**1 Corinthians 12:12-14 (CEB)**

*12 Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. 13 We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. 14 Certainly the body isn’t one part but many.*

The Michigan Conference seeks to be proactive and preventive in responding to issues impacting those serving the church. We are in the Christian community and strive to live together well and with appropriate, healthy boundaries. Everyone in our community, active and retired, Elders and Deacons, District Superintendents, Provisional Members,Associate Members, Licensed Local Pastors, and District Superintendent Assignments, is asked to uphold these Guidelines.

The Michigan Conference will use these Guidelines to complement the Book of Discipline. They address concerns that are not addressed in other resources. They will be utilized as an educational tool of the Board of Ordained Ministry, Licensing School, for further dialogue, and as a tool of and at other Conference trainings. The Conference Relations Committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry will update this living document as necessaryand at least quadrennially.

While no policies or other documents can anticipate all the challenges and situations that may arise, the Guidelines for Our Life Together delineate key areas of personal and professional relationships, integrity, power, and conflicts of interest. These guidelines are designed to assist our community in following guidelines that support the well-being of all.

As clergy within the Michigan Conference, we will be guided by the following:

**A. IN OUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, WE WILL;**

1. Only serve our current appointment's members, constituents, and community. We will not provide pastoral services, including funerals, weddings, counseling, or consultation (whether in-person, written, or via social media) elsewhere unless given permission by the pastor under appointment. In the event of a transgression where the current pastor is violated, we will speak to the other pastor directly and, if not resolvable, will consult with our District superintendent.

2. When leaving an appointment, we pledge to be completely honest and transparent about the appointment we are leaving in all conversations with our district superintendents and incoming clergy colleagues. This includes current worship attendance, the church's financial position, and other vital congregational information, such as the accuracy of membership rolls, which would be helpful for the incoming clergyperson;

3. Avoid communicating (verbal, written, and via social media) negatively about our colleagues, especially our predecessor or our successor;

4. Keep appropriate confidences and privileged information:

5. Avoid the appearance of impropriety in visitation and counseling sessions;

6. Maintain a healthy emotional and social balance and maintain boundaries between pastoral identity and self‐identity, private and community life, self and others;

7. Separate our ministerial role from our personal lives by not being romantically involved with those directly served or employed by our ministry;

8. Maintain appropriate boundaries by refraining from exclusive relationships that could compromise our ministerial role with those we directly serve or are employed by our ministry.

8. Encourage the congregation in the care and upkeep of the parsonage, leave the church and parsonage clean and in good condition, and accept financial responsibility for damage to the parsonage beyond normal wear and tear;

9. Practice habits, including sabbath keeping, that encourage and promote the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of our families and ourselves;

10. Clergy are always encouraged to work on their spirituality and discipleship;

11. Move towards proportional giving/tithing;

**B. IN ISSUES OF INTEGRITY WE WILL**

1. Be fiscally responsible;

2. Be honest;

3. Properly represent the polity, policy, mission, and program of the Annual Conference and the United Methodist Church;

4. Acknowledge all sources, including written and media material; we will not plagiarize another’s work;

5. If in a full-time appointment, accept employment outside of the current appointment only with the consent of the SPRC and/or the BOM and conference cabinet (paragraph 338.1);

6. Maintain the highest ethical standards regarding the use of modern technology, avoiding even the perception of inappropriate use of the internet and understanding that email and text messaging are not a private domain and should not be treated as such;

7. Provide pastoral services for weddings, baptisms, and funerals to church members without charge; the receipt of honoraria is acceptable;

**C. IN REGARD TO POWER ISSUES WE WILL**

1. Be aware of the power that is inherent in our various roles and use that power to maximize ministry opportunities that communicate worth, mutuality, and collegiality;

2. Establish clear, appropriate boundaries with anyone with whom we have a pastoral, business, professional, or social relationship;

3. Do not use our pastoral status, position, relationship, or authority to abuse, misguide, negatively influence, manipulate, or take advantage of anyone.

**D. IN AREAS WHERE THERE MIGHT BE A CONFLICT OF INTEREST WE WILL**

1. Advise and refer persons to other clergy or other professionals such as lawyers, doctors, counselors, etc., when appropriate; be aware that our judgment can be impaired by prior dealings, by becoming personally involved, or by becoming an advocate for one party against another;

2. Never take advantage of anyone to whom we are providing services to further our personal, religious, political, financial, or business interests or those of our family ;

3. Use extreme discretion concerning the acceptance of gifts from individuals;

4. Avoid using the congregation to market products or services created or provided in a non-clergy role;

5. Not accept or confer an office, position, assignment, or receive compensation, which may present the appearance of favoritism or a conflict of interest.

**COVENANT AGREEMENT**

This covenant encourages me to model Christ’s love and respect for all, ensuring my ministry reflects the values of the Michigan Conference and the United Methodist Church. I commit to following these Guidelines for Our Life Together, which support our shared values.

**Name** *(Please Print)***: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signature**: **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date**: **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**