet with the leadership team to review the life of the congregation, so that concerns can be expressed by any party openly, early and directly;
- e. Leaders should always be made aware of information communicated to other people in the congregation / organisation if it affects the life and operation of the congregation / organisation.

Dispute Resolution

To Encourage

Clear and supportive processes in situations of conflict, misconduct, discipline and grievance

Statement of Ideals

Relationships between leaders and congregations / organisations are healthiest when rooted in mutual support, esteem and care. However, even when best practice is followed, disputes can occur for various reasons. We therefore commit ourselves to resolving any disputes in a spirit of fellowship and goodwill. Recognising that disputes can have multiple causes and can bring untold harm to the life, work and witness of the Church, we resolve to settle them promptly, effectively, and in accordance with the Bible, so as to maintain the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus, the integrity of our leaders and the unity and morale of the congregation / organisation.

Proposals

- a. Disputes should be addressed without delay at a meeting between the leader and the leadership team;
- b. In the discussion of any matter in dispute, the honour of the Lord Jesus' name and the well-being of His Church should be the primary aim of all parties;
- c. Every effort should be made to handle matters under dispute with processes that are fair, reasonable and honourable to all parties;
- d. Opportunity should be given for all parties with a specific and legitimate concern in matters under dispute to be heard and to communicate their views;
- e. Matters of concern should be faced prayerfully, openly and honestly, not ignored or hidden. Otherwise, issues will never be resolved and will inevitably grow, becoming a hindrance to effective work and harmonious relationships;
- f. If a dispute becomes seriously damaging and incapable of resolution, a mutually acceptable third party should be invited in to assist in arbitration. This could be an individual (e.g., a senior or retired leader in the local area or country), or a body (e.g., a denomination or network that can appoint suitable people to assist). Every effort should be taken to ensure that the third party is mutually agreed and acceptable to all;
- g. The general arrangements for dispute resolution should be summarised in writing in conjunction with the policies of any wider denomination or network to which the congregation / organisation is affiliated

Appendix 1: Biblical Support

The goal of churches / Christian organisations and their leaders should be to maintain the highest biblical standards in their behaviour. Below are some passages which support the intentions of this Code. It is not our intention to proof text every detail, but to highlight those Bible passages which have a bearing on these matters.

Passages Calling For The Highest Biblical Integrity By Those In Pastoral Ministry:

1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

Passages Commanding The Highest Care, Support And Honour For Those In Pastoral Ministry:

1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 and 1 Timothy 5:17-20 and Hebrews 13:7-17.

Passages Directing Believers In Conflict Resolution :

Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20.

Appendix 2: The Status of Paid Church Leaders

The nature and legal status of Church leaders will be variously defined and regulated by the congregation's constitution, denomination, rules or handbook.

In some cases, leaders will be considered office-holders rather than employees. Unlike employees, office holders are free to organise their affairs as they see fit in fulfilling the functions of their office. This means that neither the church nor the charity trustees are the leader's employer. In this case, it is for the leaders, in discussion with the church and other leaders, to determine the hours they need to work to fulfil the functions of their office and the amount of holiday they should take. The terms of appointment will normally be set out in a joint memorandum of understanding rather than a contractual arrangement. It is, nevertheless, critical that appropriate accountability structures are in place.

In other cases, the congregation and the leader agree to adopt an employer/employee relationship regulated by a contract of employment. Both parties may see this relationship as an example of how all Christian employers and employees should conduct themselves in a workplace situation.

If the congregation's governing documents do not specify that any paid leader will be an office-holder, employment case law makes it very likely they will be regarded as an employee.

These terms of appointment should be made clear and agreed before the leader starts in the role.

Congregations should always consult policies, procedures and up-to-date employment information provided by their denominations, networks or other supportive bodies to which they are affiliated.

Appendix 3:

Written Statement of Employment Particulars

What Is A Written Statement Of Particulars?

Care should be taken to ensure that all employment/office holder relationships comply with current legislation when making an appointment.

At the time of writing, Sections 1-7 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Employment Act 2002 set out the essential elements of the written statement of employment. Some information must be included in one document; the other information can be delivered in instalments.

All employees are entitled to receive a statement of their main employment particulars within two months of starting work. This is a minimum statement concerning employment, it is generally issued before employment commences and whilst quicker to produce it is not a substitute for a full set of terms and conditions.

The statement is a legally binding agreement between the employer and employee. The statement must contain certain information such as pay, holiday entitlement, etc. Other information such as sick leave and grievance procedures may be contained in other documents or in electronic format.

What Must The Written Statement Contain?

- Name of employee and employer
- Date employment commenced and continuous employment started
- Job title or brief description of work
- Hours of work
- Pay rate and when it will be paid
- Job location and where the employee is permitted to work
- Holiday entitlement including Bank Holidays
- Notice period
- Details of any collective agreements that affect the employee
- How long the employment is expected to continue if not permanent

The letter offering the job or the employment contract could contain the information and Statement of Main Particulars.

What Other Information Should Be Provided?

The following must also be provided but this may be in an accompanying document, staff handbook or electronically:

- Sick leave and sick pay entitlement
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Pension arrangements

The written statement of employment particulars should also cover the following matters:

- The provision of accommodation (if applicable);
- The provision of special leave for other purposes (e.g. caring responsibilities, paternity);
- The provision of relocation costs for new pastors;
- The reimbursement of expenses, including mileage at HMRC approved rates;
- The reimbursement of an annual book allowance;
- Assistance with training and development – including attendance at conferences and the provision of study and sabbatical leave (referred to in some churches as ministerial development or refreshment leave);
- The nature of any appraisal/review process; and
- All the practical arrangements to be applied on the termination of ministry