



Ethical Guidelines

for Directors of Christian Education

A Revision of the *Proposed Code of Ethics*
Originally Presented to the
National DCE Leadership Summit 2000
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Introduction

Cyril Houle (1980) identifies characteristics of a professionalization process for vocational groups. One characteristic identified is that of formulating a tradition of ethical practice that is established and refined in the light of changing circumstances. The desire to formulate an ethical code for DCE ministry emerged twenty years ago and has emerged in various forms over the years. This proposal is the latest in a series of documents and discussions that are continually evolving from various sources and places.

A proposed Code of Ethics was formulated with the assumption that a conceptual framework must be clarified for those working within ministry. It was determined, early on in the current discussion, that the committee could not just take a code of ethics defined by another profession and transfer the standards to DCE ministry. Thus, even though other codes were extensively referenced, each item was placed through the filter of DCE as theological educator serving in the public ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In some respects the proposed Code of Ethics looked like numerous others, yet, must be seen within its own uniqueness.

The committee struggled with formulating a guide for ethical decision-making without developing a standard of legalism. The committee concluded that ethical dilemmas are part of functioning as a professional and that every professional practitioner must make judgments with regard to propriety. Therefore, the formulation of the purpose became critical to the committee's work. It was the committee's desire that this document becomes a guide for behavior and a means to clarify a shared set of values ("New study," 1999). Readers of this revised document, *DCE Ethical Guidelines*, are asked to read the document with the purpose statement clearly in mind:

The purpose of the *DCE Ethical Guidelines* is to provide a guide for behavior and to clarify and reinforce a shared set of values that are rooted in the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as expressed in congregational based settings for those who serve as Directors of Christian Education in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The committee is grateful for the opportunity to delve into the issue of ethics. While interesting to pursue, we would also agree that the project was larger than any of us anticipated. We present this to the National DCE Leadership Summit 2000 with thanks to God for whatever insight and wisdom might be present. It is our prayer that those serving in DCE ministry will be served by this document.

Sincerely, in Christ,

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Preamble

The Augsburg Confession (AC XIV) states “nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.”

The Lutheran Church understands that the Call includes certain Scriptural foundations that serve as conduct goal for service (1 Timothy 3: 9–13). The Called worker is to:

- be sound in doctrine
- live a life above reproach
- be competent

Purpose Statement

These principles are the conduct goals and the aspirations of the called workers who serve as Directors of Christian Education in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. These principles give expression to and facilitate dialog about our commonly held values that are rooted in the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions as expressed in congregational based settings.

The Ethical Guidelines for Directors of Christian Education

As Directors of Christian Education, we shall:

1. Express our commitment to Scripture and The Lutheran Confessions.
2. Reflect the understanding that every DCE, in common with all of humanity, suffers under original sin, receiving redemption, finding meaning and purpose at the foot of the Cross.
3. Proceed from an understanding of the third function of the Law (Epitome, Formula of Concord, VI) as a curb to sin.
4. Demonstrate the second use of the Law (Epitome, Formula of Concord, VI) confronting DCEs with their sinfulness and need for grace.
5. Foster the opportunity for Confession and Absolution leading to reconciliation and forgiveness.
6. Reinforce the definition, mission, and values identified as essential by the 1999 National DCE Leadership Summit:

Definition: A Director of Christian Education is a Synodically certified, Called and Commissioned lifespan educational leader prepared for team ministry in a congregational setting.

Mission: Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Director of Christian Education plans, administers, and assesses ministry that nurtures and equips people as the Body of Christ for spiritual maturity, service, and witness in home, job, congregation, community, and the world.

Important Values for DCEs:

- Exhibit Christian character
 - Nurture a personally maturing faith in Christ grounded in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions
 - Relate well with people of all ages
 - Express a passion for teaching and learning
 - Manifest a servant heart
 - Balance personal and professional life effectively
 - Model a team orientation
 - Strive for excellence
 - Lead to equip leaders
 - Perform in a self-directed manner
7. Recognize that ethical dilemmas are part of functioning as a professional and that every professional practitioner must make judgments with regard to propriety. Ethical dilemmas in the Christian walk are approached through prayer and a discernment of Law and Gospel within the Scriptures. *“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16–17 NRSV).
 8. Highlight that ethical situations in the ministry of the Director of Christian Education arise frequently and impact life within the Body of Christ and impact approaches to outreach.
 9. Cover any activity that directly or indirectly relates to professional identity or training.
 10. Promote general principles of behavioral goals that are intended to serve as an expression of the core values necessary for functioning as a servant leader in public ministry.
 11. Promote behavioral goals to which the individual DCE, as well as the profession, can encourage one another with Christian love.

Director of Christian Education Ethical Guidelines Values and Principles of the Profession

Principle 1.00: *The DCE is Sound in Doctrine.*

“They must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Timothy 3:9 NRSV).

Values

- *Nurtures a personally maturing faith in Christ grounded in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions*
- *Displays a spiritually maturing faith.*

Ethical Implications

- 1.01 A DCE teaches in accordance with the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions.
- 1.02 A DCE submits his or her teaching and practice to the scrutiny of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.
- 1.03 A DCE undergirds and supports his or her teaching of correct doctrine and personal spiritual formation by regular participation in worship, celebration of the Sacraments, study of the Word, service, witness, and membership within the community of believers.

Principle 2.00: *The DCE Demonstrates a Life Above Reproach*

“And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons” (1 Timothy 3:10 NRSV).

Values

- *Exhibits Christian character.*
- *Balances personal and professional life effectively.*

Ethical Implications

A Director of Christian Education will live a life above reproach in relationship to self, family, and community.

- 2.01 The DCE manages himself or herself in such a way as to maintain an appropriate relationship with regard to time commitments between personal, family, and professional responsibilities.
- 2.02 The DCE manages his or her household finances in such a way as to model Biblical stewardship and to demonstrate sound fiscal management.
- 2.03 The DCE is a responsible and active member of the civic community.
- 2.04 The DCE is a responsible and active member of the congregation, District and/or Church at large and by personal witness in appropriate settings.
- 2.05 The DCE, single or married, creates a balanced and healthy family life.
- 2.06 The DCE seeks personal, spiritual, and professional support in matters of personal distress.
- 2.07 The DCE is culturally sensitive and appropriately responsive to cultural boundaries.

2.08 The DCE avoids addictive and abusive behavior that will hurt himself or herself and[or] others while giving offense to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and seeks support for the healing process.

A Director of Christian Education will live a life above reproach in relationship to all professional colleagues in ministry.

2.09 The DCE respects and honors the role of the team leader.

2.10 The DCE treats colleagues with respect and represents accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues.

2.11 The DCE refrains from inappropriate and unwarranted criticism of colleagues with members of the personal family, congregation, and/or community.

2.12 The DCE engages in direct and mutual conversation and support with colleagues (*SA, III, iv*) and for the sake of reconciliation and growth to speak the Word of the Lord directly to one another (*Matthew 18, Ephesians 4, 2 Timothy 3: 16,17; Colossians 3*).

2.13 The DCE respects and protects confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of personal and professional relationships and transactions so that those in public ministry find a place of safety for personal and professional support and growth. When legal obligations to disclose confidential information are required, the DCE will disclose or report information to the civil authorities.

2.14 The DCE is committed to team ministry, and, whenever appropriate and possible, will seek and provide to the extent possible the wisdom and support of colleagues.

2.15 The DCE, as a member of an interdisciplinary team, participates in and contributes to decisions that affect the mission and ministry of the Church, respecting and drawing on the gifts, preparation, spiritual discernment, perspectives, values, and experiences of all those serving as professionals in ministry.

2.16 Disagreements are resolved in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of Confession and Absolution as a model for reconciliation in the Body of Christ.

2.17 The DCE serves as part of the public ministry of the Church under the doctrinal oversight of the Pastoral Office and within the administrative structure of the Congregation.

2.18 The DCE will under no circumstances engage in sexual activities outside of marriage. Romantic relationships and sexual behaviors will honor the intentions of the Sixth Commandment.

2.19 Physical contact with appropriate touch is an acceptable expression of fellowship within the Christian community for those who are comfortable with that type of expression. The DCE will not promote or engage in inappropriate physical contact. Physical contact (e.g. hugs) with colleagues will be engaged in with those who express acceptance of touch and, when appropriate and clear boundaries have been established.

2.20 The DCE will not engage in harassment of any kind of anyone in any manner.

2.21 The DCE who has direct knowledge of a colleague's incompetence, impairment, or unethical behavior offers assistance to the individual in the spirit of Christian fellowship as presented in Matthew 18. Legal and moral obligations will be honored, so when required by law or synodical guidelines, situations will be disclosed or reported to civil and/or synodical authorities of actual or pending harm.

2.23 The DCE defends, supports, and assists colleagues who are unjustly charged.

A Director of Christian Education will live a life above reproach in relationship to members of the congregation.

- 2.24 The DCE respects and encourages the individual to move towards a Spirit-led life of self-direction in learning and decision-making.
- 2.25 The DCE respects and attempts to understand all cultures and is sensitive to teaching the faith in various cultural settings.
- 2.26 The DCE recognizes, respects, and honors all members of the congregation as baptized and valued children of God, seeking to understand the diversity that is present such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, mental or physical disability, or socio-economic status.
- 2.27 The DCE is alert to and prevents conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion, impartial judgment, and a full teaching of the Word of God. The DCE informs the parishioner when a real or potential conflict of personal, political, or business interests arises. Occasionally, the protection of the parishioner may require the referral of the parishioner to another professional teacher or support person.
- 2.28 The DCE seeks written permission from a congregational member to disclose information when a referral is made to another professional.
- 2.29 The DCE sets clear, appropriate boundaries recognizing dual or multiple relationships with members of the congregation that create a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the individuals involved.
- 2.30 The DCE respects the right of members of the congregation to privacy. When intrusive solicitation of information is required for the full teaching and forming of the child of God, the DCE will operate in a sensitive manner and with utmost respect for confidentiality.
- 2.31 The DCE protects the confidentiality of all information personally obtained and will to the extent possible, inform individuals as to the limitations that information may be disclosed as prescribed by law.
- 2.32 The DCE does not discuss confidential information in settings that cannot ensure privacy (e.g. public or semipublic areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants.)
- 2.33 The DCE does not disclose identifying information when discussing members of the congregation for teaching or training purposes unless the member has consented to disclosure of confidential information.
- 2.34 The DCE does not disclose confidential information about members of the congregation with any member of the DCE's family, unless the family member is involved due to serving on the same staff or as a professional colleague offering consultation services.
- 2.35 The DCE, under no circumstances, engages in sexual activities outside of marriage.
- 2.36 The DCE does not promote or engage in inappropriate physical contact.
- 2.37 The DCE speaks well of congregation members and continually prays to the Lord on their behalf, uses the Second and Eighth Commandments to guide conversation, and will not use derogatory language in his or her written or verbal communications.
- 2.38 The DCE is encouraged to maintain faithfulness to the observance of a healthy stewardship of work and life as addressed in the Third and Seventh Commandments.

Principle 3.00: The DCE Is Competent in Service as a Professional Lifespan Educational Leader
“For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 3:13 NRSV).

Values

- *Expresses a passion for teaching and learning.*
- *Manifests a servant heart.*
- *Models a team orientation.*
- *Strives for excellence.*
- *Performs in a self-directed manner.*
- *Relates well with people of all ages.*
- *Leads to equip leaders.*

Ethical Implications

- 3.01 The DCE seeks excellence through regular self-evaluation as well as the evaluation of his or her performance from appropriate congregational and professional colleagues.
- 3.02 The DCE seeks professional review of programs under his or her purview.
- 3.03 The DCE seeks excellence by persistently working well, demonstrating high quality performance in speaking, writing, teaching, administering, etc.
- 3.04 The DCE pursues formal and informal continuing education that addresses the mission of DCE ministry, i.e., to plan, administer, and assess ministry that nurtures and equips people as the Body of Christ.
- 3.05 The DCE accepts responsibility for professional service only in areas of present or emerging professional competence.
- 3.06 The DCE demonstrates competence in working with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, shaping professional practice accordingly.
- 3.07 The DCE demonstrates competence as a life-span educational leader.
- 3.08 The DCE teaches and administers in such ways as to equip people as the Body of Christ for spiritual maturity, service, and witness in home, job, community, and congregation.
- 3.09 The DCE strengthens team ministry with pastors, DCEs, and other servants in the church, both lay and professional.
- 3.10 The DCE leads in the congregation and the larger church by demonstrating both initiative and humility in service.
- 3.11 The DCE follows the congregation’s screening and training guidelines of all persons placed into teaching and leadership roles in a congregation within the realm of his or her defined responsibilities.
- 3.12 The DCE advocates for adequate resources to fulfill a ministry of education.

- 3.13 The DCE creates a climate of physical, mental, spiritual, sexual, and intellectual safety and will take reasonable steps to eliminate any conditions that violate, interfere with, or discourage safety.
- 3.14 The DCE will be a good steward of ministry resources, investing where appropriate and never misappropriating funds for unintended purposes.
- 3.15 The DCE maintains appropriate records with regard to resources, human and material, needed to provide continuity and accountability for effective ministry.
- 3.16 As members of the Body of Christ, the DCE lives in the context of community and in the course of life, will both give and receive support from that community. When receiving the support of community for resolution of personal issues that impact the life of the DCE, the DCE will make every attempt to not permit private conduct or personal issues to interfere with his or her ability to fulfill professional responsibilities unless circumstances require renegotiation of the agreements made.
- 3.17 The DCE takes responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work he or she has actually performed and to which he or she has contributed, acknowledging the work of and the contributions made by others.
- 3.18 The DCE stays informed and abides by current laws that affect parish ministry situations.
- 3.19 The DCE assesses the needs of the faith community in order to promote the development and implementation of relevant programs that address those needs.
- 3.20 The DCE serves to promote and improve the field of Christian education.
- 3.21 The DCE contributes time and professional expertise to activities that promote the value of, integrity of, competence of, and respect for the Director of Christian Education ministry.
- 3.22 The DCE supports and encourages the Synodical certification process for Directors of Christian Education.
- 3.23 The DCE seeks to express the joy of ministry in daily service.
- 3.24 The DCE recruits servants of the Lord to become prepared for service as DCEs and other church professionals.
- 3.25 Regardless of functional description, a certified DCE uses the title Director of Christian Education (DCE) in all formal references to service within the congregation, District, or Synod (e.g. DCE John Doe, Minister of Family Life; Jane Doe, DCE; Minister of Family Life).
- 3.26 The DCE educates congregations and others with regard to *The DCE Ethical Guidelines* in order to enhance the public ministry of the Church.

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Credits

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The National DCE Leadership Summit for continually raising the issues and supporting the efforts of those who probe and explore

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Ethical Guidelines

For Directors of Christian Education

Discussion Guide John Paulus, DCE (adapted)

Purpose Statement

- Review the Preamble and Purpose Statement and supporting points on pages 3-4.
- What would you consider to be positive elements in the *Ethical Guidelines for the DCE* profession?
- What initial concerns or questions do you have about the attempt to establish a set of ethical guidelines?

Values and Principles of the Profession

Principle #1: The DCE is Sound in Doctrine.

- Is there anything in this section that concerns you?

Principle #2: The DCE Demonstrates a Life Above Reproach...in relationship to self, family, and community.

- Are the ethical implications stated here a “given” or is it important for them to be stated? Why or why not?

... in relationship to all professional colleagues in ministry.

- Out of all of the ethical implications listed here, what do you feel are two of the most important ones for an effective team ministry? Why?
- What dilemmas could develop if all of the team does not adhere to these ethical implications? Does a supportive environment need to be present to fulfill these ethical implications, or can they be maintained by an individual in a negative environment?

... in relationship to members of the congregation.

- What ethical implications in this section are you unclear of or need further clarification?
- Are there any implications you would eliminate or any that you think would be a value to add?

Principle #3: The DCE Is Competent in Service as a Professional Life-span Educational Leader.

- Do you find any tension between adhering to these ethical implications and the actual expectations and/or needs of the church or its individual members?
- How would you rate the practicality of maintaining all of these implications in your current ministry? With which ones do you struggle? Why?

Overall Impressions

- Personally, what impact will the *Ethical Guidelines for DCE* have on you? Is it important for you to have a set standard of guidelines for reference? Does it matter if you are a *rookie* or a *veteran*?
- What kind of accountability needs to be in place for this document to be effective? What might that look like?
- Other comments, reactions, impressions, etc. you would like to pass on to the editorial committee: