

Truro Diocesan Guild of Ringers Membership Code of Conduct

1. Purpose

1.1 A document to be used to formalise the processes the Guild can use to resolve issues, conflicts or breaches rules to enable it, and it's membership to carry out the 'Object' and 'Powers' of the Guild

- Encouraging members to ring for services and on other appropriate occasions;
- Promoting good fellowship amongst ringers of all traditions;
- Supporting bands in the recruitment, retention and training of ringers;
- Helping members to achieve a high standard of ringing;
- Promoting the installation, augmentation, care and restoration of rings of bells and their fittings; and
- Furthering an appreciation of bells and bell ringing amongst the general public.

2. Application

2.1 This code will apply to all members of the Guild and relates to their conduct and behaviour whilst acting in a Guild member capacity.

2.2 The Code does not relate to standards of ringing other than with respect to members' safety.

2.3 The Code will act as a reference in circumstances where the conduct of a member raises concerns and the potential application of some kind of response from the Guild; for instance informal or formal encouragement for improvement or temporary or permanent exclusion from membership or removal from office.

2.4 Any issue associated with safeguarding must be undertaken in accordance with relevant safeguarding procedures of the Church of England. Issues referred to the Guild will be taken up with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

2.5 Members are obliged to follow Canon Law when entering a church and as such the ultimate jurisdiction is that of the incumbent and churchwardens.

3. Principles

- 3.1 Members are expected to support the object of the Guild and its powers and not actively undermine or subvert any of those values. Nevertheless, it is recognised that Guild values should be subject to scrutiny in a manner consistent with Guild rules and this Code of Conduct.
- 3.2 The Guild considers that good relations between members will assist the Guild to meet its aspirations.
- 3.3 The Guild recognises that disagreements will occur from time to time and that such dissonance can often be positive, aid communication and help the Guild make progress toward fulfilling its objectives. However, the Guild expects its members to manage such disagreement in a respectful manner for instance through the criticism of ideas rather than individuals.
- 3.4 The Guild is particularly concerned to ensure that high standards of conduct, as set out in this code, are maintained by members in all environments including social media.

4. Expected standard of conduct and behaviour

- 4.1 The Guild expects its members to maintain the following standards:
 - To act lawfully at all times when undertaking activities as Guild members.
 - To support the objectives and rules of the Truro Diocesan Guild of Ringers (TDGR) or, if a member feels they can be improved upon, constructively suggest changes to them in accordance with Guild rules.
 - To ring in a safe and responsible manner, following both Guild and Church Health and Safety requirements.
 - To be hospitable and welcoming to others at any event associated with Guild ringing.
 - To promote good fellowship amongst bell-ringers and those with whom they interact, for instance church incumbents and officials and residents who hear bells being rung.
 - Not to bully, intimidate or harass others and to report or condemn such behaviour if ever witnessed.
 - To abide by, and uphold, legislation and formal guidance provided by, or adopted by, the Guild. In particular that relating to;
 - Safeguarding
 - Health and Safety
 - Data Protection
 - Discrimination

- Social media use

5. Misconduct, Process and Application of Sanctions

- 5.1 The aim of the Code of Conduct is to foster good conduct and therefore sanctions applied should serve to encourage and support in the first instance rather than condemn.
- 5.2 Misconduct is defined as a breach of any of the 'Expected standard of conduct and behaviour' outlined in Section 4 above or breach of Guild rules. Gross misconduct is defined as misconduct so serious as to fundamentally break the relationship between member and Guild. Examples include; perpetrating a criminal offence associated with Guild activities, serious and clear disregard for Guild rules on safeguarding and health and safety, clearly and unambiguously acting in such a way as to directly and seriously damage the Guild's reputation or assets.
- 5.3 The following **sanctions** may be applied according to the severity and frequency of misconduct;
- A written warning for first misconduct or series of minor misconducts that work against the Guild objectives and/or doing damage to the reputation or assets of the Guild. To stay in effect for 1 year.
 - Permanent withdrawal of membership and/or Office for continued behaviour that is clearly contrary to the interests of the Guild. The original decision for the permanent withdrawal of membership will be subject to a three year review by the Guild. In cases where 'withdrawal' is lifted, re-election to membership is required.
 - Any other sanction deemed fair and proportionate by the Standing Committee.
- 5.4 The following **sanction** may be applied in cases of gross misconduct:
- Permanent withdrawal of membership and/or Office for gross misconduct (including a first instance). Any permanent withdrawal of membership will be subject to a three year review by the Guild. In cases where 'withdrawal' is lifted, re-election to membership is required.
- 5.5 The following **processes** will be followed in the event of a reported breach of this code;
- The President, Secretary or Safeguarding Officer must receive a letter of complaint or allegation in writing.

- Three members of the TDGR to be appointed by the President (but not including the President) to consider allegations of misconduct. The President should appoint persons that are independent of the situation and person concerned. Normally one member of this inquiry group should be from the same district of the Guild as that of the member under scrutiny. One of the three to be appointed Chair.
- Both the group and respondent can seek legal advice.
- The group may seek the involvement of others such as the Diocese or Police.
- For matters that are unlikely to lead to a permanent withdrawal of membership:
 - The inquiry group is free to adopt whatever approach it thinks fit within the Guild rules, this Code of Conduct and the rules of natural justice. For instance to avoid the unnecessary embarrassment of the person under scrutiny it may be deemed better that one member of the group be assigned to collect evidence and in particular to speak with the member. The subject will have the right to speak to the three members together if he/she so wishes but normally the process, unless serious, should be conducted in as informal and friendly way as possible.
 - At all times the member will be accorded the right to be accompanied by another member.
 - If, after consideration by the group, the sanction is to be a written warning the decision may be given directly, a letter drafted by the inquiry group and passed to the member within 7 days and the matter closed. The Standing Committee will be advised of the outcome.
- If it becomes apparent to the group (at any stage) that the allegations could lead to a permanent withdrawal of membership then the inquiry group will adopt a more formal approach:
 - The group will hear evidence from:
 - The claimant and circumstances of the complaint.
 - Any other members or in some cases non-members.
 - Written statements and evidence will be collected and a copy provided to the respondent subject to the claim. The group will invite the respondent to make his or her representations at a hearing. At least 2 weeks-notice of the hearing will be given.

- The respondent may only be accompanied at the hearing by another member.
 - In the respondent's absence the hearing may still proceed.
- If, after consideration by the inquiry group, the recommended sanction is more severe than a written warning, the Standing Committee will be advised and a two-thirds majority of the Standing Committee will be required for any imposition of the recommended sanction. They may also substitute a different sanction (or no sanction) from that recommended by the inquiry group.
- The complainant and respondent subject to the complaint will be informed of the outcome in writing.
- In all cases where a sanction is applied, the member in question shall have the right of appeal. Appeals must be lodged with the President within fourteen days of receipt of the sanction applied.
- Appeals will be heard by an Appeals Panel normally with two months of receipt of an appeal. The President will chair such an appeal with two further trustees of the Guild not previously involved in the case appointed by the President. Appeals panel members will not be members of the same district as the member in question.
- The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the member in question as soon as is reasonably possible. No further appeal will be allowed.
- In the event that the President is the subject of misconduct all appointments, notifications and decisions made by the President will be delegated to the Guild Secretary.

6. Acknowledgement

- 6.1 The Guild acknowledges reference to the ANZAB Tower Stewardship Handbook 2007 (compiled by Christopher O' Mahony) and the Lincolnshire Diocesan Guild Code of Conduct (authored by Chris Sharp).