

# Code of Conduct

for the Prevention of Sexual and Spiritual Abuse

31 October 2024

## Introduction

This Code of Conduct sets out the expectations and obligations of all members of the Bethlehem Mission Society SMB in order to create a safe, respectful and supportive environment for everyone, in particular for vulnerable persons. This Code is in accord with the spirituality of Bethlehem and with our common purpose of preventing sexual and spiritual abuse.

## Principles of Conduct

- **Preservation of Dignity:** All members are obliged to respect and protect the dignity and rights of every individual.
- **Safety:** Every member has the responsibility to create a safe environment in which everyone can feel secure and respected.
- **Transparency:** Openness in communication and in conduct is decisive for fostering trust both outside and within the community.

## Rules of Conduct

- **Appropriate Interactions:** Contact with any person, and in particular with vulnerable persons, must be respectful, professional and appropriate. Physical contact should take place only in a safe context and in accordance with the agreed guidelines.
- **Avoidance of the Abuse of Power:** All members must be aware that their position and influence must not be exploited. Power relationships must always be shaped transparently and fairly.
- **Respect for Boundaries:** The personal boundaries of all persons, and in particular of vulnerable persons, must be respected at all times. This includes physical, emotional and spiritual boundaries.
- **Reporting of Suspected Cases:** All members are obliged to report any conduct or sign of abuse immediately, without fear of reprisal. Suspicions must be taken seriously and pursued.
- **Protection of Privacy:** The privacy of all persons, including vulnerable persons, must be respected. Information about them may only be shared in an appropriate and necessary context.

## Dealing with Vulnerable Persons

- **Sensitivity and Empathy:** Members of the Society are urged to show empathy and understanding in their dealings with vulnerable persons and to take their needs seriously.

- **Required Training:** All members who work directly with vulnerable persons must take part in regular training, in order to improve their skills in this area and to keep informed about current preventive measures.

## Responsibilities of Leadership

- **Role Model Function:** Leaders are urged to act as role models and to actively implement the guidelines. They are responsible for fostering a culture of safety and respect.
- **Support and Guidance:** Leaders must provide support and guidance to ensure that all members understand and apply the Code of Conduct.

## Consequences of Violations

- **Examination of Accusations:** In the event of a violation of this Code of Conduct, all accusations are taken seriously and investigated without delay.
- **Disciplinary Measures:** Depending on the severity of the violation, disciplinary measures may be taken, up to and including exclusion from the Society.

## Review and Updates

- **Regular Evaluation:** This Code of Conduct is reviewed regularly and updated as needed, to ensure that it corresponds to current standards and to the needs of the community.
- **Feedback Culture:** Members of the Society are encouraged to give feedback and to make suggestions for improving the guidelines and procedures.

## Declaration of Commitment

I commit myself to the Bethlehem Mission Society (SMB) to conduct myself in accordance with this Code, in particular on the following three points:

- I respect and protect the sexual, psychological and physical integrity of children, adolescents and adults. I do not tolerate boundary violations or sexual assault.
- I report to the Independent Coordination Officer for sexual misconduct within the SMB whenever I am affected by, or become aware of, suspected boundary violations or sexual assault. As a victim, I and my relatives also have access to the State victim-support services.
- In the case of conduct presumed to be criminal, I file a report with the Independent Coordination Officer, who is also responsible for ensuring that a complaint is filed with the public prosecutor. In addition to reporting to the Independent Coordination Officer, I may also file a complaint with the police. I understand that a complaint filed with these authorities cannot be withdrawn.

Place and date: \_\_\_\_\_



Surname, first name: \_\_\_\_\_

Function: \_\_\_\_\_

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

