**Confidentiality Guidelines for The Barn Community**

As Church leaders (Vision Team, staff, caregiving volunteers), we welcome and encourage Barn participants and friends to come to us with spiritual, emotional, and relational struggles. We want our community to know that we will treat shared struggles with care and respect, and we will hold in confidence our discussions. However, the promise of confidentiality has limits that you should be aware of from the outset of any conversation. Legally, we have a responsibility to speak to others in authority if we learn

that (1) you pose a threat to yourself or others, or (2) there is sexual or physical abuse of a minor or a vulnerable adult (physically or mentally handicapped, or an elderly person) involved. Conscientiously, as leaders of the church we also feel a responsibility to speak to others to ensure that we are providing the kind of care and support that will be in your best interest. Please understand that, our goal is to avoid gossip or speaking lightly of any Barn participant. We do feel a responsibility to do the following when hurting people come to us for help:

1. We will attempt to resolve or refer the one seeking help. If the situation involves another Barn participant, we will offer to serve as mediator between the affected parties. If the issue is not resolved, we will talk to at least two of our fellow leaders to get their advice and counsel and solicit their prayers. There are situations – when the issues are serious enough and could affect the whole church – when conversations will be shared with the Vision Team as a whole.
2. When other people in our faith community are involved (e.g., when relationships are broken, when there is anger or disappointment, when gossip is involved), we will approach those other people in an effort to get both sides of the story and to foster reconciliation. We will not listen to stories involving others without talking to the people directly involved.
3. When we are made aware of a struggle that someone else in our faith community has experienced and overcome, we may well speak to that person and enlist their wisdom and help in dealing with your struggle. The church offers many resources for healing. Keeping your secrets is not our first priority. Helping you find healing is. We don't want the fear of exposure to keep you from approaching one of us. But, neither do we want the promise of absolute confidentiality to tie our hands in offering you our best help. If you have something that cannot be shared with anyone else in the church, let us help you find a professional counselor who can honor your request for confidentiality. But if you can honor us with your struggle, know that we will work with you – discreetly and carefully – to provide the best help your church family has to offer.

Concerning prayer requests, hospitalizations, sickness and other such information, we will attempt to seek the permission of the person before sharing with the larger (over) congregation. When someone states something is confidential; it is to be maintained as such. Such concerns should be stated behind closed doors not shared in a public forum where the conversation can be overheard.

The Barn will encourage its participants to avoid triangulation. We will encourage one another to talk directly to anyone with whom they have an issue, concern, or problem. If they are uncomfortable approaching the other, we will offer to go with them and seek to be a mediator desiring to bring reconciliation, healing or clarity to the situation. Our end goal will be healthy relationships that seek the other’s best interest.

The Barn’s office phone and our staff’s home/cell phones are not private and therefore confidential and/or private messages/information should not be left on them.

Our pastor(s) and staff offer pastoral care. This is not to be confused with pastoral counseling. Barn participants seeking extended or involved counseling will generally be referred to a therapist, psychiatrist, or spiritual director.

Much of the wording of this document was taken from Cornerstone Christian Church’s Document on line at [www.cccknoxville.com/**Confidentiality**%20**Policy**.pdf](http://www.cccknoxville.com/Confidentiality%20Policy.pdf)

**Approved by the Vision Team March, 2013**