

Guidelines for Allegations of Sexual Misconduct against Ministry Personnel

Introduction

It is the privilege of those serving as ministry staff personnel to maintain blameless moral lives in keeping with the teaching of Scripture concerning the spiritual requirement of the office held. Within FEB CENTRAL it has been the general conviction and practice that a morally fallen ministry staff person not be restored to pastoral ministry. It is recognized that others hold different views.

Churches are to be aware that it is legally incumbent upon them that suspicions or accusations that involve minors must be reported immediately to legal authorities.

One person should be designated to be the sole spokesperson should response to the media or other agencies become necessary. This spokesperson should only proceed to fulfill this responsibility after obtaining formal legal counsel.

It is the responsibility of the local church to insure that the integrity of its ministry is not compromised. At the same time, it is of paramount importance that ministry staff personnel accused of sexual misconduct must be considered innocent until the accusation has been substantiated. The welfare of all - the offender, offended, affected families, and local church or churches - must be protected and care extended to each of the affected parties.

Discipline is a biblical exercise established to be both redemptive and corrective. Discipline is to be administered in order to facilitate restoration of the morally fallen ministry staff person to God, his or her spouse, family and church fellowship, while at the same time protecting the testimony of the local church and FEB CENTRAL.

Documentation of all proceedings is important and should be protected with confidentiality. In general, all allegations, complaints, content of phone calls, notifications, minutes of meetings and correspondence are to be documented in writing and kept on file for future reference.

Definitions

1. "Local church" refers to a recognized church within the The Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada – Central Region.
2. "Ministry staff person" refers to any employed pastor or church ministry staff of the local church.
3. "Spiritual leadership" refers to the elders and/or deacons of the local church.
4. "Associations" refers to the geographical groupings of the local churches throughout the FEB CENTRAL Region for the purpose of fulfilling certain privileges and responsibilities.
5. "Sexual misconduct" refers to pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations (e.g. fornication, adultery, and homosexuality). Professional sexual misconduct includes the

misuse of ministerial power to abuse those that the ministry staff person has been trusted to protect and serve.

When substantive allegations of sexual misconduct are made, the spiritual leadership of the congregation will attempt to follow the process outlined in Matthew 18:15-20 and 1 Timothy 5:19-22. Matthew 18:15-18 states:

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three complainant.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

1 Timothy 5:19-22 states: "Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three complainant. Those who have sinned are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning."

It is to be understood that FEB CENTRAL, through its Regional Ministry Centre, is ready to provide counsel to the local spiritual leadership as it follows this biblical process. It must be noted that Matthew 18:15-18 addresses offenses between individuals. However, the moral failure of a leader embraces the body of Christ in general and the local church in particular. Great care must be taken in the confrontation, discipline and restoration of the ministry staff person in light of 1 Timothy 5:19-22.

Step 1 CONFRONTATION

When sexual sin is alleged against a ministry staff person, the complainant should go promptly with a member of the spiritual leadership and confront the accused in private. If this is not appropriate, then members of the spiritual leadership should go and gently confront.

Step 2 CONFESSION

If the confrontation results in the acknowledgement of the sin with confession and contrition, forgiveness needs to be granted in the name of Jesus.

A process toward personal, spiritual recovery will be offered immediately to the affected parties with the aid of the spiritual leadership (see Step 5 RECOVERY).

As a consequence of the confessed action, the ministry staff person is to be immediately terminated from his/her responsibility and ordination credentials withdrawn. As an expression of compassion, the church will extend an appropriate financial package to the ministry staff person (see Step 5 RECOVERY).

Step 3 INVESTIGATION

If the confrontation results in denial of the charges, yet the spiritual leadership feels there is sufficient evidence to consider the charge, the accusation will be further pursued. The

ministry staff person may be released from all ministry duties during the investigation while maintaining full remuneration.

1. Initiating the Process

- i. The spiritual leadership is encouraged to bring the allegations of misconduct to the attention of FEB CENTRAL through its Regional Ministry Centre.
- ii. The Regional Ministry Centre may assist in the selection of a committee of qualified personnel to conduct an investigation.

2. Investigative Process

The spiritual leadership and/or the Regional Ministry Centre will insure that appropriate hearings are conducted. The investigative committee (representing the spiritual leadership) will:

- i. Meet with the person(s) making the complaint to:
 - a.) Hear the allegations immediately and directly;
 - b.) Request that a written, signed complaint be submitted by or, on behalf of the complainant;
 - c.) Request the complainant's permission to use in writing the signed complaint and name in discussions with the ministry staff person;
 - d.) Request any material evidence; and
 - e.) Secure the complainant's agreement, if requested, to appear at a formal hearing.
- ii. Meet with the ministry staff person after receiving the complaint in order to:
 - a.) Present a copy of the written complaint and make notification of the right to respond; and
 - b.) Receive the response to the complaint;
- iii. Provide a written summary of the response to the ministry staff person and the complainant for comment;
- iv. Review the written complaint, the ministry staff person's response and any counter response from the complainant in order to determine if the complaint has merit and whether or not to proceed with the investigation. If the decision is to proceed the investigative committee will:
 - a.) Inform the spiritual leadership, and mutually determine whether or not the congregation should be notified of the investigation;

- b.) Investigate the accusation fully, seeking information and documentation from the complainant, ministry staff person, and other sources as deemed necessary; and
- c.) Report its findings and make recommendations to the spiritual leadership. If the church has been previously notified, the report and actions will also be reported to the congregation.

Step 4 DISCOVERY

1. Unsubstantiated Allegations

If the investigative committee concludes that the charges are unsubstantiated, every effort shall be made by the committee to exonerate the ministry staff person.

- i. A written summary of the investigation and conclusions will be provided to the ministry staff person and the report will be placed in the FEB CENTRAL file with the permission of the ministry staff person;
- ii. Where the congregation has been notified of the investigation, and if the ministry staff person chooses, a public statement of exoneration will be made to the congregation by the spiritual leadership or a representative from the investigative committee; and
- iii. Charges made in bad faith may require disciplinary action by the church against the complainant.

If the investigative committee is unable to substantiate the charges, but substantial concerns remain, it is not constrained to publicly exonerate the ministry staff person. They may wish to recommend to the spiritual leadership an appropriate system of accountability.

2. Substantiated Allegations

If the committee believes that the charges are substantiated, the committee will recommend that the spiritual leadership take appropriate action with the ministry staff person.

- i. It is expected that the ministry staff person will confess, repent, and seek restitution if need be. If the ministry staff person refuses to respond in a spiritually appropriate way, the spiritual leadership will seek to continue to minister to the ministry staff person in order to procure such a response if possible.
- ii. The ministry staff person is to be immediately terminated from his/her responsibility and ordination credentials withdrawn.
- iii. A process of recovery will be immediately offered to the affected parties with the aid of the spiritual leadership
- iv. As an expression of compassion, the church will extend an appropriate financial package to the ministry staff person.

- v. The spiritual leadership and a representative from the investigative committee will meet with the ministry staff person, complainant congregation to explain the actions taken.

Step 5 RECOVERY

The Scriptures exhort: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

The church is encouraged to work with FEB CENTRAL in the establishment of a recovery process in order to assure that both the ministry staff person and the other person are cared for by the local church.

1. Care Team

A Care Team will be offered to the affected parties to assist the process of full restoration. The team will report to the spiritual leadership.

2. Counseling

Qualified professional counselor(s) will also be offered to the affected parties. However, the ministry staff person must sign a release of information agreement with the counselor to the Care Team.

Some of the basic criteria for restoring a ministry staff person to active participation as a member of a church:

- i. Complete confession to the membership of the church where the ministry staff person was ministering when the offense took place and naming what took place, the sins and lies that supported it, and impact those actions have had on others;
- ii. Full disclosure to the spiritual leadership where restoration to active participation is being proposed;
- iii. Appropriate responses to those hurt by the ministry staff person’s actions based on the judgment of the Care Team and the spiritual leadership where the offence took place;
- iv. Recommendations by the Care Team and professional counselor that the offending ministry staff person has insight into the nature and causes of the offensive actions; is not minimizing or blaming others for such actions; has made significant changes in thinking; has demonstrated repentance through lifestyle and relational modifications; and
- v. Termination of relationships with any sexual partners other than the spouse and a bona fide effort at restoring the marriage (when applicable).