

Box Hill Baptist Church

Code of Conduct for Church Leaders and Members

The members of the Box Hill Baptist Church Community are committed to a standard of responsible and ethical behaviour which is expected in our church and is consistent with our faith in God.

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

This Code of Conduct gives guidance about what practices (actions) are supported and what practices are not condoned.

The Code of Conduct is not exhaustive and does not foresee every set of circumstances that may arise across the variety of Church events and activities.

The Code of Conduct should be viewed as an educational guide to the principles that help inform what is appropriate conduct.

The Code of Conduct values the social, relational and interpersonal safety and wellbeing of people of all ages.

The Code of Conduct also values the role of leaders and mentors by promoting transparent, accountable relationships that in turn elicit trust and confidence in the Church and its programs.

We value:

Respect, Trust, Integrity, Honesty, Humility, Support, Compassion, Community, Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Generosity and Thankfulness, Equality and Inclusiveness, Justice, Service and Stewardship, Peace and Confidentiality.

We commit ourselves to living out these values in all areas of our lives.

We commit ourselves to:

1. Conduct ourselves at all times in a manner that honours God and the Church.
2. In all financial matters act with scrupulous honesty and publically account for all monies handled by us on behalf of others.
3. Endeavour to conduct all personal relations in a godly manner, acting with respect, love, integrity and truthfulness toward all those we seek to associate, irrespective of their race, gender, position or religious position.

4. Where grievances occur and a resolution is not forthcoming, that we will seek additional assistance. We will seek 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 we will report to the Police as required by law.

5. Be diligent in providing each other with information and resources to fulfil our roles and be mindful of the expectations others have of us.

6. Be truthful and honest in our communication with each other. We will be willing to share our reflections, concerns and ideas with each other.

7. Be loyal in our support of each other and other church members. We may express our opinions robustly but understand that once collective decisions have been reached we support 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, 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 including unwarranted shouting
 - Unjustified or unnecessary comments about a person's attributes or abilities.

Confidentiality: confidentiality and trust are fundamental to sound church relationships and must be upheld within the constraints of the law and statutory requirements.

Voluntary reporting is strongly encouraged where a belief has been formed that there is a requirement to do so.

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.

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.

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

Recommended Process:

Step One	<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.</p> <p>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 Two	<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.</p> <p>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 Three	<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.</p> <p>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 Four	<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</p>

	<p>leadership as well as to the individuals. Keeping the agreement is a matter of trust on both sides.</p>
<p>Step Five</p>	<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.</p> <p>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> <p>Within a church environment, both parties would then normally stand down from any leadership positions.</p>

Policy Adopted: Church Conversation November 2017

Review due: November 2020

Responsible Group: Ministry Reference Group