

Churches Must Trust Their Pastor

By Les Dennis

Years ago, Alberta Community Church had a pastor, John Davidson, who put in many hours beyond what is considered to be a full-time work week, but the deacons did not fully trust him. They were concerned about what he did with his time. They had another concern that really bothered them. A former deacon, Peter Smith, was known to be having some serious problems and was in need pastoral counselling. Previous experiences with a counsellor had caused him to be anxious regarding confidentiality issues.

About a week before a deacon's meeting, Peter stopped by to see the pastor early one morning on the way to work. He said, "I want to talk with you about a serious problem, but I do not want anyone to know that I have ever talked with you about it. I especially do not want the deacons to know that I have talked with you at all, other than the normal greetings at church. If anyone ever finds out, I will never discuss another problem with you again." The pastor agreed and the counselling session began.

At the deacons' meeting, the chairman brought up the subject of Peter's need for pastoral counselling. He mentioned the former deacon and said to the pastor, "We are concerned that you do not care about Peter Smith. You should be offering to help him, since it is commonly known that he has serious problems. You have not even offered to talk with him." Fortunately, they did not ask for a reply; they just wanted it in the record that the pastor was failing to do his job. This item went into their list of complaints to be used against that pastor at a future time.

The pastor had to play dumb and accept the rebuke without comment or violate confidentiality. He believed so firmly in keeping his word to Peter that he let the rebuke go unanswered.

Note: the names of the deacon, the pastor, and the church have been changed to protect confidentiality.

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