

# CODE OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT:

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WHY EVERY MINISTRY NEEDS ONE



ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

MINISTRY ALLIANCE

A LEGAL RESOURCE FROM ADF MINISTRY ALLIANCE



Our nation is in a time of cultural unrest. Changes in culture are leading to changes in law, and those changes may affect your ministry.

Indeed, ministries like yours are facing a challenging legal landscape that threatens their ability to serve and carry out their mission. For instance, in some states, ministries are coming under scrutiny for aligning employment practices with biblical principles they expect their employees to live by.

Your ministry should be proactive in preparing for such scrutiny. One of the ways to do this is by adopting a Code of Christian Conduct. This code should be grounded in your ministry's Statement of Faith and establish parameters for acceptable behavior for all employees, teachers, administrators, campers, students, etc.



## **WHAT SHOULD MY MINISTRY'S CHRISTIAN CODE OF CONDUCT INCLUDE?**

The code should address a variety of behaviors related to the ministry's particular context. While the level of detail and specific types of conduct addressed will vary from organization to organization, ministries are encouraged to address issues of marriage and sexuality given that they are current cultural issues. Make clear that the ministry believes God established marriage as being between one man and one woman and that He immutably creates each person as either male or female. Also make clear that your ministry expects employees, volunteers, students, campers, etc. to conform their conduct and dress to reflect these beliefs. Cite the organization's Statement on Marriage and Sexuality to highlight why this conduct is biblically required.

Finally, include a warning that the ministry has the right to discipline or ask an employee, volunteer, camper, student, etc. to withdraw for any reason, and that failure to comply with expected standards of conduct will subject the individual to potential disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion or dismissal.



## CASE STUDY

### ***SEATTLE'S UNION GOSPEL MISSION V. WOODS***

Take a look at the introduction to Seattle's Union Gospel Mission's Statement of Faith:

“As a non-profit Christian ministry, Seattle's Union Gospel Mission bases its work on the teachings of Jesus Christ. We take seriously His command to feed hungry people, clothe those who are naked, and provide shelter for those who are homeless. We consistently combine our faith with action by serving those in greatest need regardless of their religious beliefs, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity.”

The Mission, which opened during the Great Depression as a soup kitchen, exists to live out the Greatest Commandments of loving God and others as well as the Great Commission to make disciples. Today, the Mission serves its homeless neighbors by providing food, shelter, addiction-recovery, job placement, and legal services, among other things.

Everything the Mission does is designed to share the Gospel message—and the Mission makes this clear in its Statement of Faith, which is publicly available on its website. The Mission’s Code of Christian Conduct also clarifies that every staff member must live out those beliefs and share the Gospel with the people they serve.

Unfortunately, the Washington Supreme Court ruled against the Mission when it declined to hire a lawyer for its legal-aid clinic who refused to follow the Mission’s religious-lifestyle requirements and was not active in a local church and so he could not give his pastor’s name and contact information (as the Mission required). The lawyer disagreed with the Mission’s beliefs and applied for the position hoping to change those beliefs. The Court’s decision violates the Mission’s religious liberty and independence.

While the Mission is still involved in a legal battle, it had taken the three essential steps to prepare before the battle began by:

- 1 Clearly **communicating** its beliefs
- 2 Creating **core documents** memorializing its beliefs and practices
- 3 **Consistently applying** the core documents to all aspects of the ministry, including employment



## IS YOUR MINISTRY PREPARED FOR A CHALLENGE TO ITS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY?

Today, it is not a question of *if* ministries will be threatened or sued for standing true to God's Word—the question is solely *when* and *where* such cases will arise.

The Alliance Defending Freedom team created the ADF Ministry Alliance membership so you can get the religious liberty legal help you need when you need it. We prepare, advise, and even represent ministries, when necessary and appropriate, because we desire to see your ministry flourish.

By standing together and proactively preparing and protecting one another, we can bring more glory to God through our ministries.





## AS A MINISTRY ALLIANCE MEMBER, WE CAN HELP YOUR MINISTRY IN FOUR KEY WAYS:

- **DOCUMENT REVIEW:** We'll review your governing documents from a religious liberty perspective to help ensure your ministry has the greatest religious freedom legal protections possible.
- **ACCESS TO ATTORNEYS:** When religious liberty-related questions or threats arise, you can consult directly with an attorney.
- **LEGAL RESOURCES:** Stay on top of trending news and laws impacting ministries with access to legal resources.
- **LEGAL REPRESENTATION:** Should your ministry ever face a religious liberty threat, we will represent your ministry in court, when necessary and appropriate, at no additional cost.

### ARE YOU READY TO JOIN?

Complete your application today by visiting  
[ADFMinistryAlliance.org/signupform](https://ADFMinistryAlliance.org/signupform).

It takes less than five minutes!

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# MINISTRY ALLIANCE



ADFMinistryAlliance.org  
833-ADF-ALLY  
MinistryAlliance@ADFlegal.org

The information included in this guide is designed to be an educational resource and does not constitute legal advice. For specific questions or legal issues related to religious freedom, we encourage you to contact us directly.