

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

In pastoral counseling, we understand that confidentiality is an important and vital aspect of the counseling relationship. To that end, the pastor-counselors, elders and others who assist (i.e., “shepherdesses”¹) agree to carefully guard the information entrusted to them by counselees to the fullest extent possible.

Counselors are expected to protect the information they receive in order to ensure the integrity of the counseling process and the privacy of the counselee. All who counsel are accountable and responsible to the session (or board of elders) of Christ Covenant church.

Biblical confidentiality is different than what is typically practiced in non-church professions. As such, under certain circumstances, it may be necessary to reveal information obtained in the counseling process in order to uphold the principles of Scripture, the standards of the Presbyterian Church in America and/or the laws of the state of North Carolina. **The pastor-counselors do not hold to the legal concepts of the priest/penitent, doctor/patient, psychotherapist/patient or counselor/counselee privileges except as previously noted and required by law.**

Situations wherein it may be necessary to reveal otherwise confidential information include, but are not limited to:

1. When the counselee has revealed information that the counselor is legally bound to report.

Child: NC Code § 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.

(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found.

(b) Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required by subsection (a) of this section, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required by subsection (a) of this section, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Elderly: NC Code § 108A-102

2. Where a counselee, although encouraged to renounce a particular sin refuses to do so, it may become necessary to seek the assistance of others in the church to encourage repentance and reconciliation in accordance with the Scriptures (Proverbs 15:11, 24:11; Matthew 18:15-20). In said cases, only such information as is necessary to deal with that particular sin will be revealed. Further, said information will only be revealed to those biblically required to be involved. To that end, it may become necessary to contact the pastor and/or other elders of a counselee’s home church.

¹ These are women chosen by the elders and trained by the pastors as crisis disciplers.

3. Counselors, uncertain as to how a particular issue should be addressed, may reveal necessary information to and seek assistance from another counselor or pastor.
4. Where a counselee threatens to harm himself/herself or another person, it may become necessary to notify the proper legal authorities, family members, pastor, intended victim or all of the above. If the counselee makes such threats in the context of a counseling session, the pastor-counselor will immediately upon receiving the information, consult with any available elder or pastor of Christ Covenant Church, who will work with them to assess the situation and assist in making appropriate notifications if necessary.
5. If a counselor is privy to evidence that abuse or some other crime has been or is about to be committed, it may be necessary to reveal such to the legal authorities.
6. We recognize that in the course of the loving discipline of their children, Christian parents may employ corporal punishment in accordance with the teachings of Scripture and in conformity with those Scriptures, we support a parent's right to do so according to the instructions of the Bible.

However, if in the course of counseling, the pastor-counselor learns that a minor child has been physically or sexually abused, **the legal authorities will be contacted immediately** (see #1 above).

7. Observers, including but not limited to, counseling students, may sit in on counseling sessions either to assist in the counseling process or for training purposes.
8. **All observers and counselors agree to be bound by this confidentiality agreement and should they be found to be in violation of this agreement understand they face dissolution of the counseling relationship and additional church discipline, if appropriate.**

I have read and understand the above Confidentiality Policy and agree to be bound by its terms.

Dated: _____ Signed: _____

 Counselee Parent (if minor) (circle one)