



## ***Member Privacy Policy***

### **Introduction**

This policy is intended to inform church members how their sensitive information is handled. Messiah Lutheran Church strives to maintain the confidentiality of its members and has policies in place to do so. Every employee receives and signs a statement of acknowledgment of Messiah's Personnel Handbook, which states the following regarding confidentiality:

*Whether directly by the nature of a job description, or indirectly through other means, employees may have access to highly sensitive or confidential information about other employees or church members. Employees must keep this information confidential. All such information shall be communicated to other employees on a strict "need-to-know" basis.*

### **Pastoral Care Information**

There is a distinct difference between pastoral care and professional counseling; Messiah's pastors are not professionally trained counselors. Generally, pastoral care sessions are short-term in nature and are intended to provide personal or relationship advice within the context of Christian living. For long term problems or for issues that are beyond the scope of our Pastors' expertise, Messiah has a referral system in place for professional counseling services.

In order to protect the integrity of the church while still maintaining privacy, pastoral care sessions will normally be held in the pastor's office with the door closed but within view of others.

Personal details that are shared with a pastor as part of a pastoral care session are kept confidential, unless the pastor learns of an abuse situation or otherwise believes that someone may cause harm to himself or others. There may be instances where one pastor may want to share details with another pastor to get a different perspective. If this is the case, the pastor must ask and gain permission from the person receiving care. The pastoral administrative assistant has access to the pastors' calendars and therefore may know dates and times of particular visits, but no other details are shared.

Visits from the pastoral staff to members in the hospital are tracked with the name of the patient and the date of the visit. *(Due to HIPAA regulations, patient information given to clergy members by healthcare facilities is greatly limited. If someone is hospitalized and would like a visit from Messiah's pastoral staff, a phone call to the church office by the member or a close relative is recommended).*

Visits from the pastoral staff to long-term care patients or shut-ins are also tracked with the name of the person who was visited and the date of the visit. If the person being visited received Holy Communion, that information is also noted.



## Stephen Ministers

Stephen Ministry is a valuable ministry at Messiah that provides confidential, Christian care to people who are hurting due to a variety of circumstances. (For additional information about this ministry, visit [www.stephenministries.org](http://www.stephenministries.org) )

The leader of Messiah's Stephen Ministers will know how many ministers are actively caring for a member, but will not know the members' names or any details. Stephen Ministers meet regularly for training and to provide support for each other, but personal details about care receivers are never shared.

## Prayer Requests/Prayer Chain

Prayer requests are generally received by the church receptionist or ministry administrative assistant via email, telephone, or a prayer request connection card.

### *Printed Prayers*

We will only publically print prayers that have been requested by individuals on their behalf, or on behalf of an immediate family member.

### *Prayer Chain*

Messiah has a group of "prayer warriors" who have committed to pray privately for anyone with a prayer request. These requests are often relayed via email. The emails state that the content should not be shared or forwarded, and they are sent via blind carbon copy (bcc).

## Financial Contributions

*Offering collections*-The counting of cash and checks placed in the offering plates each Sunday is carried out by a trusted team of volunteers. At least two volunteers are always present when money is being counted. They do not share information with each other or have access to financial statements.

*Online Payments and Electronic Giving*-Online payments are handled through Sage Payment Solutions. Electronic giving is handled through Vanco Services LLC. In accordance with Sage's and Vanco's requirements, Messiah participates in an annual audit ensuring our compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). This process ensures that Messiah is protecting cardholder data.

*Giving Statements*-Statements of financial contributions that are mailed periodically are generated and mailed under the supervision and guidance of the finance department. Volunteers are not involved in



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this process at any time. Contribution records are only accessible by the Director of Operations and the Finance Assistant.

*Memorials or Bequests*-Certain memorials may be acknowledged by name unless confidentiality is requested

Financial stewardship is an important aspect of Christian life and is one measure of spiritual maturity. Contributions from every Sunday are reported to the congregation in a weekly email. Additional information such as total congregational giving, special offerings, average giving and number of households giving may be reported annually. While the pastoral staff does not routinely have knowledge of an individual's giving history, they may obtain this information from the finance department with the approval of the Senior Pastor.

## Personal Information

Messiah maintains a church database with information provided by frequent visitors and pending or current members. All of this information is collected voluntarily and may include:

- Name, address, telephone number, email address
- Names and birthdates of family members
- Date of membership
- Dates, places, officiant of official church acts: baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals
- Interests and experience in various ministry areas

This information is collected so that we can send important communications about Messiah to our families, and to help our members become better connected to each other and their community. Messiah never shares this information with a third party. Any family that does not want to receive email or printed communication can opt out.

Messiah prints an annual membership directory with names, addresses, and telephone numbers. This information is provided so that members can contact each other. Use of the church directory for sales or marketing purposes is not allowed.

Photos of worship services, musicals, or other public events are occasionally posted on Messiah's social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Messiah website or blog). Messiah will not "tag" anyone in these photos and we request that visitors to these social media sites refrain from identifying individuals by name. If you do not want your photo or your child's photo to be posted, please contact the church office.