



BOUNDARIES OF INFORMATION

Confidential Information (between 2)

- is officially limited by formal rules
- (legal and professional)
- is intended to protect privacy and strictly personal information
- includes conversations between lawyer and client, “penitential communication,” and routine supervision of employees



Limited Access Information

- is intended to *prevent harm*, as well as protect privacy
- is restricted to those who directly *need to know*
- includes exceptions to confidentiality guidelines:
 - △ legal exclusions:
i.e., mandated reporting of child abuse
 - △ professional exclusions:
i.e., legal and professional consultations
 - △ pastoral exclusions:
i.e., relevant, responsible committee work

For example, in sexual misconduct procedures, those who need to know are identified in written judicatory policies. Included in this restricted information are: the identity of those abused, the specifics of events, the content of testimony and evaluations, rumor and unconfirmed charges.



Open Information

- shared, in a clear and timely manner, reasonably and prudently, with the staff, leaders and members of the congregation
- does not include unnecessary detail
- helps prevent the re-wounding that occurs when people discover new and unexpected revelations
- creates opportunities for reconciliation and renewal in the congregation

If the information concerns a misconduct issue, Open information is most helpful when offered with education about:

- pastoral power and responsibility
- denominational policy and procedure
- spiritual healing

Withheld Information: Secret Keeping

- This information could be shared and would assist a congregation in appropriate responses to church dilemmas.
- This information could contribute to healing, understanding and reconciliation.
- Secrets are withheld through fear, need to control or unwillingness to face painful emotions or potential conflict.
- When withheld, a congregation “adjusts” to a crisis *without* fully healing from it.

Often the most important critical information withheld is educational in nature, like discussion of the dynamics of sexual misconduct and the injury it creates.