

MCC Newcastle Confidentiality Policy – September 2008

Friendship Care

At MCC Newcastle we seek to care for each other as all true friends would do. In doing so, we expect everyone in the Church to respect the rights and freedom of other people and to take personal responsibility for their own words and actions – see the policy on Direct Dealing.

As friends, we will sometimes receive information in confidence. We must always respect such confidences, but sometimes we may find that it would be wrong to keep this information to ourselves. This is most likely to happen, if the information indicates that someone may be in danger, including the person giving the information. We must make it very clear to anyone who gives information in confidence if we find that it would be wrong to keep this to ourselves.

Pastoral Care

MCC Newcastle recognises that many people who are part of our life and ministry expect us to provide more formal opportunities for them to unburden themselves. We try to support people who come along to us and to provide pastoral care. However we are not trained counsellors. We will provide the details of a professional counselling service to anyone who feels, or whom we feel, may benefit from counselling.

In providing pastoral support within the Church, those in positions of Church leadership will always respect the confidentiality of any pastoral relationship. But we cannot give an absolute guarantee that such conversations are confidential. Matters discussed with a Church leader in a pastoral context are confidential to that leader and to the Pastor. Matters cannot remain confidential from the Pastor, so as to prevent people from playing leaders off against each other and to ensure that the Pastor is fully aware of situations as they arise within the Church.

From time to time someone may ask a member of the Church leadership to keep certain information confidential from the Pastor and/or other leaders. No matter how well-intentioned, such a course of action always runs the risk of undermining the Church's pastoral ministry. For this reason, no undertaking should ever be given which actively or passively allows specific information to be kept confidential from the Pastor.

Church leaders will not keep confidential any information which indicates that people are a danger to themselves or others. If a member of the leadership feels that it would be inappropriate to keep in confidence any information which indicates a person is a danger to her/himself or others, s/he will make this very clear to the person concerned.

Members of the Board and other Church leaders will find it particularly challenging at times to discern whether people are approaching them as personal friends or as leaders of the Church. It is essential that all Church leaders draw this distinction for the wider well-being of the Church and for their personal accountability to the Board. It is advisable for any Church leader who feels that a pastoral issue of an individual raises a potential conflict between personal friendship with this or any other person involved and their loyalty to Church to refer the issue to another Church leader. Any Church leader who experiences difficulty in drawing this distinction in particular circumstances should approach the Pastor for guidance.

The Board

It is never appropriate for a Board Director to keep confidential from other members of the Board a Church issue that does not relate to a pastoral relationship. Phrases such as: "people are

saying....," or "I'm not allowed to name names....," are directly contrary to the principles of Direct Dealing. It is always the responsibility of a Director who receives such information to indicate, at the very beginning of the conversation, that they will inform any third party of the claims being made, that they will name the speaker of whatever they hear, and they will expect that speaker to substantiate their claims.

MCC Newcastle will follow the principle that mature leaders of the church do not allow themselves to be channels for unattributable antagonism, in order to avoid joining in a potential antagonist's campaign.