

CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY PRESBYTERY OF SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND

Among Our Individual And Corporate Responsibilities Are:

AVAILABILITY

To be available within reason to other members of the Presbytery who ask to be heard. To inform them when they raise matters which must be shared with civil authorities (such as child abuse). To make appropriate referrals as the situation demands.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To normally keep confidential all information shared with or within the C.O.M. To be discreet in the way we conduct ourselves as members of the committee. To not necessarily or prematurely take actions that would embarrass others or signal that "trouble" exists. To serve as reference only with prior permission from the person for whom we are asked to serve as reference; and to openly share the reference given with that person. To only consider sharing confidential information when we are required to do so by civil law or the Constitution of our church.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

To avoid conflicts of interest:
by absenting ourselves from deliberations of the C.O.M. when matters are introduced which pertain to our personal interests or interests of congregations with which we are directly connected; and by not using relationships with other members of the C.O.M. to influence the outcome of matters which pertain to our personal interests or interests of congregations with which we are directly connected.

REMUNERATION

To normally not accept remuneration or personal gifts for our services except when offering some special service such as "moderator of session," "long term conflict consultation" or "pulpit supply." To report any and all such gifts to the C.O.M.; and to accept its counsel in the disposition of such gifts.

WORK WITH CHURCHES AND MINISTERS

To respect the collective wisdom of the C.O.M. To act as agents of the committee when working with churches and ministers. Not to act unilaterally, unless the committee has granted this authority. To fairly represent the position of the committee; and not present our own personal position or views as the position of the committee. Not to ignore, bypass or act contrary to the Book of Order.

SIGNED _____
DATE _____

Guidelines for Dealing with Sensitive Information

From time to time members of COM may receive sensitive information during a meeting with a pastor, a session, or a member of a congregation - either during a one-on-one meeting or phone call, a cluster group interview, a Triennial visit, or an exit interview. COM is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the reporting person. COM is, however, obligated to "make note" of the information gathered so that it may effectively serve the pastor, church, and Presbytery.

Some sensitive information cannot be kept confidential and is reportable. Reports of child abuse or sexual misconduct are the types of sensitive information that must be reported according to the Presbytery policies and/or state law on those topics.

Sensitive information that is not reportable should be shared in any of the following ways within the COM only:

1. Verbally to chair of COM, General Presbyter or Stated Clerk
2. Verbally within the COM meeting
3. Written for COM's church or minister file
4. Written for Presbytery's church or minister file

If the receiving COM member is unclear if information is of a reportable nature, they should immediately check with the chair of COM.

The Committee on Ministry will deal confidentially with information that it receives and will attempt to respect the wishes of the provider of information. It cannot be a keeper of secrets but will act prudently at all times with the information that it receives. COM and its members may promise "anonymity" to the provider of information when appropriate. One should not make promises carte blanche about not using that information; making promises "not to tell" beforehand is not appropriate. Assuring the person providing the information that it will be handled confidentially and sensitively and without attaching a specific name to the information is appropriate, if it is not of a reportable nature. Throughout the process, the receiver of the information shall clearly state to the provider of information how the information shall be dealt with, acted on, and documented to insure clarity on these issues by all parties.

Approved by COM, November 15, 2000