



## **Code of Ethics for Leaders Policy**

(10-23-2025 reviewed by Standards Team; 10-28-2025 approved by UWM Board of Trustees)

NOTE: This policy also replaces the Sexual Conduct Policy and Social Media Policy.

### **COVENANT**

United in our call to serve the spirit of love and justice through the vocation of ministry in the Unity spiritual tradition, we, the members of Unity Worldwide Ministries (UWM), covenant with one another:

- To conduct ourselves with integrity, honoring the trust placed in us.
- To embody in our lives the values that we proclaim on behalf of our teachings.
- To support one another in collegial respect and care, understanding and honoring the diversity within our association.
- To hold ourselves accountable to each other for the competent exercise of our vocation.
- To use our power constructively and with intention, mindful of our potential to unconsciously perpetuate systems of oppression.
- To seek justice and right relations according to our evolving collective wisdom, and to refrain from all abuse or exploitation.
- To cultivate practices of deepening awareness, understanding, humility, and commitment to our ideals.
- To collaborate earnestly for the well-being of our communities and the progress of the Unity movement.

We recognize that none of us is perfect and all are works in progress. We hold one another in love as, through fidelity to this covenant and our Code of Ethics for Leaders, we aspire to grow in wholeness and bring hope and healing to the world.

Unity Worldwide Ministries (UWM) Code of Ethics for Leaders applies to the following:

- All credentialed leaders
  - Licensed or ordained Unity ministers (LUM or OUM)
  - Licensed Unity teachers (LUT)
- All non-credentialed leaders serving in the capacity of a credentialed Unity leader participating in Special Dispensation and similar programs
- All ministerial candidates from all affiliated Unity schools seeking licensing and ordination from UWM
- All LUT candidates from all affiliated Unity schools seeking licensing
- All certified leaders and candidates certified in any other capacity by UWM
- All members of the UWM Board of Trustees
- All UWM staff members, contract employees, and representatives
- All individuals serving as consultants to our ministries whose contracts incorporate this Code
- All members of UWM Ministry Teams

### **Introduction and Intention**

Foundational to Unity is the principle and teaching that we are individualized expressions of God. This calls us, as Unity leaders, to live from our Christ nature in all circumstances, thereby being a harmonizing presence and a role model for those we serve. Because of this, it is our intention to be accountable to one another and to UWM in maintaining a high level of professional conduct.

Our Code of Ethics articulates a vision of ethical behavior grounded in our teachings. Its purpose is to provide guidelines for behavior that are both ethical and authentic, and encourages us to give full expression to our Christ nature.

We also recognize that certain violations of our Code of Ethics require action on the part of UWM. Some behaviors are explicitly illegal, and such violations may require suspension of membership or revocation of licensure and/or ordination from Unity Worldwide Ministries. Some behaviors are unacceptable by UWM standards and compromise our ability to perform and provide ministry. These behaviors harm our movement and interfere with our effectiveness in achieving our mission.

This document describes the professional and ethical expectations of individuals serving as leaders in Unity organizations. Failure to comply with these expectations may result in a review through the current or future assessment program. These violations will be addressed in a consistent and professional manner.

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The following sections relate to standards of behavior that all are expected to demonstrate. Each credentialed leader is deemed to have made the commitments expressed below as a condition of the credentialing they maintain from UWM.

### The Leader's Relationship with Others

I am responsible for my choices, words, actions, behavior, and the consequences that result from them. I agree to function within the standards of conduct to the best of my ability at all times.

1. I will be honest and diligent in my work to fulfill the offices of ministry according to the stipulations of my calling, service, or employment and my best professional judgment.
2. I will not misappropriate the money or property of the congregations, organizations, or enterprises I serve, or of their members, staff, or clients.
3. I will honor the intellectual property of others, assuring that appropriate attribution is given to avoid intentionally creating the impression that the work of others is my own.
4. I will maintain appropriate leadership boundaries, realizing that crossing boundaries is a betrayal of trust. In honor of that trust, I do not exploit nor violate the emotional, spiritual, physical, or financial well-being of people or institutions who come to me for help or over whom I have any kind of authority. I do not create or cultivate dependencies.
5. I will not engage in racist or oppressive actions or speech. I will demonstrate respect, compassion, and equitable treatment to everyone both within and outside of my ministerial context, including clergy colleagues, regardless of denomination or faith, staff, those I serve, and anyone who may disagree with me.

I will work to understand, identify, and eliminate discrimination—including tokenism—based on racialized identity, ethnicity, size, gender expression, gender identity, sex, disability, affectional or sexual orientation, family and relationship structures, age, language, citizenship status, economic status, national origin, or religion. This includes challenging injustice in myself, in ministerial and other professional colleagues, those I serve in ministry, institutions, and in the wider world.

Refer to the **Unity Worldwide Ministries Social Position Statements**.

<https://unityworldwide.org/who-we-are>

6. I will exercise good judgment regarding my social conduct. My relationships will be such as to command only the highest respect. I will publicly and privately act with respect toward colleagues, staff, and members of the congregation or constituents. Such behavior includes sharing of pertinent information and insights, providing programmatic support, honoring others' professional abilities, respecting confidences, and giving public support, although not necessarily agreement.

I will conduct my work, private and public, in accord with the teachings, standards, and ideals of Unity World Headquarters at Unity Village and Unity Worldwide Ministries without competition or contention.

7. I will refrain from relating to colleagues, staff, and members of the congregation or constituents of the setting in which I serve in a manner that creates an intimidating, hostile, or oppressive environment. I will not engage in bullying behavior or emotional abuse.
8. I will not intentionally deceive colleagues, staff, congregants, or constituents in any setting.
9. I will not manipulate, defame, or take advantage of those I serve, or damage the integrity of any congregation, organization, or enterprise in which I serve.
10. I will follow these guidelines when I am disturbed by the activities of another credentialed or lay leader, an assistant or associate minister, licensed Unity teacher, or by the activities of another Unity ministry:
  - a. I hold the situation in prayer.
  - b. I communicate directly with that leader.
  - c. If unresolved, I will consult with my Regional Representative and/or Member Support Team Lead.
  - d. If necessary, I will seek spiritual counseling or coaching from a licensed professional outside Unity.
  - e. If guided, I will file an Ethics Review System complaint.
11. I will respect the free will of members to move or transfer membership away from the Unity ministry I serve and will accept such requests without hesitation or inquiry.
12. I will not directly attempt to draw members or congregants away from any other established ministries or groups.

Increasing virtual accessibility makes defining ministries only by geographical space obsolete and necessitates a higher call to professional courtesy rather than solely relying on ethics “rules.” Virtual ministries on the Internet are open to the World Wide Web and should not be seen as an attempt to draw members or congregants away from any other established ministry or group; however, unauthorized use of a ministry email list is unethical.

13. Confidentiality:
  - a. I am honor-bound to keep all confidences shared with me, except if a confidence reveals that the person confiding may pose a threat to self, others, or property.
  - b. I never mention, without permission, either privately or publicly, the name, residence, or locality of any person under treatment in the past or present as an illustration or verification of Truth principles.

#### 14. Intervention in Abusive or Neglectful Situations/Mandated Reporting:

It is imperative that I, as a minister or acting spiritual leader, understand and abide by my local mandated reporting laws. If I am classified as a mandated reporter in my jurisdiction, it is important to know how my jurisdiction views the relationship between the clergy-penitent privilege and the responsibilities of a mandated reporter, since many areas do not allow an exception for clergy privilege. Relocation to a new ministry in a different jurisdiction requires me to do due diligence to know the laws of the area. For the United States:

<https://www.startchurch.com/blog/view/name/are-you-a-mandated-reporter-what-every-minister-should-know>

<https://www.churchlawandtax.com/child-abuse-reporting-laws/>

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/mandatory-reporting-laws-by-state>

<https://www.churchlawandtax.com/keep-safe/abuse-prevention/child-abuse-reporting-laws-22-facts-church-leaders-should-know/>

For Canada:

<https://cwrp.ca/frequently-asked-questions-faq#:~:text=Everyone%20has%20a%20duty%2%20to,the%20'duty%20to%20report>

- a. In our unwavering commitment to recognize and honor the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, we bear the responsibility to promptly report instances of abuse or neglect (child abuse, elder abuse, dependent adult abuse, animal abuse, etc.) to the relevant agencies.
- b. I make a good faith report of such abuse to the appropriate agencies, whether or not reporting is mandated by law.
- c. As a mandated reporter, it is a best practice to inform the person confiding (regardless of their age) of your reporting obligations.
- d. Regarding minors, it is important to know your local laws regarding age, topic, and exceptions to confidentiality expectations. For additional information, contact UWM Member Support.

15. I will engage in meaningful continuing education for both my professional and personal growth, adhering to the current UWM Continuing Education Units (CEU) policy and procedures.

16. I will, after leaving a ministry, relinquish my work with that ministry. I will modify my relations with members of that ministry to support the highest interest of the current Unity ministry and its leadership.

- a. I will not directly participate in that ministry in any way without the approval of the ministry's current credentialed leader (or leadership team in the absence of a credentialed leader).
- b. I will refrain from actively soliciting the participation of this ministry's members, whether in person or virtual, in any new ministry endeavors I begin without the permission of the current credentialed leader (or leadership team in the absence of a

credentialed leader). Increasing virtual accessibility makes defining ministries only by geographical space obsolete and necessitates a higher call to *professional courtesy* rather than solely relying on ethical “rules.”

17. I will comply with all current UWM/Unity policies and procedures required to maintain my and, when applicable, my ministry’s good standing status.

### **Sexual Conduct, Appropriate Relationship Boundaries in Ministry**

Sexual misconduct occurs whenever a credentialed leader has any sexualized or romantic contact, interaction, and/or relationship with anyone with whom the credentialed leader comes into contact with while serving in any ministerial capacity.

When there is an imbalance of power, there cannot be meaningful consent for romantic or sexual relations. Within a ministry, the credentialed leader possesses multiple bases and therefore more power than others in the ministry.

18. I am responsible for my appropriate sexual conduct.
19. I will monitor my behaviors with the understanding that a variety of behaviors, some of which do not include physical contact, constitute sexual misconduct.
20. I will accept responsibility for my interactions with the awareness that sexual misconduct is grounds for disciplinary action, including termination of employment, suspension from service, or removal of license and/or ordination.
21. I will not use those I serve to meet my own romantic or sexual needs or personal emotional needs that should be met through family, friends, therapy, self-care, or in other ways.
22. I will not engage in sexual contact, sexual harassment, sexualized behavior, or a sexual relationship with any person I serve as a minister.
23. Even if the possibility of romantic or physical involvement appears to be initiated by the congregant, it is the credentialed leader's responsibility to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship. The question of the intent of the credentialed leader is not a factor: romantic or physical involvement with an adult congregant is sexual misconduct until and unless the pastoral relationship has been temporarily discontinued for a minimum of six months or until the relationship becomes common knowledge within the spiritual community.
24. I will not engage in sexual contact, sexual harassment, sexualized behavior, or sexual relationships with colleagues who are under my direct or indirect supervision. Colleagues serving in the same setting who were already partnered at the start of the ministry may continue those relationships.
25. I will, in circumstances in which a romantic relationship might develop, follow the procedures to comply with these standards by contacting the UWM Member Support Team Lead.

### **Appropriate Use of Employment Services**

All credentialed leaders and individuals seeking employment in a member ministry will adhere to the UWM employment policies and procedures.

- 26. I am responsible for my appropriate business conduct.
- 27. I will make myself a candidate for a position of ministry only with serious intent, and I will observe the established employment procedures of UWM.
- 28. I will not engage in words or actions that degrade the vocation of ministry or the previous ministries I have served.
- 29. I will stay informed of the latest guidelines, policies, and procedures of UWM and Regions.
- 30. I will comply with all current minister and ministry employment-related policies with the understanding that the intention of these policies and procedures are for the highest good for all involved. <https://unityworldwide.org/member-support/policies>

### **Appropriate Use of Social Media**

The following expectations of conduct apply to all forms of communication, public or private media, including electronic and internet communications.

- 31. I will monitor my personal and ministry social media presence and communications in such a way that represents my role as a leader and demonstrates Truth principles in my personal and professional life.
- 32. I will refrain from posting content and images that may be considered defamatory, pornographic, harassing, libelous, racist, sexist, or may create a hostile work environment.
- 33. I will not make social media posts on behalf of a Unity organization unless I have authorization from the leadership of that center, ministry, or organization.
- 34. I will adhere to UWM ethical standards when making public posts from any personal account.
- 35. I will refrain from sharing information considered to be confidential.
- 36. I will obtain appropriate permission to use Unity or third-party copyrights, copyrighted material, trademarks, images, service marks, or other intellectual property.
- 37. I will obtain appropriate permission as indicated in the Social Media policy before live streaming, video filming, posting, or sharing images of children and youth.
- 38. I will refer all external media inquiries to the organization's leadership.

**My Pledge**

I sincerely devote myself to living in accord with this Code of Ethics in letter and in spirit. Code of Ethics provides a framework that holds me accountable to my colleagues and UWM.

I recognize that such an agreement augments our mutual and individual effectiveness.

If I find myself questioning or confused about any part of this Code of Ethics, I agree to consult with my Regional Representative and/or UWM Member Support Team Lead.

Please sign the Code of Ethics Acknowledgement & Signature Form (single-page document) and return it to Unity Worldwide Ministries.



## **Appendix A: Dedication to Truth Principles:**

### **Dedication to Truth Principles**

- A. As a Unity leader, I dedicate myself to the principles of Truth as follows:
1. God is Absolute good, everywhere present.
  2. Every human being is an expression of the Divine; the Christ spirit, by whatever name, indwells all people. Their very essence is of God, and therefore, they are also inherently good.
  3. Human beings create their experience by the activity of their thinking. Everything in the manifest realm has its beginning in thought.
  4. Prayer is creative thinking that heightens the connection with God-Mind and therefore brings forth wisdom, healing, prosperity, and everything good.
  5. Knowing and understanding the laws of life, also called Truth, are not enough. A person must also live the truth that they know.
  6. I look to the indwelling Christ for inspiration, to guide, govern, heal, and prosper me.
  7. I demonstrate Truth in my personal and professional life.
  8. I maintain a consistent prayer practice.

## **Appendix B: Self-Care:**

### **The Relationship to Self / Self-Care**

- B. I keep in mind that my personal self-care is paramount to the welfare of the ministry.
1. I demonstrate self-care by designing, implementing, and maintaining a plan of regular renewal and spiritual growth for my life.
  2. I care for my body with good nutrition and exercise.
  3. I consciously say “yes” or “no” to prevent burnout.
  4. I lead by my strengths; I model and teach self-care.
  5. I ask for help when I recognize the need, modeling and teaching the value in doing so.
  6. I balance work, relationships, recreation, and renewal.
  7. When I experience any personal crisis, I will seek help (recognizing that any personal crisis will also impact my ministry). I will confer with my board of trustees, my regional representative, and/or a representative of Unity Worldwide Ministries. I may also choose to seek counseling or confer with colleagues.

See “Appendix B: Self-Care Standards and Rubrics” for further details applied to this section

## Appendix B: Self-Care Standards & Rubrics

<b>C.1</b>		<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	
Takes time for renewal of spirit, mind, and body.		Articulates an awareness of the need for self-care.	Designs a plan for self-care and begins implementing it.	Maintains a self-care plan and is consciously aware of needs and how to address them.	Models and teaches a life of regular renewal of spirit, mind, and body.	

<b>C.2</b>		<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	
Supports self-differentiation through clear and appropriate boundaries.		Articulates awareness of need for clear sense of self and setting of healthy boundaries.	Demonstrates capacity to set healthy boundaries.	Establishes healthy boundaries while maintaining connections. Takes a stand when necessary.	Models and teaches skills for developing a clear sense of self and setting healthy boundaries while maintaining connections to others.	

<b>C.3</b>		<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	
Able to ask for help.		Expresses recognition for the need to ask for help and identifies barriers to follow through.	Expresses recognition of comfort levels in asking for help and cites examples of follow through.	Describes concisely asking for help and expresses comfort in doing so.	Models and teaches the value in asking for help.	

<b>C.4</b>		<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Exceptional</b>	
Maintains mutually enriching relationships.		Describes the differences between personal and professional relationships.	Develops healthy personal relationships outside of the ministry.	Active participant in non-church (spiritual) community activities, developing inter-professional and personal relationships.	Models and teaches skills for cultivating enriching relationships.	

## Appendix C: Definitions of Sexual Misconduct by Credentialed Leaders

1. The term **sexual misconduct** in the context of credentialed leadership embraces several distinct yet interrelated concepts: A) power, B) sexual molestation, C) sexual harassment, and D) or E) adult or child sexual abuse or exploitation.
  - A. **Power** is the possession of one or more bases of power, which include: formal authority, charisma, wealth, race, age, position or connections, emotional influence, rewards and punishment, expertise, physical appearance, gender or sexual influences, intellectual or verbal ability, and secrecy (withholding of pertinent information).
  - B. **Sexual Molestation** is the unwarranted sexualized touching of any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent.
  - B. **Sexual Harassment** by a credentialed leader may occur within any aspect of a credentialed leader's roles and responsibilities, or in a pastoral relationship. It includes, but is not limited to, conduct such as sexually oriented humor or language; questions or comments about sexual behavior or orientation unrelated to legitimate employment qualifications; inappropriately sexualized comments about clothing or physical appearance; and/or repeated unwelcome requests for social engagements or dates. Sexual harassment may lead to a hostile work environment that compromises the integrity of the ministry.

The term "sexual harassment" also includes, but is not limited to, acts which constitute a violation of the sexual harassment as defined in the federal law of the country in which the ministry is located. For example, Title VII of the U. S. Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides a detailed definition of sexual harassment as follows:

- (1) **Quid pro quo** harassment refers to sexual harassment (requests for sexual favors, sexual remarks about an individual's body or clothing, sexual stereotyping, unwelcome or offensive sexual comments, and other conduct of a sexual nature) by a supervisor or other person in authority which operates – either through submission or rejection by the victim – as the basis for any employment decision affecting the victim. Common examples of "quid pro quo" harassment are hiring, granting, or denying a promotion, demotion, transfer, training, salary increase, discharge, work assignments, and/or volunteer opportunities on the basis of the victim's response to unwelcome acts of sexual harassment.
- (2) **Hostile work environment** harassment is any conduct that creates a hostile work environment, even though the victim has not suffered a tangible employment injury, for example, denial of raises, promotion, or termination. To state a legal claim for "hostile work environment" harassment, the sexual harassment must be sufficiently

severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment and create an abusive working environment.

- (3) Under federal law, **sexual harassment** also includes any reprisal or retaliation against anyone by any co-workers or supervisors because that person, in good faith, reports a violation or suspected violation of sexual misconduct, whether or not the reported violation is substantiated by an investigation.
- (4) Any pertinent state or common law definition of **sexual harassment** that is enacted would also apply.
  - a. **Sexual Exploitation** includes but is not limited to the development of or the attempt to develop a physical or sexual relationship between a credentialed leader and an employee, congregant, or volunteer, as well as any person with whom he/she has any pastoral or professional relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual.
  - b. **Child sexual abuse** and/or **molestation** includes physical, sexual, and psychological harm to a minor or any person who is incompetent or who has a diminished mental capacity that is at the level of a child. It includes, but is not limited to, any act against a minor or incompetent person that constitutes a crime under applicable state and federal law. Allegations of child sex abuse or molestation shall be reported to the proper authorities.
- 2. The terms **pastoral relationship** or **ministerial capacity** means: a relationship between a credentialed leader and any person to whom such credentialed leader provides counseling, pastoral care, prayer support, spiritual direction, or spiritual guidance, including that received from Sunday services and/or church related classes, workshops, retreats, weddings, funerals, or any other church related activity.
- 3. A **romantic relationship** includes dating and/or an expressed desire for personal, physical, and sexual intimacy with another person.
- 4. The term **minor** means anyone who has not attained eighteen [18] years of age, or as defined by applicable local law.
- 5. The term **professional counseling** means counseling by an accredited professional in the area of psychiatry, psychology, social work, or family therapy, which does not include any elements of spiritual direction or guidance.