



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA  
**MANITOBA/NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO SYNOD**  
*Empowered by God, shepherding the church, serving the world.*

**Code of Conduct**  
for  
**Participants in Events Organized**  
by the  
**Manitoba / Northwestern Ontario Synod**

Approved by Synod Council:

09-19-2020

## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PARTICIPANTS

### IN EVENTS ORGANIZED BY THE MANITOBA / NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO SYNOD<sup>1,2</sup>

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) and as the Manitoba / Northwestern Ontario Synod we are committed to being a church that welcomes all of God's people in a safe and accepting environment.

We are increasingly aware of the racism, discrimination and harassment that has been and continues to be experienced by women, indigenous peoples, racial and ethnic minorities, people of other faiths and the LGBTQ2SIA+ community. We also recognize that there have been times when our own church has exhibited such behaviour.

Now, as we strive to work with our neighbours and to be an inclusive body of Christ, our church has adopted the following understanding of our commitment to upholding dignity.

**This church upholds the dignity of all people. We recognize the image of Christ in every person and serve that person as Christ himself. In meeting diverse people, we begin with a core sense of respect for the value of each person as a unique child of God.<sup>3</sup>**

This is why we are creating this Code of Conduct for all Synod events including synod council meetings, conventions, study conference and other events organized by the Synod.

#### **Expected Behaviors by Participants in Events Organized by the MNO Synod**

- Treat all persons fairly and with respect, courtesy, and dignity during events including break and mealtimes.
- Behave respectfully towards others and do not misuse personal or professional relationships.
- Be sensitive to cultural and social differences and practices, and careful in your use of language that may be disrespectful or demeaning.
- Do not cross boundaries set by others regarding their personal space. If someone indicates "No," even without words, respect it.
- Do not engage in behaviors such as bullying, harassment, sexual abuse, or sexual harassment.
- Do not make false accusations against people for your own advantage.
- Commit to working with the process outlined even if you are the subject of a complaint.

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<sup>1</sup> The Code of Conduct for Participants in Events Organized by the Manitoba / Northwestern Ontario Synod has been developed based on that prepared and approved by the ELCIC and by that of the *Lutheran World Federation*.

<sup>2</sup> This Code of Conduct does not supersede existing policies for Rostered Ministers such as Sexual Abuse or Harassment or Manual on Discipline.

<sup>3</sup> ELCIC Social Statement on Human Sexuality 2011.

## Synod Preparation for all events

1. Before the start of the Synod event, a minimum of two people, preferably of different genders and with an understanding of and sensitivity to diversity, are appointed by the event organizer to form the Complaint Handling Committee (CHC). The CHC members will receive instructions from the event organizer on this Code of Conduct and the procedures to follow.
2. For events attended by 15 or fewer persons, the CHC committee may consist of one person. Normally, the person designated as the CHC will be a member of the committee or group that is meeting or a member of the synod staff who is in attendance.
3. At the beginning of the event, the organizers shall remind all participants about the Code of Conduct. The CHC should be introduced at the first session. The attention of the participants shall be drawn to the Code of Conduct principles and the commitment of the Synod to uphold them.
4. Events organized with a full communion partner shall follow this Code of Conduct Policy or a similar Code of Conduct Policy of the organization hosting the event.

## What action should be taken when someone violates the code of conduct?

The procedures to follow are in harmony with Matthew 18:15–17. In the case of criminal behavior, the matter should be referred directly to the police.

### Procedure:

1. An individual who experiences or witnesses a violation of the Code of Conduct should speak directly to the subject of complaint in as timely a manner as possible, pointing out the violation in a reasonable manner and requesting that it stop/not be repeated.
2. If there is no resolution, or if the complainant is not comfortable speaking directly to the subject of complaint, the complainant (including a third-party complainant) should speak to a member of the CHC, who will discuss with them potential next steps.
3. If the subject of a complaint is a member of the CHC, he or she shall recuse themselves from any participation in the complaint handling process. If the subject of the complaint is the sole member of the CHC, the complainant should speak to the organizer of the event.
4. If the subject of the complaint is a rostered member of the ELCIC or full communion partner of the ELCIC, the CHC shall, as part of the process of handling the case, consult the ELCIC Manual on Discipline
5. If the complainant decides to begin a formal complaint process, the complainant should fill out the Complaint Form available at the event. The Complaint Form is also available at:  
<http://mnosynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Code-of-Conduct-Complaint-Form.pdf>
6. During the event the complainant should hand the completed Complaint Form to a member of the CHC. ***In the case of a virtual event or electronic meeting or where the complainant joined an in-person event using an electronic platform, the complainant may choose to register the complaint after the conclusion of the event.***
7. To register a complaint after the conclusion of an event, the complainant should send the

Complaint Form to **Synod Bishop at [mnobishop@elcic.ca](mailto:mnobishop@elcic.ca) or, if the subject of the complaint is the Bishop, to the Assistant to the Bishop. The recipient of the complaint shall be responsible for assembling a Complaint Response Team (CRT) of at least two persons to investigate.** Complaints may be registered up to 60 days following the completion of an event organized by the Synod.

8. All complaints will be carefully investigated in a time-sensitive manner. Wherever possible, the CHC or CRT will meet privately and separately with the subject of complaint and the complainant. Complaints will be dealt with in a confidential manner.
9. For the complainant, pastoral care and support should be made available. In cases where the complainant wishes to consider reporting the incident to the relevant legal and/or ecclesial authorities, they shall be offered support and assistance in considering such report. However, if the complainant decides to pursue legal action against the subject of complaint, it shall be done by the complainant independent of the ELCIC.
10. For the subject of complaint, pastoral care and support should be made available. The CHC may remove the subject of complaint from the meeting or from positions where the offense could be repeated if the CHC determines it is reasonable to do so.

**Working Definitions** (Adapted from the *Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Code of Conduct*)

**Bullying** The use of force or coercion to abuse or intimidate others. The behavior can be habitual and involve an imbalance of social or physical power. It can include verbal harassment or threat, physical assault or coercion and may be directed repeatedly towards particular victims, perhaps on grounds of race religion, gender, sexuality, or ability.

**Complainant** The person making a complaint of a violation of the Code of Conduct. This may include a third party, someone who has witnessed a violation.

**Complaint Handling Committee (CHC)** The individuals appointed at an event organized by the Synod of Alberta and the Territories to receive and review complaints.

**Discrimination** Discrimination means exclusion of, treatment of, or action against an individual based on social status, race, ethnicity, color, religion, gender including gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, political affiliation or disability.

**Synod Complaints Response Team (CRT)** The team at the Synod Office appointed to handle complaints after events organized by the Synod have completed.

**Synod Event** Refers to any formal gathering organized by the MNO Synod including Synod conventions, youth gatherings, workshops, conferences and meetings of the Synod council or any of its standing committees **that are held as either in-person gatherings, on an electronic platform or involve a combination of in-person participants and electronic platform participants.**

**Event organizer** Usually a Synod Office Staff Person.

**Harassment** Any unwelcome comment or behavior that is offensive, demeaning, humiliating, derogatory, or any other inappropriate behavior that fails to respect the dignity of an individual.

**Sexual harassment** Any unwelcome sexual advance, comment, expressed or implied sexual demand, touch, joke, gesture, or any other communication or conduct of a sexual nature, whether verbal, written or visual, by any person to another individual within the scope of work. Sexual harassment may be directed at members of any gender and includes harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Sexual abuse** Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, including inappropriate touching, by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

**Subject of Complaint** The person about whom a complaint is made for violating the Code of Conduct.

**Zero tolerance** The principle and practice of not tolerating any instance of sexual abuse, harassment, bullying and discrimination in all of our meetings and conferences and applying a clear procedure for breaches or violations.

## **GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMPLAINT HANDLING COMMITTEE**

1. Individuals or groups of individuals may come to you with concerns about how to handle a violation of the Code of Conduct. Your initial response is to listen to the complainant or to arrange a mutually agreeable time and place for a meeting. Such meetings should be conducted in private but in a public space.
2. Options for you to consider in dealing with a complaint are:
  - a. To encourage the complainant to speak directly to the subject of complaint.
  - b. To be willing to go with the complainant to speak directly to the subject of complaint.
  - c. To encourage the complainant to fill in a Confidential Complaint Form, and then to speak in private with the subject of complaint.
3. You will need to exercise your caring discretion to help the complainant choose which avenue to pursue.
4. In cases involving what you know to be, or which might be criminal behavior the matter should be reported by the complainant directly to the police.
5. Remember you are part of a team. Use the other CHC team member(s) as a sounding board. You may decide which one of you will speak to the subject of complaint or you may go together. You may also speak to the event organizer for assistance.
6. In any case, do your best to provide pastoral care and support to both the complainant and the subject of complaint. With the permission of the complainant or the subject of complaint you may ask others at the event to provide pastoral care or support.
7. Keep written notes of the actions you take and submit them, along with the original complaint form to the event organizer for confidential management.
8. If the event ends before the matter is settled, forward the Complaint Form and your notes to the Synod Complaint Response Team for follow up.

**CONFIDENTIAL COMPLAINT FORM**

**For Events Organized by the Manitoba / Northwestern Ontario Synod**

This form should be completed by a person wishing to lodge a complaint. All information will be held securely, and confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

**A. General data**

Name of the person lodging the complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the person you wish to lodge a complaint against (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of event: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of reporting: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Brief description of the incident or concern**

State what happened, trying to follow the sequence of events from start to finish. If the incident location is not well known, describe the location based on your memory of it. Give a description of the "subject of complaint" if you do not know their name.

**C. Name of witnesses: (if any)**

Supply the names of witnesses and how they can be contacted, if known.

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