

## Confidentiality Policy

As Church leaders (elders, ministers, staff, counseling volunteers), we welcome and encourage members and friends to come to us with spiritual, emotional, and relational struggles. We want you to know that we will treat your struggles with caring and respect, and we will hold in confidence our discussions. However, the promise of confidentiality has limits that you should be aware of from the outset of any conversation. Legally, we have a responsibility to speak to others in authority if we learn that (1) you pose a threat to yourself or others, or (2) there is sexual or physical abuse of a minor or a vulnerable adult (physically or mentally handicapped, or an elderly person) involved. Conscientiously, as leaders of the church we also feel a responsibility to speak to others to ensure that we are providing the kind of care and support that will be in your best interest.

Please understand that, while we will never gossip or speak lightly of any member, we do feel a responsibility to do the following when hurting people come to us for help:

1. We will talk to at least two of our fellow elders or ministers to get their advice and counsel and solicit their prayers. There are situations – when the issues are serious enough and could affect the whole church – when conversations will be shared with the elders as a whole.
2. When other people at this church are involved (e.g., when relationships are broken, when there is anger or disappointment, when gossip is involved), we will approach those other people in an effort to get both sides of the story and to foster reconciliation. We will not listen to stories involving others without talking to those people.
3. When we are made aware of a struggle that someone else in the congregation has experienced and overcome, we may well speak to that person and enlist their wisdom and help in dealing with your struggle. The church offers many resources for healing. Keeping your secrets is not our first priority. Helping you find healing is.

We don't want the fear of exposure to keep you from approaching one of us. But, neither do we want the promise of absolute confidentiality to tie our hands in offering you our best help. If you have something that cannot be shared with anyone else in the church, let us help you find a Christian professional counselor who can honor your request for confidentiality. But if you can honor us with your struggle, know that we will work with you – discreetly and carefully – to provide the best help your church family has to offer.