

Code of Conduct

The Lincoln Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers

1. Introduction

The issue of setting and communicating standards is important in at least two respects. Firstly the Guild should be rightly concerned about the conduct of its members which may impact positively or negatively on the reputation and success of the Guild. Therefore it is essential and right and proper that the Guild in turn communicates to its members what it expects from them in this respect. Secondly, if the Guild decides that it should respond in circumstances where its standards have not been met (and in some cases apply some kind of sanction), then it is essential that it has defined the standards of conduct it requires.

2. Application

- 1) This Code will apply to all resident members of the LDG including those non-ringing members elected under rule 2d.
- 2) The Code relates to the conduct of members. It attempts to set parameters of expected conduct and behaviour for the guidance of members, tower captains and officials of the guild.
- 3) The Code does not relate to standards of ringing other than with respect to members' safety.
- 4) 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 to improvement or temporary or permanent exclusion from membership or removal from office.
- 5) Any issue associated with safeguarding must be undertaken in accordance with relevant safeguarding procedures of the Church of England. Issues referred to the Guild should be taken up with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. Any safeguarding matter emanating from the church should be dealt with confidentially by Guild Officers as appropriate.

3. Principles

- 1) All members and officers are expected to follow and comply with the advice provided by the Guild and by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR) particularly that provided through the Tower Stewardship Committee in the form of Guidance Notes all summarised in

their guide entitled 'Ringing within the Community and the Law' available on the CCCBR website.

- 2) Members are expected to support the objectives of the Guild and not actively undermine or subvert any of those objectives. Nevertheless, it is recognised that Guild objectives should be subject to scrutiny in a manner consistent with Guild rules and this Code of Conduct.
- 3) The Guild considers that good relations between members will assist the Guild to meet its aspirations.
- 4) 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.
- 5) The Guild expects members to act lawfully at all times when undertaking activities as Guild members.
- 6) The Guild is particularly concerned to ensure that high standards of conduct, as set out in this code, are maintained by members when utilising social media.

4. Expected standard of behaviour

The Guild expects its members to maintain the following standards.

- 1) Support the objectives of the Lincoln Diocesan Guild or, if a member feels they can be improved upon, constructively try to change them in accordance with Guild rules.
- 2) Ring in a safe and responsible manner.
- 3) Be hospitable and welcoming to others in the belfry and at any event associated with ringing.
- 4) Encourage harmony and good fellowship amongst bellringers and those with whom bellringers interact, for instance church incumbents and officials and residents who hear bells being rung.
- 5) Do not bully, intimidate or harass others and report or condemn such behaviour if ever witnessed.
- 6) Abide by, and uphold, legislation and formal guidance provided by the Central Council of Church Bellringers and the Guild. In particular that relating to;
 - i. Safeguarding
 - ii. Health and Safety
 - iii. Data Protection
 - iv. Discrimination.
 - v. Social media use
- 7) Ensure that all the above standards are maintained in all environments including when utilizing social media.

5. Application of Sanctions

- 1) The primary aim of the Code of Conduct is to foster good conduct. It follows that for less serious and first indiscretions the 'sanction' applied should serve to encourage and support rather than condemn.
- 2) Associated with the disciplinary process described below the follow **sanctions** may be applied according to the severity of misconduct;
 - i. A 'friendly warning' for first offence or series of minor infringements of Guild rules or behaviour that works against the Guild objectives and/or doing damage to the reputation of the Guild. To stay in effect for 1 year.
 - ii. Permanent withdrawal of membership for continued behaviour that is clearly contrary to the interests of the Guild as described above. Permanent withdrawal of membership would also be applied for a gross misconduct at first offence. Any permanent withdrawal of membership will be subject to a five year review by the Guild.
 - iii. A 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.
 - iv. For any given misdemeanor, any of the above sanctions can be considered.
- 3) The following **processes** will be followed in the event of a reported breach of this code ;
 - i. Three members of the Guild Committee be appointed by the Master (but not including the Master) to consider allegations of misconduct. Normally one member of this inquiry group should be from the same branch of the Guild as that of the member under scrutiny. One of the three to be appointed Chair.
 - ii. The group will hear evidence from the subject and from other members or in some cases non-members and will invite the subject to make his or her representations before the group decide on what action to take.
 - iii. The 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.

- iv. The group will report their findings to the Guild Committee.
- v. In cases where the group determine that a friendly warning be given, they have authority to apply the sanction reporting retrospectively to the Guild Committee.
- vi. Where a more serious sanction is determined, the group will report to the Guild Committee. In such cases, it is likely that an extraordinary meeting of the Guild Committee will be required. The proposed action will require a two-thirds majority at the Guild Committee who may also substitute a different sanction (or no sanction) from that recommended by the group.
- vii. In all cases where a sanction is applied, the member in question shall have the right of appeal. Appeals must be lodged with the Master of the Guild within fourteen days of receipt of the sanction applied.
- viii. Appeals will be heard by an Appeals Panel normally with two months of receipt of an appeal. The President of the Guild will chair such an appeal with two further senior members of the Guild not previously involved in the case appointed by the Master. Appeals panel members will also not be members of the Branch to which the member in question is affiliated.
- ix. 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 so the decision of the Guild will be final.
- x. In the event that the subject of discipline is the Guild Master, all appointments to the Appeals Panel will be made by the President who may consult with the Secretary and or Treasurer.

6. Acknowledgement

The Guild acknowledges reference to the ANZAB Tower Stewardship Handbook 2007 (compiled by Christopher O' Mahony) and the Central Council Tower Stewardship Committee Guides.

Lincoln Diocesan Guild Committee (author Chris Sharp)

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