

We can refuse to keep secrets about secrets. To accomplish this goal, we are obliged to name and address unhealthy behavior. Some believe that gossip, rumours and anonymous complaints will “just go away” if ignored. Unfortunately the opposite is true. Admitting, exposing, and naming these difficult behaviors is the first step to overcoming them.

The second principle is simple: viruses cannot be spread if we do not spread them. We disable rumours, gossip, secrets, and third-party complaints by refusing to pass them on or perpetuate them. “For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases” (Proverbs 26:20). Such ancient passages remind us how long-standing and ingrained our behavior can be!

Churches can be debilitated by gossip and accusations. When people make accusations without addressing either the proper authorities or the offenders, they hurt the community. If you hear a rumour about someone, check with him or her directly about what you have heard. Also respond to rumours at their source. If leaders believe gossip is occurring, find out who is gossiping, have evidence of the gossip, and speak to the offender directly.

Rumours can be prevented by providing prompt and accurate information about decisions and process. Vestry minutes, the newsletter, posted board meeting minutes, and announcements made prior to Sunday services are just some of the ways St. John’s provides the facts about decisions affecting our church and congregation. If you attend services regularly, you are more likely to be “in the loop” and to understand the background of some of the changes we are seeing at church.

All of us at St. John’s can practice these healthier styles of being in community with each other. Most of us will have to practice healthy behaviors before getting it right. These behaviors, however, are worth practicing and upholding; they are a mark of emotional health and a gift to the Rector and fellow parishioners.

Submitted by Maureen Vescio

PARISH NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

HEADS UP EVERYONE - The next newsletter will be covering events for December and January. **All articles must be submitted** to the Church Office by November 18, 2011.