

Vestry Policy on Confidentiality

To say that confidentiality is vitally important is not an exaggeration. Upon this foundation is built trust, honest communication, and freedom for the people to express personal thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.

Maintaining confidentiality is part of our professional responsibility as Vestry members. Not only is it part of our professional responsibility, but it is part of our Christian responsibility as well.

The New Testament takes special care to instruct us as Christians about our responsibility in this matter. In the Epistle of St James we find the famous admonition to watch carefully how we use our tongues.

The Apostle James describes the tongue as a small but dangerous part of the body.

St James 3.8 reads, “No human being can tame the tongue – a restless evil, full of deadly poison.” These are very stern words, but they remind us of the fact that just as we show love by personal care, so also we need to demonstrate this love by avoiding saying anything to others which might damage the well-being of our Vestry members.

Exactly what must be kept in confidence? Remember this simple and straight-forward rule:

All transactions, all observations or impressions,
and all records are and must remain confidential.

The rule is strict because it is extremely important to preserve the special trust that develops in the Vestry so that we may function effectively.

Although the rule about confidentiality is expressed in clear, absolute terms, sometimes “gray areas” come along where we must make judgments about whether or not something is confidential.

This is due in great part to the special nature of the Christian congregation, which is a community people actively helping and caring for one another. At times you will have to distinguish between what could be called public knowledge (which is not confidential) and what could be called private knowledge (which is confidential).