



### **Importance of Confidentiality in the Call Process:**

During the call process, confidentiality is stressed as an important part of the interview process. However, sometimes, congregations feel that confidentiality is like secrecy and question the need for confidentiality. What is the difference between confidentiality and secrecy in the call process?

Secrecy often implies concealment and lack of transparency. Confidentiality **is the ethical responsibility to honor privileged information and to share that information only in the appropriate context.** Open and honest communication are encouraged throughout the call process between the council, congregation, call committee and the candidates being interviewed. Information can and should be openly shared about the timeline and process of the call process as it progresses. Yet, we ask for respect and confidentiality when handing the sensitive information such as an interviewing pastor or deacon's name and identity and other identifying information. More information can actually be shared about the call process such as the timeline or, what stage the call committee is at in its interviewing than the limited information that needs to be honored and kept confidential.

We stress confidentiality in the call process in order to protect the current ministry of a pastor or deacon. Sometimes pastors and deacons interview yet choose to remain in their current congregation. Sometimes a pastor or deacon may interview for a year or two before finding the right call. If a congregation early in the interview process breaks confidentiality, it may lead to the pastor or deacon needing to leave their current call earlier than intended for a call that is not a good match for the rostered leader or congregation. Ministry is a highly relational vocation and call. Honoring confidentiality in the call process protects the current ministry of pastors and deacons while they discern where God is calling them next. Honoring the confidentiality of the process can also build trust between the pastor and new congregation, helping the new pastor get off to a good start.

Sometimes call committees and councils ask us, "So what can we share with the congregation and other people who are interested?" **Examples of what can be shared include:**

The council can announce: "We are currently looking to appoint a transition team and call committee. Please contact us with any questions."

The call committee can make announcements at worship, such as: "We are in our first round of interviews with 3 candidates" or "We have had a hard time finding candidates who are a good match. Please continue to be patient."

The call committee should transparently communicate with the council in a similar way, such as: "We have 2 candidates that we will be bringing to interview in person in two weeks."

The call committee can be transparent with the candidates, including statements like: "We are interviewing 2 more candidates. We will let you know our next steps in two weeks."

At the congregational call vote, the call committee and council can share the candidate's full identity.

**Examples of what should NOT be shared:**

Candidate's name, age, gender, and current ministry setting.

**Good practices that preserve confidentiality:**

The name or identifying characteristics of a candidate are not to be shared beyond the call committee without the candidate's permission until the congregational vote. Information can be shared about the candidate's strengths and gifts that the call committee sees in them.

Call paperwork, the RMP, should be kept in a location that is private. Paperwork should be disposed of once a candidate has either withdrawn or been released by a congregation. We expect that call paperwork, especially the RMP, is not shared between congregations.

Call committees may look at internet resources about a candidate. Please do not forward those resources to council or congregation members.