



Name: _____

CODE OF CONDUCT

We, Hawthorn West Baptist Church, commit ourselves to a standard of responsible and ethical behaviour which is expected in our church and will bring honour and glory to God.

Our Code of Conduct is underpinned by trust and a belief that everyone should be treated with respect and dignity.

This Code gives guidance about what practices (actions) are supported and what practices are NOT condoned.

This Code of Conduct is not exhaustive and does not foresee every set of circumstances that may arise across the variety of our Church events and activities. Signatories are expected to proactively check with the Church Leadership Team if unsure about a particular event or activity.

This Code values the social, relational and interpersonal safety and wellbeing of people of all ages. It also values the role of leaders and mentors and their transparent and accountable relationships which promote trust and confidence in our Church and its programs.

Confidentiality and trust are fundamental to sound Church relationships and must be upheld within the constraints of the law and statutory requirements. Our church adheres to Safe Church policies and expects all adults to report unsafe conduct to the Safe Church Team or Leadership Team.

HWBC will take appropriate steps to deal with allegations of a breach of the Leaders' Code of Conduct or ministry misconduct in a manner consistent with BUV guidelines. See Appendix attached.

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually.

In my role as a leader in Hawthorn West Baptist Church (HWBC) I commit to:

1. Follow the HWBC Safe Church Policy, the HWBC Child Protection Policy and Procedures, and all other HWBC policies applicable to my role.
2. Act in a manner that honours God and His Church.
3. Act with scrupulous honesty in all financial matters and publicly account for all monies handled by me on behalf of others.

4. Conduct myself in a godly manner towards all, acting with respect, love, integrity and truthfulness regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, culture, political or other opinion, or disability.
5. Where grievances occur and a resolution is not forthcoming, I will seek additional assistance. I will make every effort to pursue reconciliation following biblical principles when conflict or division occurs. Issues pertaining to criminal actions, bullying or sexual misconduct will be handled in accordance with Baptist Union of Victoria policies and I will report to the Police all matters as required by law.
6. Be truthful and honest in my communication with others. I will be willing to share my reflections, concerns and ideas with others.
7. I may express my opinions robustly, but understand that once collective decisions have been reached, I will accept the outcomes.
8. Actively promote:
 - a. A safe environment where abuse of any nature is neither tolerated nor able to take place.
 - b. A safe environment where bullying of any kind is neither tolerated nor able to take place. Bullying can include:
 - i. Exclusion from a group or activity
 - ii. Intimidation
 - iii. Extortion
 - c. A safe environment where harassment is neither tolerated nor allowed to take place. Harassment is unwelcome conduct, whether intended or not, which makes another person feel offended, belittled, or threatened, which may occur through a single incident or a series of incidents over a period of time. Harassment can include:
 - Unwelcome physical contact
 - Gestures or language that could give offence
 - Unjustified or unnecessary comments about a person's attributes or abilities.

Print name

Sign

Date

Leadership position

Document Revision History

Next revision date May 2022

Version	Date	Revised by	Details
1.0	27/10/2019	Church Council	Final draft
2.0	3/2/2020	Church Council	No amendments made
3.0	17/5/2021	Interim Leadership Team	Complete revision
4.0	14/8/2023	Leadership Team	Small amendments made

APPENDIX FROM BAPTIST UNION OF VICTORIA (BUV)

What should happen if the code is breached?

This code outlines expectations of behaviour and appropriate boundaries for all members and in particular leaders of a church. However, in every community there are situations where issues arise and behaviour occurs that can cause offense or hurt between individuals. It is important that as Christian communities, we ensure that the response to this behaviour is appropriate to the severity of the breach but also offers the opportunity for individuals to find a godly and appropriate pathway to see their issues and concerns addressed.

Core Biblical Values:

The core Biblical values that underpin this process are:

Truth-telling (Eph 4:15,25)

Justice-seeking (Micah 6:8)

Grace-giving (Col 3:13)

Peace-making (Matt 5:9, Eph 4:2-3)

Matthew 18:15-20 provides an outline for the overall process where Jesus indicates both God's presence in the process of resolution and also the significance which God places on the outcome reached.

Note: The reference in Matt 18:17 of treating people like "tax collectors and sinners" does not mean rejecting them from the church. It means that if a person consistently does not behave like a Christian, then we do not expect them to behave like a Christian and we adjust our expectations for them. That is, that if the expectations we would normally have of Christian disciples, (i.e. that they demonstrate grace, truthfulness, humility and a willingness to see and respond to personal sinfulness) are not being seen in their behaviour, we minister to them as if they were still to join the community like tax collectors and sinners. They are treated with kindness, gentleness but invited to repent and respond to the forgiveness of God, and to begin the journey of Christian discipleship.

It is recommended that where concerns have been identified, they are dealt with quickly to ensure that the matter does not become more complex.

A procedure like this can be a guide for individuals in any situation where conflict or a broken relationship occurs. However within a church context, particularly among leaders, it may be an agreed and expected procedure to which leaders are accountable. Some churches have a policy that refusal to engage in a process such as this at a time of conflict requires standing down from leadership as unwillingness to work toward reconciliation disqualifies a leader from service.

The recommended process below is adapted and used with permission from John Mark Ministries (<http://johnmark.net.au/jm/>).

Recommended Process:

Step 1	<p style="text-align: center;">Personal Reflection</p> <p>Take some time before God to pray and reflect on the offence or injury you have received. In some situations you may decide not to take the matter further, in other situations important principles may be at stake and the situation needs to be taken further.</p>
(Optional step)	<p style="text-align: center;">Wisdom and Accountability</p> <p>If you are unsure about the right response and feel the need to seek wise counsel for yourself before taking the situation further it is appropriate to do so. Seek a godly counsellor, pastor, leader or mentor to share with. The focus of this is to gain clarity on the right path to take and to be accountable in the situation to act with integrity, wisdom and towards making peace.</p> <p>This consultation must be distinguished from gossip or sharing the incident with others in order to gain sympathy and support. These are inappropriate.</p>
Step 2	<p style="text-align: center;">Informal Discussion</p> <p>A key step in resolution is to go to the other person informally and in private and share your concern. Seek to understand the perspective and viewpoint of the other. Be willing to receive an apology or respond to a process of restoration if it is offered. If the matter is resolved, no further action is needed.</p> <p>If you are on the receiving end of a discussion of this nature, be quick to listen, make sure you understand what the person is sharing. Guard yourself from simply reacting. If you need time to reflect, ask for it. If you can see what you have done and can accept responsibility for it, apologise and seek forgiveness.</p>
Step 3	<p style="text-align: center;">Formal Discussions</p> <p>If step two fails to reach a resolution, ask that it move to a formal process. Here others may be invited to be involved as either support people or informal facilitators. At this level it is appropriate that some record be kept of what occurs. If resolved, no further action is required. Normally the church leadership would be notified that this has happened. The meeting should be pre-arranged and both parties have the opportunity for support people present.</p>
Step 4	<p style="text-align: center;">Formal Mediation</p> <p>If step three fails, then the church (elders or pastor) should be notified and with the agreement of all, a trained mediator should be appointed who will meet with both parties and then facilitate a discussion together. Opportunities for interpersonal reconciliation are usually given. Points of agreement and disagreement are usually documented along with the outcome. Usually a solution which is acceptable to both is negotiated. If agreement is reached, no further action is required. A confidential report is given to the church leadership as well as to the individuals. Keeping the agreement is a matter of trust on both sides.</p>
Step 5	<p style="text-align: center;">Arbitration</p> <p>If step four fails, the church and both parties may agree to abide by the ruling of an appointed and agreed arbiter or arbitration panel. Again this person or panel is appointed by the church. In this scenario the arbiter interviews both parties and may ask for further witnesses. The case is examined and principles of justice applied. A judgement is given and the parties by their own agreement should abide by it. If this step fails, the situation has moved beyond the ability of the community to handle it internally and it must be referred to the civil courts.</p>

	Within a church environment, both parties would then normally stand down from any leadership positions.
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Further considerations regarding the severity of a breach:

- 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 will understand 'unacceptable' behaviours. Even after explaining the code some may be unaware they are exhibiting unacceptable behaviours. Leaders 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 has been made aware of their behaviour and yet refuses to change:
 - a. The ministry coordinator meets with the person for behaviour review meetings. Communicate required behaviour change (no more than 3 meetings).
 - b. 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.
 - c. If the behaviour/s continue 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. NB. Written notes of all meeting to be carefully taken and a copy given to all parties.
- d) **Breaches of the law or allegations of abuse:** Allegations of abuse or serious misconduct are to be referred to the appropriate government authorities, in line with the Baptist Union of Victoria processes.

Adopted from Safe Church Manual

Sourced on 27/6/2021 from

<https://www.buv.com.au/resources/church-leadership-resources/>