

Standards of Ethical Conduct 2025

We respond to the sacred Call by empowering and nurturing those inspired for expansive ministries in the world.



FCM

Circle of Directors

Document Revision History

Version	Date	Description
1999.1	June 1999	Original Code of Ethics
2017.1	July 2017	Update
2025.1	July 2025	Current Edition, Approved July 10, 2025

Introduction

Purpose of the Standards

The members of FCM treat each person whom they encounter with reverence and respect. People trust that pastoral ministers respect the dignity of all, and believe these ministers are motivated by the love of God. The unethical actions of some ministers are a betrayal of this trust and have caused great damage. People demand that the conduct of those in ministry reflect the highest ethical standards.

Compliance with these standards presupposes that members are committed to accepted behavior and ethical principles rooted in the Scriptures. At the heart of these principles and standards is Jesus, the model of God's provident care.

The FCM Circle of Directors adopted this version of the Standards of Ethical Conduct during its meeting on July 10, 2025. The Standards became effective on July 13, 2025.

Inquiries concerning substance or interpretation of the Standards should be addressed to

FCM

Chairperson, Ethics Committee
2261 Market Street
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Applicability

The Standards of Ethical Conduct apply only to members' activities that are part of their ministerial and professional roles as FCM members. Areas covered include but are not limited to ministries that occur in settings such as (but not limited to) pastorate, chaplaincy, eccumenical, interfaith, social justice, and advocacy. The Standards apply to these activities across a variety of contexts, such as in person, postal, phone, internet, and other electronic communications. These activities shall be distinguished from the purely private conduct of members, which is not within the scope or purview of the Standards.

General Principles

The following principles are aspirational in nature and serve as ethical inspiration for ministry rather than enforceable rules. They provide a foundation for members of FCM to reflect deeply on their role, conduct, and responsibilities.

Beneficence and Nonmaleficence

FCM members seek to benefit those they serve and to avoid harm. This principle calls members to remain aware of the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, and institutional consequences of their actions. Members must monitor their personal health and limitations to ensure their work remains safe and effective. In situations of ethical conflict, members are expected to take steps that minimize potential harm to all involved.

Fidelity and Responsibility

Ministers build relationships grounded in trust and are accountable for their responsibilities to individuals, communities, institutions, and to the Divine. They clarify roles and boundaries, honor commitments, avoid conflicts of interest, and manage power responsibly. Members uphold professional standards of care and seek support or consultation when ethical complexities arise.

Integrity

Members model integrity through honesty, accuracy, and consistency in word and deed. They avoid deceit, misrepresentation, and manipulation in all forms. Integrity also calls for transparency, humility in acknowledging mistakes, and commitment to correction when harm has occurred.

Justice

FCM members promote fairness and equitable access to care, support, and resources. They work to dismantle systemic barriers, challenge injustice, and address discrimination when it arises. They examine their own assumptions and biases and strive to ensure just treatment for all, particularly those who are marginalized or vulnerable.

Respect for the Rights and Dignity of All

Members affirm the sacred worth of every person. They honor the rights of individuals to self-determination, privacy, and participation in spiritual community without coercion. Members respect diverse identities and traditions, and create safe, inclusive spaces that reflect hospitality, compassion, and deep listening.

The Standards

1. Dignity of All

1.1. Unfair Discrimination

- 1.1.1. FCM members do not engage in unfair discrimination based upon age, anatomical gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or any basis dictated by law or FCM policy.

1.2. Sexual Harassment

- 1.2.1. FCM members do not engage in sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is sexual solicitation, physical advances, or verbal/non-verbal conduct that is sexualized in nature, that occurs in connection with an FCM member's roles and responsibilities, and that either is unwelcome, is offensive, or creates a hostile environment, and the FCM member is aware of this, or is told this, or is sufficiently severe or intense to be abusive to a reasonable person in the context. Sexual harassment may consist of a single intense or severe act, or be evident in multiple persistent or pervasive acts.

1.3. Harassment

- 1.3.1. FCM members do not knowingly engage in behavior that is of a harassing nature, or demeans any person from whom they interact in their ministry or work.

1.4. Avoiding Harm

- 1.4.1. FCM members take reasonable steps to avoid harming individuals and communities, and to ensure that any harm that is foreseeable and unavoidable is minimized as much as possible. FCM members do not participate in, facilitate, assist or otherwise engage in forced proselytization/conversion of any individual, as defined as any act in which severe pain or suffering, either physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person or community in order to gain agreement, adherence or compliance from the individual or community under duress.

2. Inclusive Ministry

2.1. Equality of All

- 2.1.1. FCM members ensure that they treat all people they encounter with dignity and respect, including promoting equality and equity of all.

- 2.1.2. FCM members are sensitive to diverse forms of spirituality and worship.
- 2.1.3. FCM members promote the principles of interdependence, subsidiarity, and intersectionality in their expression of ministry.

2.2. Justice for All

- 2.2.1. FCM members actively participate in, and seek opportunities to connect with those marginalized people in the world, both through ministry and secular life, with special attention to those who have been harmed, hurt or alienated from the Church/faith communities.
- 2.2.2. Members work for personal and systemic justice for all people, particularly the vulnerable, the poor, and the oppressed by setting an example of the faithful steward in the workplace and cultivating a society marked by justice.
- 2.2.3. Members are active in encouraging people to address the social and ethical issues of the day.
- 2.2.4. Members ensure that they fulfill their civic responsibilities, including all just financial obligations.

3. Health and Wellbeing

3.1. Self-care and Spiritual Development

- 3.1.1. Members are committed to maintaining their spiritual, physical, and emotional health, recognizing that they are precious gifts entrusted to them by a loving God through seeking spiritual nourishment regularly in prayer and reflection.
- 3.1.2. Members maintain and develop their health and spiritual development by being committed to a spiritual growth program suited to their individual needs.
- 3.1.3. Members monitor their lifestyles to maintain physical and emotional health.
- 3.1.4. Members strive towards a healthy balance between responsibilities to self, family, friends and ministry.

4. Boundaries

4.1. Multiple Relationships

- 4.1.1. A multiple relationship appears when an FCM member is in a pastoral/professional relationship with a person and (1) at the same time is in another role with the same person, (2) at the same time is in a relationship with a person closely related to or associated with whom the member has the pastoral/professional relationship, or (3) promises to enter into another

relationship in the future with the person or a person closely related to or associated with the person.

- 4.1.2. FCM members shall refrain from entering into multiple relationships if the relationship could reasonably be expected to impair the member's objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing their pastoral function, or otherwise risk exploitation of harm of the person with whom the pastoral/professional relationship exists.
- 4.1.3. Multiple relationships that would not reasonably be expected to cause impairment or risk exploitation or harm are not unethical.

4.2. Conflict of Interest

- 4.2.1. FCM members shall refrain from taking on a role when personal, professional, spiritual, legal, financial, or other interests or relationships could be reasonably expected to (1) impair their objectivity, competence or effectiveness in performing their functions as ministers, or (2) expose the person or institution with whom the relationship exists to harm or exploitation.

4.3. Exploitative Relationships

- 4.3.1. FCM members shall not exploit persons or communities in which they have ecclesiastical, supervisory, evaluative or other authority over.

4.4. Cooperation with Other Professions and Vocations

- 4.4.1. When appropriate, FCM members cooperate with other members of the Clergy (as represented in all faith traditions) or other professionals in order to serve those they minister to effectively and appropriately.

4.5. Duty of Confidentiality and Pastoral Privilege

- 4.5.1. FCM members protect the confidentiality and integrity of their pastoral and professional relationships in furtherance of the commitment to inclusivity and honoring of all people. Each member will ensure that proper confidentiality and privacy are maintained in all contexts.
- 4.5.2. Pastoral privilege (also referred to as clergy-penitent privilege) is a legal concept that protects the confidentiality of communications made to clergy members within their professional capacity. Pastoral privilege does not apply in cases of mandatory reporting obligations (such as reporting instances of child abuse).
- 4.5.3. Pastoral privilege is distinct and separate from the concept of *duty of confidentiality*. Within this context, privilege means that the communication cannot be shared in a court. The duty of confidentiality applies in all contexts and all FCM members must adhere to the Standards regarding duty of confidentiality.

4.6. Honesty

- 4.6.1. Members do not make false, deceptive, or otherwise fraudulent statements concerning their (1) training, experience or competence; (2) their academic degrees or achievements, (3) their credentials; (4) their institutional or association affiliations; (5) their facilities; (6) their fees or honorarium expectations (if applicable); or (8) their ecclesiastical standing, endorsement or authorizations.
- 4.6.2. Members claim educational degrees as credentials for their professional ministry only if those degrees (1) were earned from a regionally accredited educational institution or (2) were the basis for ordination, authorization, or ecclesiastical endorsement by FCM.

4.7. Statements Made

- 4.7.1. Members who engage others to create or place public statements that promote their ministry, profession, or activities retain responsibility for such statements. Members do not compensate employees or authorized agents of press, or other communication media in return for publicity in a publication or news item. A paid advertisement relating to a member's activities or ministry must be identified or clearly recognizable as such.

4.8. Sexual Intimacies with Congregants or Care-seekers

- 4.8.1. Members do not engage in sexual intimacies with current congregants, members of faith communities in which they serve as leader, or care-seekers where such intimacies create an exploitative relationship.
- 4.8.2. Members do not engage in sexual intimacies with former congregants, members of faith communities in which they serve as leaders, or care-seekers for at least two (2) years after cessation or termination of the relationship.

5. Competency

5.1. Scope of Competence

- 5.1.1. FCM members shall provide service, care, sacrament (where appropriate and authorized) and support only to populations and in areas within the boundaries of their competence. Competence shall be based upon their education, training, supervised experience, consultation, study and/or professional experience.

5.2. Duty to Minister in Emergencies

- 5.2.1. In emergency situations, ordained members of FCM are expected to provide service, care, sacrament and support where appropriate and where welcomed.

- 5.2.2. Ordained members shall make themselves known in emergency situations, where appropriate, and provide ministry appropriate to the situation and context.

5.3. Personal Problems and Conflicts

- 5.3.1. FCM members shall refrain from beginning any activity when they are aware, or should be aware, that there is a substantial risk that their personal problems will prevent them from performing their ministerial-related activities in a competent manner. Should members become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performance, they shall take appropriate measures, including but not limited to obtaining ministerial consultation or assistance from colleagues, their Regional Vice President, or the Chairperson of the Circle of Directors. Upon seeking additional support, members shall determine if they should limit, suspend, or terminate their duties.

5.4. Documentation and Pastoral Record Keeping

- 5.4.1. Members create, and to the extent the records are under their control, maintain, disseminate, store, retain and dispose of records and data relating to their professional and ministerial work in order to (1) facilitate provision of service later by them or by other Clergy or professionals, (2) meet the institutional requirements of FCM, and (5) ensure compliance with law.

6. Resolving Ethical Issues

6.1. Conflicts Between Ethics and Law, Regulations, or Other Legal Authorities

- 6.1.1. If an FCM Member's ethical responsibilities conflict with law, government legal authority, regulations or policy, the members shall ensure that the nature of the conflict is clear, notify others of their commitment to the Standards of Ethical Conduct, and take reasonable steps to resolve the conflict. Under no circumstances may this standard be used to justify or defend violating human rights.

6.2. Conflicts Between Ethics and Institutional Requirements

- 6.2.1. If the demands of an institution with which the member is affiliated with, or for whom they work for are in conflict with these Standards, the member shall clarify the nature of the conflict, notify others of their commitment to the Standards of Ethical Conduct, and take reasonable steps to resolve the conflict. Under no circumstances may this standard be used to justify or defend violating human rights.

6.3. Informal Resolution of Ethical Violations

- 6.3.1. In an instance where an FCM member believes that there may have been an ethical violation by another member, they shall attempt to resolve the issue by bringing the possible violation to the individual's attention. If an informal resolution appears appropriate and the agreed upon resolution does not violate any other Standards or regulations, the matter may be considered concluded.

6.4. Reporting Ethical Violations

- 6.4.1. In an instance where an apparent ethical violation has substantially harmed, or is reasonably likely to substantially harm a person, organization, or community and is not appropriate for informal resolution, or if an informal resolution is attempted but an agreement cannot be reached, members shall take further action aligned with the situation. These actions may include (but are not limited to) referral to state or national committees on professional ethics, to state licensing boards, or the Chairperson of the Circle of Directors following the procedure for complaints and discipline in the FCM polity appropriate for that individual or situation.

6.5. Cooperating with Ethics Committees

- 6.5.1. FCM members shall cooperate in ethics investigations, proceedings, and any subsequent or resulting requirements. Failure to cooperate is in itself a violation of the Standards. Making a request for deferment of adjudication of an ethics complaint pending the outcome of other litigation does not alone constitute refusal to cooperate.

6.6. Improper Complaints

- 6.6.1. FCM members do not file or encourage the filing of ethics complaints that are made with reckless disregard for, or willing ignorance of any facts that would disprove the allegation(s).

6.7. Unfair Discrimination Against Complainants and Respondents

- 6.7.1. FCM members do not deny individuals employment, admissions, tenure, promotion, or advancement based solely upon their having had or their being the subject of an ethics complaint. This does not preclude taking action based upon the outcome of such proceedings or considering other appropriate information.