



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

The primary purpose of our complaints procedure is to provide a process for dealing with complaints relating to the behaviour of, or activities and decisions taken by, the church's staff, charity trustees/Elders, or members.

2. General Principles

Wherever possible the church would prefer to follow Biblical principles of reconciling differences informally and personally. However, on occasion attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not be appropriate. Where this is not possible or appropriate, we will seek to resolve your complaint through a formal process.

3. Can I make a complaint if I am not a member of the church?

Yes. You do not have to be a member of the church to make a complaint. If you believe you have reasonable grounds to make a complaint and you cannot resolve the issue informally or believe it would not be appropriate to do so, you can make a complaint.

4. What kind of complaint can I make using this procedure?

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether it subsequently proves to be justified or not, about any aspect of church life. This can be about a person or persons, an activity or a group, or about a service that is provided by the church.

5. What kind of complaints are not suitable for this procedure?

Safeguarding concerns relating to the protection of children or adults at risk

Any safeguarding concern should be reported to the church's safeguarding lead (Nathan Richards) following the church's safeguarding procedure which can be found on the website.

An employment grievance

The church has a staff grievance procedure which is set out in the employee's contract of employment. Employment-related grievances by staff should be dealt with in accordance with that grievance procedure which can be found in the staff handbook.

6. How do I make a complaint and how will the church deal with it?

You can make a complaint by phone, in person or in writing. The first stage of our procedure is to try to deal with the complaint informally. The second stage, if informal resolution fails or is not appropriate, is to deal with it formally.

Informal process

Wherever possible the church would prefer to follow Biblical principles of reconciling differences and dealing with complaints informally and directly with the people concerned if possible and appropriate, involving a third person if necessary (see Matthew 18 vv.15-17).

However, on occasion attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or it may not even be appropriate. A formal process of reviewing and addressing the complaint is available for such cases. It is hoped that during this stage, most complaints can be resolved by talking and achieving a shared understanding of the issues.

Formal process

The church has a form for recording complaints and ideally, complaints should be made using this document. If, however, the church receives a written complaint which is not on the correct form, the person designated to receive the complaints will ensure that all the information required for the form has been included. If not, they will request the additional information that would have been provided had the form been completed.

Complaints should be made to our Chair of Elders. If the complaint concerns t, the Chair of Elders you should address the complaint to one of our other trustees.

Dealing with your complaint

On receipt of your complaint, the person to whom it was made will:

- Reply within 7 days, telling you who will be dealing with your complaint;
- Within 14 days, begin dealing with it, contacting you for further information if needed, finding out what happened, when it happened, and who was involved, and if necessary, interviewing those people;
- Inform the person or people who the complaint is about what the complaint is about unless this would seriously prejudice addressing your complaint;
- Recommend what could be done to resolve your complaint, if anything, giving reasons;
- Write to you informing you of the outcome of the review.

Multiple complaints

The church may, on occasion, receive related complaints, or several people may make the same complaint. Depending upon the nature of the complaint and when each complaint is received, the trustees may decide to consider/deal with the complaints together or to deal with the earliest complaint first. The more complex the complaint is, the longer it may take the church to respond. This is especially likely if the complaint relates to historic matters or if several people need to be interviewed.

Complaints where there is a police investigation

If the police investigate the person who is the subject of the complaint in relation to the same or related matters, the church may not be able to begin or complete the review until the police have completed their investigations.

Reporting obligations

Please be aware that the church may decide that it is under a duty to report the matter to statutory authorities or the Charity Commission. If this is the case, the church will write to you to tell you this.

Confidentiality and data protection

The church will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with the church's privacy policy which can be found [here](#).

We will only share details of your complaint with those who need to know about it. Generally speaking, when sharing details of your complaint we will look to discuss this with you, although there may be occasions where we cannot do so.

However, on occasion, the church may need to make a public statement about the subject matter of the complaint, report it to statutory authorities or seek professional advice, and consequently the church cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential. You should maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of your complaint, other than to seek professional advice if required.

7. What if I am not happy with how the church deals with my complaint?

You should write to the Elders telling them that you want to appeal and why.

The Elders will:

- acknowledge your appeal within 7 days of receiving it,
- review it within 14 days of receiving it; and
- appoint someone to deal with it.

That person will be in contact to:

- confirm how long it will take for that person to review your appeal;
- seek further information from you and others if required;
- recommend what remedial action, if any, should be taken, giving reasons;
- write to you informing you of the outcome of the appeal.

An appeal should not include new evidence, unless you could not with reasonable diligence have provided that evidence when you first complained.

If you are unhappy with how the church deals with your complaint, you may choose to contact the Charity Commission, the regulator of charities, using the following form:

<https://www.gov.uk/complainaboutcharity/>.

8. Vexatious Complaints

If someone makes repeated complaints about the same or similar matters and these have been addressed through this process, then we will contact the complainant and may inform them that we will no longer be responding to their complaints. If the church concludes that the complaint is vexatious and particularly disruptive to the church and the complainant is a church member, the church may consider exercising church discipline.

Q1 Have you tried to resolve this matter informally? YES/NO

If no please explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally.

Q2 If you tried to resolve this matter informally, what happened?

State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome

Q3 Action sought:

What actions are you wanting the church to take and what outcomes are you seeking? Whilst the charity trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what resolution you are seeking.

The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church's privacy policy. The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share that information in order to review and resolve your complaint.

Signature:

Date: