

MRBC Confidentiality Policy

- *The church's policy on confidentiality sits alongside our data protection and safeguarding policies. It addresses how we handle confidential information that is not written down.*
- *A guiding principle is that the privacy of individuals, whether church members or others we have dealings with, must be respected at all times.*
- *There is also the teaching of Scripture such as in verses like Matthew 18:15-17, about not criticising fellow Christians behind their backs, which is covered in the document 'Maintaining healthy church relationships' (14th September 2004).*

1. Church membership has its responsibilities as well as its privileges. By agreeing to join the church, members are consenting to be subject to church disciplines.

2. In practice, this means that the behaviour of individual members may be discussed amongst the leadership of the church, and in extreme cases, at a Church Meeting. This does mean, however, that leaders (or members, in the case of a Church Meeting) should not discuss what has been shared in confidence with anyone outside that meeting.

3. If members share confidences with church leaders, there can be no guarantee that these confidences will never be shared with anyone else. The leader has the right to share information with other leaders where this is in the interests of the church or its responsibility to other individuals.

4. Church leaders also have a responsibility to pass on information when members want to join another church, where that information is important to their safety and to the safety and well-being of people in the church they wish to join.

5. Members and friends will want to share items for prayer. Often this happens in small groups. The members of that group must respect the wishes of the person bringing the prayer request as to how widely it can be shared. The assumption must always be that nothing is shared outside the group without the agreement of the individual who originally shared it.

6. Sensitivity must be shown at all times. Even where an individual has agreed to disclose information, such as about a health condition, a work or family situation, the feelings of their wider family (for example) need to be considered before this is passed on.

7. Our services of worship on Sundays are public gatherings, and those present could include non-members or other visitors, who may or may not be sympathetic to our beliefs and values. Anything mentioned publicly, including disclosures in testimonies and prayers, cannot be regarded as confidential information. The assumption must be that those sharing items in public worship are happy for what they have disclosed to be more widely shared.

Adopted: at 12th March 2019 church meeting.

(MRBC header and date adopted added 17th April 2019)