

A Just Peace, Open and Affirming Conference

SEARCH COMMITTEE GUIDE TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Search Committees receive a great deal of information about those individuals whom they consider for ministry positions. It is important for Search Committees to remember that this information can be used in ways that enable Search Committees to do their work well. This same information, misused, can have painful and destructive impact on the lives of individuals seeking a call in the United Church of Christ. Therefore, Search Committees need to consider carefully and prayerfully the role of confidentiality as they consider various candidates for a particular position.

The information contained in the Ministerial Profiles of individuals is confidential information to be treated with care and respect. It is a serious violation of confidentiality and trust to use this information for anything other than its intended purpose, to circulate the information contained in a Ministerial Profile beyond appropriate individuals, or to disclose information when it is not essential for the recipients to have the information in order to carry out their obligations. Search Committees must take active steps to ensure that no violation occurs.

Confidentiality is not secrecy. When we declare that certain information is confidential, we accept certain responsibilities and limitations on the use of this information. Generally, confidential information is protected or restricted in three ways:

- 1) Confidential information is used only for its intended purpose. In the context of the search process, information about candidates is used only as it relates to the call. If the information does not inform the search, it need not be shared.
- 2) Confidential information is shared only with appropriate persons. Generally, these are individuals who use the information in order to carry out their responsibilities on behalf of the church. Within the context of the search process, this normally includes members of Search Committees and Conference/Association staff working with Search Committees. It may be necessary and appropriate to share certain information with others in the congregations (such as the governing body) in order for those people to fulfill or carry out their responsibilities at various steps in the search process. When this occurs, it is good to indicate to the candidate your intent to share the information.
- 3) Confidential information is to be shared only when appropriate and essential. Only information germane to the responsibilities of the appropriate people is shared, and then, only at that time when the information informs those responsibilities. Within the context of the search process, this means that some information needs to be guarded and protected with some people at one stage in the deliberation, but shared with them at an appropriate time.

Confidentiality applies to all Ministerial Profiles Search Committees receive, including those the committee no longer has under consideration. Once the search process is complete, calling bodies should retain the profile for the person being called. The Conference or Association office should indicate whether Search Committees destroy the other forms or return them to the Conference or Association office. Under no circumstances should the Ministerial Profiles that the Search Committees received be left where unauthorized individuals have access to them.