

The Society for Community Ministries

Code of Professional Practice

Adopted December 31, 2004

PREAMBLE

We, the members of The Society for Community Ministries (also known as SCM), do affirm this Code of Professional Practice as our standard of ethical commitment for the practice of community ministry. We envision and urge that this Code be adhered to by all SCM members, both lay and ordained.

I. Self

A. I commit myself to honor the ideals of community ministry, such as those set forth by The Society for Community Ministries, and to actively promote and articulate the underlying values set forth in the Principles and Purposes of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

B. Because the religious life is a growing life, I commit myself to honor my needs for spiritual, ethical and professional growth by means of continuing education in order to deepen and strengthen myself and my ministry.

C. I am committed to fulfilling my responsibilities as agreed upon with my employer and/or with the Governing Board of any congregation to which I stand in special relationship (such as endorsement) supportive of my community ministry. In cases of disagreement, or should these responsibilities appear to conflict, I will seek mediation by responsible and appropriate parties. (This may include UUMA and/or SCM leaders.)

D. I will strive to know and understand myself, my strengths, weaknesses, and limitations. As a finite human being, I will strive to honor my needs for recreation, vacation, relationships, and play. Should I require psychotherapy or long-term spiritual assistance, I will seek it from qualified persons outside my place of employment or my church setting. Should I seek short-term counseling from the parish-based ministers of my home church, I will be cautious about the risks presented by dual relationships and the hazards of intimate disclosures among colleagues.

E. I will recognize and practice within the limitations of my expertise and credentials, and I acknowledge the need for making appropriate referrals for matters which lie beyond my expertise.

F. Because the demands upon me will be many and constant, I commit myself to vigilance over my relationships and especially the needs of my partner and family, if any, and my relation to them as partner, parent, or friend.

G. As a spiritual and religious leader, I have power to influence people and relationships. I recognize that my power can be used to perpetuate relationships of injustice and oppression both by my actions and my inactions, and I will avoid using it for such purposes. I also recognize that my power can be used to help heal relationships of injustice and oppression and seek right relations.

H. As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that ministry gives me, and refrain from practices that are harmful to or exploitative of others or which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. I will not engage in sexual activity or sexualized behavior with any person charged to my care, including, children, non-consenting adults, counselees, congregant, spouses or partners of persons in my place of ministry or congregation, interns, or volunteers.

When in a supervisory role, I will also avoid sexual activity with students, clients, counselees, patients, inmates, volunteers or any other persons I supervise. In compliance with the state and federal law, I will report knowledge of unlawful sexual activity with a child or underage adolescent.

I. I recognize that any criminal misconduct I commit may result in sanctions up to and including termination of my membership in The Society for Community Ministries.

J. Though I may personally profess and represent a spiritual tradition, when I provide professional counseling/chaplaincy services, I will affirm the religious and spiritual freedom of all persons and refrain from imposing doctrinal positions or spiritual practices on those charged to my care.

K. As far as I am able, I will work actively to promote the importance and benefits of community ministry to the UUA and its congregations as well as to the larger community.

L. I will sustain a respect for ministry, and encourage the same in others. I will refrain from flippant or wanton words, in private as well as in public, degrading to lay or ordained ministry, especially those that might be destructive of congregational life.

II. Congregation

A. I will uphold and honor the practice of congregational polity within the congregation to which I relate as a person doing community ministry, knowing that by educating and modeling the practice of such polity, I am strengthening the experience of free corporate religious life.

B. If I am a minister in fellowship with the Unitarian Universalist Association, I will hold myself accountable to that body and to The Unitarian Universalist Ministers' Association. Whether lay or ordained, I will seek a responsible relationship with one or more congregations/District(s), preferably to be acknowledged both in a written document and in a service commissioning me to my ministry and giving structure to our mutual relationship.

C. I will respect the traditions of all congregation(s) and/or Unitarian Universalist organizations I relate to, and of my place of employment. I will seek needed changes that reflect greater inclusiveness or fairness in ways that are wise, temperate and collegial.

D. I will honor the confidences of others as far as these are within the bounds of the legal and moral responsibilities of my particular professional calling, advising clients or confidants according to applicable state and federal laws that I may also have a duty to report certain kinds of activities, such as child abuse. When the need arises, I will report to the proper authorities as I am legally and/or morally bound to do.

E. I will promote and adhere to responsible freedom of the pulpit for all persons, including those who may disagree with me.

F. I will encourage by my example an inclusive, loyal, generous, and intellectually honest and forthright spiritual leadership. Some of the ways to do this include broadening discussion, and acknowledging all experiences to help people be heard and honored.

G. I will hold to a single standard of respect and help for all members of the congregational community/ies I serve or relate to, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, color,

gender expression, marital or partnered status, ability, class, or ethnicity. I will actively seek support, education and training that will allow me to strengthen my ministry in this regard.

H. I will strive to work in a spirit of cooperation with all, not to promote a merely personal agenda, but wisely and temperately to discern what is best in my congregation(s)/District(s) and/or in my place of employment. Should I become confused or uncertain about matters of significance, I will seek guidance or input from other ministerial leaders.

III. Colleagues

A. I will stand in a supportive relationship to my colleagues, both lay and ordained, and keep for them an open mind and heart.

B. I will strictly respect confidences given to me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine as well, with exceptions here specified. See section III C.

C. Should I know that a colleague, whether lay or ordained, is engaged in practices damaging to him/herself or the congregation that he/she serves, I will first seek to confront the misuse of power in appropriate ways by speaking to that person. Only upon meeting with an inadequate response, I may consult, if necessary, with the Good Officers of the UUMA and/or of the Officers of the SCM, depending on my membership status with each organization.

D. I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in ministry in public, unless required to do so by a court of law. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will strive to speak responsibly and temperately.

E. The nurture of the relationship between a congregation and its called minister(s) is of importance to the strength of the movement and to the integrity of our ministry. For this reason, consultation among persons practicing the diverse forms of our ministry in a particular geographical area is essential to promote healthy congregational life. Those of us who practice community ministries need to be vigilant not to give rise to dissension or create divisiveness.

F. I will seek with reasonable persistence to arrive at written agreement(s) which define my relationship to other ministers in the congregation(s) I serve or relate to, and which promote harmony and clarity in roles and responsibilities assumed, accountability, and clear channels of communication between and among all ministers and with the lay leadership of such congregation(s.)

G. If I am a member of a congregation served by one or more parish-based minister(s), I will in all ways honor the priority of his or her call to the ministry of that congregation, and I will avoid inappropriate influence which others may yield to me in the light of my experience, status, and prestige. Notwithstanding, I will work with the called minister(s) to see that my call and my ministry will also be treated with respect.

H. I will not participate in any activities or actions in the church that seek to undermine the ministries or roles of other church leaders.

I. I will inform the Governing Board of the congregation immediately should I decide to change my endorsing congregation, or when my employment ceases or changes.

IV. Movement and Association

A. I will encourage the growth of our congregations and the spread of the ideals of the Unitarian Universalist tradition and fellowship.

B. As a member of The Society for Community Ministries, I understand that I have a responsibility to educate both lay people and ministerial colleagues about community ministry, and to enlist their help in seeking appropriate visibility and support for community ministries and those engaged in community ministries, both lay and ordained.

C. I will strive to keep my professional commitments by attending meetings of the SCM whenever possible, and thoughtfully considering matters of professional interest.

D. I will offer such support or encouragement as I am able for appropriate efforts to fund and compensate those aspects of community ministry that may be advocated or funded by the Unitarian Universalist Association, and other programs of or for those who practice community ministry.

E. I will participate in and encourage lay participation in meetings and activities of our Association.

F. I will encourage financial support of the Unitarian Universalist Association and its associated programs, including The Society for Community Ministries.

G. Because respect for the worth and dignity of every person is fundamental to our Unitarian Universalist tradition, I will work to confront attitudes and practices of discrimination on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, gender expression, marital or partnered status, ability, class, or ethnicity, within myself and in individuals, congregations or organizations, and groups I serve.

V. Community

A. In word and deed, I will live and speak in ways representing what I believe is good Unitarian Universalist leadership in the larger community.

B. I will encourage the efforts of all to solve community problems.

C. I will offer sympathetic support to neighboring ministers and lay leaders in other religious bodies, whenever consistent with our Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes.