

Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest (ACCCNW)

CODE OF CONDUCT

INTRODUCTION

We warmly present this Code of Conduct as a Biblical guide for how the church should optimally interact, communicate, resolve conflict, and serve as a community of faith. Though not exhaustive, it is a roadmap to foster an environment where every individual is embraced, respected, and appreciated for their personalities, talents, and gifts. Though diverse but unified in Jesus Christ, this document aims to nurture our collective growth in harmony with the principles of Scripture, and consequently, each other. **“...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16).**

Though characterized by precept, it represents our collective commitment to mutual edification in faithfulness to God and His holy Word. It outlines our shared beliefs and its practical expression in the church community. By God’s grace, the emphasis is obedience to Scripture, which will bring blessing to the congregation and glory to the Lord’s name. **“...to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:21).**

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Code of Conduct is designed to ensure that our ideals are coherent with Scripture, clearly communicated, understood, and applied. The churches faithfulness, forgiveness, healing, restoration, and joyful Christianity will underscore the blessings of obedience implicit in this statement. **“By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:2-4).**

Adherence to these guidelines signifies our collective responsibility to unity, care for one another, and conflict resolution with wisdom and sensitivity. Foremost, this attitude and action testifies to the church and the world that with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, we love and follow Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. **“...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).**

APPLICATION

This Code of Conduct applies to all within ACCCNW—pastors, elders, ministers, deacons, employees, fellowship and small group leaders, and congregation. Repentance, discipline, and

grace are all biblical concepts. Congregation must consult with relevant party of responsibility and exercise reverent, thoughtful, patient, and loving discernment in taking corrective action. Misconduct may lead to appropriate disciplinary action.

INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

- **Disruptive and Destructive Behavior** Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:12-14; 2 Corinthians 13:11

Staff and congregations create and sustain a positive community. Each congregation abstains from behaviors such as abusive communications, bullying, gossiping, vandalism, cheating, fighting, threatening violence, and intimidating behavior. Such behaviors extend far beyond healthy disagreements and differing opinions.

- **Non-ACCCNW Income/Benefit Generating Personal Business** Colossians 3:23-24; Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:10-12; Proverbs 4:23

Using church resources for personal business not aligned with ACCCNW's mission is not permitted. Given the many nuances of this topic, a more thorough explanation is available in Appendix A.

- **Sexual Immorality** Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 5:3-5; Matthew 19: 4-6; Romans 1:26-27

Staff and congregations are thankful for God's gift of sexual relations within the context of a monogamous, one woman/one man marriage covenant. Scripture teaches that all other sexual activities are disobedient to God, including adultery, pre-marital sexual intimacy. In addition, deriving sexual gratifications(lust) from pornographic media or engaging in unholy communications is prohibited.

- **Non-Fraternization** Proverbs 11:3; Proverbs 27:17; Colossians 1:9-12; II Samuel 11:1-5

Responsible coworkers and mentors have positions of trust and relational power. As such, they may not engage in social engagements of a romantic or sexual nature with congregants or place themselves in situations where moral integrity may be compromised. ACCCNW community seeks to resolutely avoid misuse of staff-congregant trust and/or relational power.

- **Political activities at Church** Romans 13:1-2; Colossians 3:17; Romans 14:19; I Corinthians 10:23

While respectful, nonpartisan discussions are allowed, partisan activities and lobbying are not permitted on church premises or within church-affiliated social media. More details on this important subject are available in Appendix B.

- **Doctrinal Differences and Division** Ephesians 4:1-6, 4:15-16 4:29; Colossians 4:6

ACCCNW recognizes that within our community, congregants may hold diverse theological perspectives. In alignment with our code of conduct, a detailed guideline is available in Appendix C. Ideally, all members of the Body of Christ should be well taught, navigating doctrinal differences with respect, grace, and a commitment to unity.

Unfortunately, the reality is that division often occurs due to several factors: (1) Teaching false doctrine. The truth sets free, and the lie enslaves. History has taught us that heretical teachings divide the church. (2) Despite diverse theological perspectives on secondary issues, some people raise a secondary viewpoint to the level of an essential doctrine. This creates dogmatism and division where none should exist. (3) Lawlessness will increase in the end times: **“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions” (II Timothy 4:3).** (4) Legalism. Some people are principled in thought, but rigid in character, holding to the law, but quenching the Spirit; filled with knowledge, but lacking wisdom.

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me” (John 17:20-21).

- **Youth/Children’s Ministry** Matthew 18:6

For Youth Ministry and Children’s Ministry, we recognize additional guidelines are helpful. Please refer to Appendix D for more details.

- **Divisive Behavior** Titus 3:10-11; John 17:20-21; Romans 16:17-18

Congregations, coworkers, and volunteers are expected to foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding. We encourage open and respectful dialogue that seeks to build bridges, enhance mutual understanding, and strengthen communal bonds. Scripture repeatedly warns Christians about the corrosive influence divisive people have on the church. Church congregations who seek to stir up agitation against fellow church congregations and/or the responsible coworkers must be stopped. Church leaders must be vigilant about correcting those who would seek to cause any division within the church for which Jesus died. Actions or communications that undermine the unity of the community, such as spreading rumors, engaging in slander, or promoting sectarian divisions, are strictly prohibited.

Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest (ACCCNW)

Disciplinary Policy

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish and communicate the guidelines for correcting inappropriate behavior of congregants at ACCCNW (Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest).

2. SCOPE

This document contains ACCCNW's policy for disciplinary action and restoration of church congregation, volunteers, ministry coworkers, deacons, ministers, pastors, or elders who have engaged in inappropriate behavior and are deemed in need of action by the church leadership (PEC). This policy outlines the reasons for, purpose of, and process for church discipline.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

As with all policies, procedures, and other guidelines, it is the responsibility of all ministry leaders to ensure that the details of this policy are known and followed by all ACCCNW staff and ministry volunteers. The primary responsibility for this policy rests with PEC.

4. DEFINITIONS

ACCCNW – Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest

Congregants – Individuals actively and consistently participating in the ACCCNW community, per church bylaw.

JBED – Joint Board of Elders and Deacons

PEC - Pastors and Elders Council

Volunteer – An unsalaried individual who offers to take part in a ministry or undertakes a task for ACCCNW.

5. POLICY ON CHURCH DISCIPLINE

5.1 Description

5.1.1 Church Discipline is the process whereby the PEC of ACCCNW takes action to discipline a congregant's sinful behavior that adversely affects both the individual and the church as a whole.

5.1.2 Scope: In all cases, the model found in the New Testament shall be followed (Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-8, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, James 5:19-20). If a congregant becomes unwilling to place themselves under the authority of the Word of God and God's ordained authority in the church, that congregant shall be disciplined by the church PEC.

5.2 The Purpose of Church Discipline

5.2.1 Though not exhaustive, the Bible teaches there are four main reasons to discipline a church congregant: (1) to protect the church from division; (2) to protect the church from the spread of false teaching; (3) to protect the church from the spread of immoral behavior; (4) to restore the erring church congregant to emotional and spiritual health, and a right fellowship with God.

5.2.2 It must be noted that while the goal is to restore a Christian's fellowship with God, this does not necessarily mean their fellowship with ACCCNW must be restored. In rare cases, it would be better for both the Christian facing church discipline and the disciplining church to have their fellowship with God restored but seek to worship and serve in another church fellowship.

5.3 The Process of Church Discipline

5.3.1 The church discipline process at ACCCNW is based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:15-17: **"If a brother or sister sins, go and point out the fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector."**

5.3.2 *Step One: One on One Confrontation* – This happens when one church congregant confronts another church congregant regarding persistent, unrepentant sin, divisive behavior, and/or aberrant doctrinal teaching. If the confronted church congregant acknowledges and repents of his/her behavior, the goal of the confrontation has been achieved –the matter is considered resolved.

5.3.3 *Step Two: Group Confrontation* – When behavior goes unchecked after a preliminary confrontation, Scripture encourages Christians to escalate the process to involve one or two other Christians. In many cases, when a Christian in error is confronted second times by two or three church authorities, they will understand what others are perceiving of their behavior. This mitigates subjectivity, or isolated perspectives. If after a group confrontation, the church

congregant acknowledges and repents of his/her behavior, the goal of the confrontation has been achieved, and the matter is considered resolved.

5.3.4 Step Three: Church Pastoral/Elder Confrontation (Implementation of Restoration Process) –

Unfortunately, sometimes Christians will not change their persistent, unrepentant sin, divisive behavior, and/or aberrant doctrinal teaching, even after multiple confrontations. When this occurs, PEC steps in to lead the unrepentant church congregant through a detailed restoration process. Before PEC meets with the church congregant in question, a member of the staff will contact and interview those church congregant negatively affected by the church congregant in question. These interviews are documented for the record. At this meeting, the church congregant is asked to acknowledge and repent of their behavior as well as submit to a detailed restoration process. If the church congregant in error submits to and completes the restoration process, the goal of the confrontation has been achieved. The erring Christian has changed his/her behavior, and the matter is considered to be resolved. If a church congregant refuses to participate in the restoration process, PEC will proceed to step four. A refusal to meet with PEC on the part of the church congregant in question will be interpreted as a “refusal to participate in the restoration process.”

5.3.5 Step Four: Removal From All Church Participation –

When a church congregant refuses to acknowledge and repent of his/her behavior to complete the restoration process presented by PEC, they will be disassociated from the church. Under no circumstances will they be allowed to return to any ACCCNW worship service, fellowship meeting, or other church-related activity until they have met again with the PEC and submitted to the restoration process. If a church congregant refuses to complete the restoration process, an official notification will be archived in the church documents; it's also necessary for the pastor to explain the process and action taken to the congregation. All parties affected by the adverse behavior will be personally contacted by PEC. If at a future time the church congregant seeks to come back to the church, even years afterward, the church congregant must first complete the restoration process before being restored to church fellowship.

5.4 Restoration Process

5.4.1

While each restoration will vary according to the circumstances, it will include at least the following:

5.4.2 Initial Meeting –

PEC will meet with the church congregant in question and present him/her with the details of the case against them. If the church congregant acknowledges and repents of their behavior, they will be asked to sign a document outlining their commitment to the following:

5.4.3 Repentance to All Parties Affected – The church congregant will personally ask for forgiveness from everyone he/she has affected by their behavior. A list of people to be contacted will be generated at the initial meeting. PEC will follow up with the affected church congregants to ensure this has transpired.

5.4.4 Probationary Period – The church congregant will be given a probationary period based on the decision of the church PEC whereby the church congregant will not be allowed to serve in any capacity or participate in the Lord's Supper. The church congregant will be allowed to attend church services and participate in a small group, but that is all. The goal is to restore their fellowship with God and rebuild trust within the church. Various books and resources will be recommended to the church congregant as well as avenues for support and counseling. After a period of time, there will be a face-to-face meeting with PEC to examine and discern if restoration conditions have been met. Once restoration is determined, the church congregant will be allowed to serve again and participate in the Lord's Supper.

5.4.5 Leadership Probation – After the probationary period is over, the church congregant may seek to serve, but will not be allowed to assume a leadership role in any area of ministry. A Leadership Probationary Period will be set by approval of PEC, during which the congregant may serve but not assume a leadership role. After the Leadership Probationary period is over, there will be another meeting with PEC. At that time, the church congregant's eligibility will be considered for leadership roles. The PEC will then recommend this to JBED for approval.

5.4.6 Confidentiality Acknowledgement – During and following the disciplinary process, all relevant parties including the church congregant in question, affected parties, and relevant staff and volunteers understand and acknowledge they will receive confidential information pertaining to the background, activities, and personal information of the congregant. Relevant parties further acknowledge that disclosure of such Confidential information may be a betrayal of trust and damaging to ACCCNW congregation and/or ACCCNW.

5.4.7 Confidentiality Procedure - Relevant parties will adhere to the following: Not disclose or discuss Confidential Information with others not authorized to receive it. Use reasonable means to protect and prevent the disclosure of Confidential Information, whether oral or written. Confidential Information should only be used in connection with the Church ministry; an individual may disclose Confidential Information to Pastor(s), Elder(s), Deacon(s), and specific congregation(s) of ACCCNW that are involved in this process, or as indicated by PEC.

Appendix A: Non-ACCCNW Income/Benefit-Generating Personal Business

Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest (ACCCNW) prioritizes its mission to serve the community and spread the Gospel above all. To maintain the integrity and focus of this mission, it's essential to have clear guidelines on personal business activities within and related to the ACCCNW community.

- **Facility and Resource Usage:** Facilities and equipment of ACCCNW are designated solely for supporting the church's mission. Utilizing these resources for any personal income-generating or benefit-creating activities is strictly prohibited. This includes leveraging church premises, equipment, or digital platforms (emails and social media accounts associated with ACCCNW) for such purposes.
- **Prohibited Activities:** The sale of products or services, participation in multi-level marketing sales, or any similar activities targeting parishioners within church facilities or during church-related functions is expressly forbidden. This policy is set to avoid potential conflicts of interest and keep the focus of church gatherings on spiritual growth and community support.
- **Guidance on Interactions:** Community congregations are advised to practice caution in their personal business dealings to avoid any perceptions of exploiting church relationships for financial gain. Proactively offering business services or products to fellow parishioners, whether inside or outside church facilities or functions, is discouraged to maintain trust and unity within the church community.
- **Expectation of Conduct:** ACCCNW expects all congregations, staff, and volunteers to adhere to the highest standards of integrity, avoiding any actions that might be seen as using their church position or relationships for personal financial advantage. This includes refraining from soliciting business or promoting personal business ventures in any church-related setting.

Appendix B: Political Activities at ACCCNW

Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest (ACCCNW) acknowledges the importance of engaging in civic duties and staying informed on political matters. However, given the potential for politics to create division within our community, especially during election years, ACCCNW sets forth the following guidelines to maintain unity and focus on our shared mission of worship and service.

- **Neutral Ground:** ACCCNW is committed to providing a neutral ground where congregations can come together in worship and fellowship, irrespective of their political affiliations. As such, openly supporting one political candidate or party over another within church premises, functions, or through church-affiliated communication channels, including email or any social media, is not allowed.
- **Communication and Conduct:** We urge congregations to refrain from sending messages or posts that promote any political candidate or party on platforms associated with or widely used by our church community. Our collective communication should reflect our primary commitment to spreading the Gospel and fostering unity among believers.
- **Pulpit Guidelines:** While ACCCNW remains steadfast in preaching God's Word from the pulpit, it is crucial that such teachings are not used to endorse political candidates or parties implicitly or explicitly. The content of sermons and church teachings will focus on biblical principles, spiritual growth, and community service, avoiding political partisanship.
- **Conversations with Wisdom:** Recognizing the diversity of political opinions within our congregation, we advise congregations to approach political discussions with wisdom, love, and respect for differing viewpoints. Conversations should aim to build up, not divide, ensuring that love remains the guiding principle in all interactions.
- **Encouragement for Civic Engagement:** While discouraging partisanship within the church, ACCCNW encourages its community to be informed and engaged citizens outside the church context. Participating in the democratic process, including voting and civil discourse, is an important aspect of our civic duty, provided it is done with biblical conviction, discernment, and respect for others.

ACCCNW is dedicated to preserving a spirit of unity and love within our church family, recognizing that our shared faith in Christ transcends political affiliations. By adhering to these guidelines, we

aim to ensure that our community remains a place of support, encouragement, and spiritual growth for all congregants, regardless of their political views.

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Appendix C: Guidelines for Respectful Dialogue on Doctrinal Differences

Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest (ACCCNW) recognizes that within our community, congregants may hold diverse theological perspectives. Our essential doctrinal positions are written in the Statement of Faith under ACCCNW by-laws. In alignment with our code of conduct, we provide the following guidelines to navigate doctrinal differences with respect, grace, and a commitment to unity:

- **Primary and Secondary Doctrines:** ACCCNW distinguishes between primary doctrines, which are essential to the Christian faith, and secondary doctrines, which are important, yet not essential for salvation. We affirm that salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is a core tenet that unites us. We further identify other core doctrines in our Statement of Faith. All other items are considered “secondary doctrines,” and they should be approached with humility and respect for differing beliefs. In essential beliefs, we seek unity. In non-essential beliefs, we uphold liberty, and in all things, we practice charity. While agreement on essentials is necessary for church unity, non-essentials should be approached with grace and sensitivity.
- **Attitude in Disagreement:** Our attitude in discussions should reflect love, patience, and humility. Disagreements should not be a source of division but an opportunity for edification and mutual growth. We aim to emulate Ephesians 4:29-32, speaking only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, and forgiving as we have been forgiven in Christ.
- **Mediated Dialogue:** When disagreements arise, sincere and respectful dialogue is encouraged. If differences intensify, it is recommended to conduct a conversation in the presence of a mediator such as a pastor, elder, or deacon. This third-party objectivity helps facilitate understanding and reconciliation. All parties are encouraged to actively listen and engage the discussion with an intent to find common ground or agree to disagree amicably.
- **Conduct in Community:** We commit to ensuring that our interactions, especially regarding doctrinal differences, are characterized by kindness and gracious dialogue. Although the focus is on our shared faith and mission, our community is a place where all should feel welcome, valued, and heard.

By incorporating these guidelines into our code of conduct, ACCCNW upholds a community of faith that is nurturing, respectful, and united, even in the presence of diverse theological views.

Appendix D: Additional Guidelines for Youth and Children's Programs

Atlanta Chinese Christian Church Northwest (ACCCNW) values the safety, well-being, and spiritual growth of our young congregations. Both the Youth Ministry and the Children's Ministry have established Handbooks for their respective ministries. While the handbooks provide much more details, the following summarizes key conduct expectations for all individuals when engaging with youth and children's ministries:

- **Appropriate Conduct:** All interactions with children and youth should reflect Christ's love and compassion, maintaining the highest standards of professionalism, courtesy, and respect.
- **Sexual Behavior/Physical Contact:** No physical contact with sexual intent is permitted at youth and children program activities. Other behavior that does not involve physical contact, such as suggestive or sexual comments, displaying sexual materials, or exposing sexual body parts, is also prohibited. Ministry activities should be conducted in a public and observable setting.
- **Privacy:** Adults must respect the privacy of children and youth, particularly in situations that involve personal care or changing of attire and should provide assistance only when it is absolutely necessary for the child's safety.
- **Communication:** Engage with children and youth positively and suitably for their maturity. We encourage a principle of open communication where any correspondence (including digital) with children and youth could be shared with or viewed by their parents without concern. This openness ensures that interactions are above reproach and align with the values and ethical standards of ACCCNW.
- **Abstinence from Alcohol:** In a youth or children program or event, adult co-workers will abstain from drinking alcohol in the presence of youths/children and will lead an exemplary life in alcoholic related issues.
- **Gifts:** Co-workers shall not give personal gifts or money to an individual youth or child without first notifying the parents or another counselor. Gifts to entire classes or groups are acceptable.
- **Transportation:** When transporting minors for church-related activities, safety is paramount. Authorized adults must ensure proper permissions, follow all safety

regulations, and avoid being alone with a minor of the opposite sex unless consented to by the minor's parent or guardian.

- **Reporting:** Suspicions or allegations of child abuse or inappropriate conduct must be reported immediately to the designated church authorities. ACCCNW is committed to responding swiftly and appropriately to all reports in compliance with legal requirements.

This appendix serves as a reminder and affirmation of our collective responsibility to create a safe and nurturing environment for the spiritual growth and development of our children and youth. All actions must be established in accordance with the broader principles outlined in ACCCNW's Code of Conduct, and where applicable, in accordance with Georgia state law.

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