

Healthy Communication for Leaders

As church leaders, you lead the way in showing us how to treat each other. The eight keys to healthy communication are: (based on Matthew 18:15-17)

1. We speak to each other, not about each other behind their backs
2. If someone complains to us about another person, we ask them to speak to that person first and tell them it is so important that we will follow up in a week to see how the conversation went.
3. We don't respond to anonymous comments or letters.
4. We don't carry other people's mail. We ask, "What would you like me to do with your comment? You can come to council/meeting yourself or I can go with you."
5. We explain, "I can carry a signed written statement to the person/council/meeting for you, but please don't ask me to speak for you. I don't want to express your views inaccurately."
6. We recognize that "what doesn't come out straight, comes out crooked." Unexpressed concerns, grief, anger or pain build up and get uglier. Eventually they *will* come out. Best to speak them, calmly, before they become ugly and truly hurtful.
7. We say "I," not "You;" as in, "I was upset by what I heard," not "You hurt my feelings;" or "I felt attacked" rather than "You attacked me."
8. We explain each other's actions in the best possible light. We check with the person quoted or referred to for accuracy before we repeat the comment. (Luther's explanation to 8th Commandment)

Disagreements happen in any organization, including congregations. Using healthy communication can stop and even prevent disagreements from spreading and engulfing the whole organization.

Thank you for practicing healthy communication and encouraging others to do the same.