



Anonymous Communication Policy – 2019

With only the gravest exceptions, the Presbytery of Cincinnati does not consider information of any kind that is offered anonymously.

This includes telephone calls, e-mails, letters, and online social media posts. This policy concerns information for which there is no verifiable attribution. It does not concern conversations/communications between parties that are appropriately private or confidential. This policy does not apply to information received in which or for which there is sufficient factual evidence to warrant further action.

Telephone Communications:

- 1.) Calls from unidentified persons will either not be passed through, or will be disconnected.
- 2.) Unidentified voice mail messages will be deleted.

Postal Mail:

- 1.) All mail bearing no return address will be opened by the Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery.
- 2.) The Executive Presbyter will briefly scan the contents to determine if the suspicion of anonymity is correct.
- 3.) Letters determined to be anonymous will be shredded immediately.

E-mail and Social Media Posts:

- 1.) All e-mails and/or “troll” posts or comments sent from fake or anonymous accounts shall be deleted by the appropriate person in a supervisory position; the content of those messages shall not be considered or acted upon.

This policy extends to all committees, commissions, networks, task forces, and work groups within the Presbytery. The Presbytery also commends this policy to its member churches and minister members, and encourages them to adopt similar policies for their corporate or personal use.

Rationale:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:17-20a, ESV)

“In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Christ God reconciles all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross (Col. 1:19-20). In Christ’s name, therefore, the Church is sent out to bear witness to the good news of

reconciliation with God, with others, and with all creation. In Christ the Church receives its truth and appeal, its holiness, and its unity.” (Book of Order, F-1.0205).

The Church is called by her Lord Jesus Christ to be an agent of reconciliation. Individuals bringing allegations or accusations under the cloak of anonymity work directly against this call, for reconciliation can never be a unilateral action. Reconciliation requires the participation of multiple parties, who in courage, in love, and in obedience to the Golden Rule (“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7:12, ESV), are willing to speak the truth to each other in love as they seek to address any and all areas of brokenness in the hope of bringing about peace and fellowship.

Anonymity precludes seeking redress or agreement; instead, it fosters division, suspicion, and toxic doubts, as it allows neither substantiation nor attribution. Without these, there cannot be any sense of procedural integrity, the absence of which is an affront to our polity.

Exceptions:

If the communication alleges that a member of the Presbytery has taken action that might initiate PC(USA) judicial proceedings, a confidential summary of the anonymous communication, including information as to who received the message, the day, date, and time of receipt, and the information received, shall be forwarded to the Stated Clerk. No further actions shall be taken by the recipient of the communication.

If the communication indicates a civil law may have been broken, or that harm could come or has come to an individual, the local law enforcement shall be informed of all pertinent information, including who received the message, how it was received, and day, date and time of receipt, and the information communicated. The recipient of anonymous information may consult with the Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk for advice in these matters.