



# CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TRUSTEES AND HONORARY OFFICERS

## 1 Introduction and context

This code of practice is a set of principles and guidelines which outline the responsibilities of, and proper practices for the trustees and honorary officers of Church Society. Although a code of conduct is not a legal requirement, we wish to provide such persons with an understanding of what is required in their role. This is so that Church Society trustees and honorary officers are enabled to be transparent, honest, and accountable in their roles in the organisation. The trustees and honorary officers are expected to abide by the fundamental values that underpin Church Society (namely, the doctrine set out in the Thirty-Nine Articles and expressed in the Book of Common Prayer) and are required to make every reasonable effort to meet the standards of this code of practice.

Furthermore, according to its Christian identity, Church Society is committed to act in all circumstances with compassion, grace, and pastoral concern. For trustees and honorary officers, this encompasses their interactions (whether in person, by telephone, by email, on social media, or any other form of correspondence) with one another, those employed by Church Society, Church Society members, the media, interested non-members, and especially those raising concerns regarding the organisation, or one of its representatives, in terms of communication and/or practice.

## 2 Scope

Candidates for election will be encouraged to indicate that they are prepared to abide by this document in their role as a trustee or honorary officer. The code also acts to preserve the understanding of behaviour and expectation between fellow trustees and honorary officers. Additionally, it can be used to evaluate a trustee's or honorary officer's conduct should any concern or allegation be made. Finally, the code of practice should be used at the time of a Church Society governance review.

## 3 Policy

As a result of our shared beliefs and values the following are examples of behaviours we would expect to find among trustees and honorary officers of Church Society:

- Willingness to give a personal account of a living faith in Jesus Christ
- Regular commitment and participation in the life of a Church of England church, or a church in full communion with the Church of England
- The treatment of one another with grace, respect, courtesy, politeness, forgiveness and self-control as well as justice, integrity and truth: living out Church Society's values both in behaviour and in tone of communication, both face-to-face, in writing, and online
- Honesty and co-operation in our interactions
- Commitment to read papers and to attend meetings, training sessions and other relevant events
- Commitment to good stewardship of Church Society's finance and resources.

It is recognised that the Bible outlines specific behaviours as fundamental and in situations where these may have been contravened, those investigating on behalf of and advising the Council would act within a context of grace and compassion, taking time to consider the circumstances of the situation, including:

- The severity of the perceived misconduct
- Whether the incident is a 'one-off' or part of repeated behaviour or lifestyle
- Any mitigating circumstances, e.g. personal issues
- The position of trust and particular responsibilities of the trustee/honorary officer

- The treatment of similar instances of misconduct by other trustees/honorary officers
- Length of service
- The extent of any 'live' investigations and warnings
- Repentance or other evidence of regret.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of matters which may be considered to be gross misconduct, which finding may result in asking for a trustee's or honorary officer's resignation, or initiating the process by which the Council can terminate membership of Church Society:

- Any action constituting a serious criminal offence
- Theft, fraud, forgery, deliberate falsification of documents
- Serious breach of Church Society's Equality and Diversity Policy
- Harassment of any kind; particularly sexual, racial, antisemitic (as defined by the IHRA), religious or gender related
- Bullying of any kind; including emotional manipulation, psychological coercion, the deliberate misuse of power, and any use of physical chastisement whether consensual or not
- The deliberate viewing or circulation of pornographic material or other similarly offensive materials
- Breach of trust
- Abuse e.g. sexual, racial, antisemitic (as defined by the IHRA), alcohol, drug or substance
- Disregard for safety precautions thereby endangering oneself and others
- Promoting, condoning or engaging in other activities or beliefs that conflict with our Christian beliefs or our ethical/moral/public stance on such matters. For the avoidance of doubt, this would include matters pertaining to the authority of the Bible such as our stance on: marriage being a lifelong union between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others; sexual activity outside marriage; God creating male (man) and female (woman), distinct but complementary, being a permanent state determined biologically from conception
- The repeated use of blasphemy or sexual innuendoes
- Involvement in the occult

- Being engaged (without prior written consent of Standing Committee) directly or indirectly with any organisation or event which risks you being perceived as promoting or condoning activities or beliefs that conflict with our Christian beliefs (including our beliefs regarding the authority of the Bible) or our ethical/moral/public stance on such matters
- Activity which risks causing serious reputational damage to the organisation; such as the dissemination of confidential information.

#### **4 Speaking on behalf of Church Society**

Trustees and honorary officers agree not to make public comments on behalf of Church Society unless they are authorised to do so by council or standing committee.

Any public comment made in the capacity of a trustee and honorary officer should be in line with Church Society's values and policies.

Unless authorised, trustees and honorary officers should not put themselves in a position where personal interests conflict with their duty to act in the interests of the organisation. When making public statements as individuals or in the capacity of another role/organisation, trustees and honorary officers should strive to uphold the reputation of Church Society.

Church Society trustees and honorary officers are expected to respect organisational, council, and individual confidentiality.

#### **5 Relations with others**

Trustees and honorary officers should engage considerately and respectfully with all those they come into contact with as part of their role at Church Society.

They should recognise that the roles of trustees/honorary officers and staff at Church Society are different and seek to understand and respect the differences and boundaries between these roles. They should seek to support and encourage the staff.

When contacted by someone raising an issue, concern, or complaint regarding Church Society's communication and/or practice, trustees and honorary officers should:

- Listen carefully
- Speak respectfully
- Not disregard or dismiss issues/concerns/complaints raised
- Not promise absolute confidentiality, which is not usually appropriate or necessary
- Consider the well-being of any persons involved
- Set appropriate limits for contact with those raising issues/concerns/complaints
- Inform the person what action will be taken with the information provided (always distinguishing the boundaries of one's role)
- Bring such issues/concerns/complaints to the attention of the Chair and Director (unless the complaint is made about them specifically, in which case, the vice-chair and associate director should be informed).

*This code of practice should be taken alongside other relevant Church Society policies including the Safeguarding Policy, the Social Media Policy, and the Complaints Policy. All these policies are available at <https://www.churchsociety.org/about-us/policies/>*

*This policy draws on the Evangelical Alliance Code of Conduct: <https://www.eauk.org/assets/files/downloads/Evangelical-Alliance-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>, as well as documentation from CPAS and the Christian Legal Centre.*