**Complaints & Church Discipline**

**Procedure For**

**North End Baptist Church**

The aims & objectives of this Procedure are to bring a loving and caring process to deal with difficulties and misunderstanding as they arise, that will limit any hurt or damage to the whole body of Christ, and to endeavour to seek unity at all times.

This is based on our Vision, Purpose Statement and Values as we seek to be the Church that our Lord, Jesus Christ has called us to be.

Vision

Experiencing God; journeying together; embracing community.

Purpose Statement

As a Christian community our bedrock is based on the following 2 scriptures taken from what Jesus said to his disciples:-

**Matthew 22: 37-40**

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.  And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself’

**Matthew 28:18-20**

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Values

Up

\* Encountering God through freedom in worship

\* Deepening our personal relationship with God

\* Strengthening our faith through studying and embracing the Word of God and Biblical truths

Out

\* Building relationships as we serve and embrace our community

\* Genuine welcoming culture

\* Passionate about sharing the gospel

In

\* Devoted to growing and modeling authentic friendships

\* Creative communications to inspire and engage

\* Encouraging and journeying together as disciples

**Complaints Procedure**

**What counts as a complaint?**A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action, or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the church, or about the policies and procedures of the church.

If, however, a complaint relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that an adult or another child may have caused harm to a child or adult who may be vulnerable, it must be responded to through the Safeguarding Procedures for handling allegations of abuse.

If the complaint originates from someone hiring the hall or our neighbours we would look to follow a similar process as outlined below. The specifics can be found in section 3.

Complaints from employees need to follow the Employee Handbook.

**Problem-solving**

The aim always, when responding to complaints, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation, based on Matthew 18:15-20.

**1. Procedure for Internal Complaints**

1. We encourage the person expressing the concern to go to the individuals themselves and speak with them directly.

2. Should this prove not to be possible or not to bring about the outcome of reconciliation and restoration, then they will be encouraged to take another member, or possibly a Church Deacon or the Minister. That person will then seek to ascertain the true facts regarding the situation. **Gal 6:1 & Lk 6:41-42.**

3. Should this still prove not to resolve the situation, the Minister/Deacon will encourage the person making the complaint to put it in writing so it can be taken to the Church Deacons, who together will determine how best to proceed. It is hoped that a decision and mediation by the Church Deacons will bring about a satisfactory conclusion. However if the person bringing the complaint is still not satisfied with the outcome, then the next step can be applied.

4. If there is no resolve at stage 3, then the issue will be taken to the church members meeting; each person will be given opportunity to outline the issue and be open to questioning by the church members. Members when called together, and seeking the will of God through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and under the Lordship of Christ, shall be the final decision making authority in all matters relating to all the affairs of the Church. All organisations, committees and groups, and their leaders shall be accountable to it.

5. Should the person bringing the complaint still not feel that they have had a fair hearing, and prove not to resolve the matter, then the Senior Regional Minister of the Southern Counties Baptist Association may be approached by the Senior (or only) Minister, Deacon or aggrieved parties for advice. The decision of the Church Meeting will remain as the final decision making authority.

**2. Complains/Issues concerning the Senior (or only Minister)**

If the complaint concerns the Senior (or only) Minister, in the first instances the normal rules shall apply, bearing in mind **1 Tim 5:19**.

If you have an issue with the Senior Minister (or only Minister) then the following actions are to be taken:

1. To speak with the Senior Minister (or only Minister) expressing the concern to them directly.

2. Should this prove not to be possible or not to bring about the desired outcome of, then they should write to the church deacons / leaders for it to be discussed with the minister. The Deacons will then seek to ascertain the true facts regarding the situation. **Gal 6:1 & Lk 6:41-42.**

3. Following this a meeting may be had with the minister, deacons and the individual (or group) to try and resolve the situation.

4. If there is no resolve, the issue will be taken to the church members meeting; each person will be given opportunity to outline the issue and be open to questioning by the church members, and an outcome be determined.

5. If the Church Meeting are unable to resolve the issues, then the Church Meeting can decide to approach the Senior Regional Minister of the Southern Counties Baptist Association, and if necessary, the Church Members Meeting may invite him/her to act as arbitrator to bring about resolution and reconciliation.

**3. Church Discipline Procedure**

Sadly, there are times in any family where the behaviour of an individual can lead to difficulties which, if not addressed, can prove damaging both to the individual’s well being, that of their biological family and the family of the church. In instances where church discipline may prove necessary, the Minister/Deacons will seek to act in accordance with **Matthew 5:21-26 & 18:15-20**:

In such situations the following discipline will apply:

1. They will first encourage the person expressing the concern to go to the individual(s) themselves and speak with them directly.

2. Should this prove not to be possible or not to bring about the outcome of repentance, reconciliation and restoration, then they will be encouraged to take another member, or possibly a Church Leader. That person will then seek to ascertain the true facts regarding the situation. **Gal 6:1 & Lk 6:41-42**

3. Should this still prove not to resolve the situation, the Minister/Deacon will then inform the deacons, who together will determine how best to proceed.

Depending on the seriousness of the situation, the Church Leaders may decide to:

1. Temporarily suspend Church Membership for a period without reference to the Church Members Meeting, in order to give such time as is necessary to offer help to address the issues.

2. Where the situation cannot be resolved or there is unwillingness on the part of the individual(s) concerned to recognise a problem, then the Minister/Deacons will bring a recommendation to the Church Members Meeting that membership be withdrawn permanently.

3. In some cases it may prove necessary for the Minister/Deacons to warn other churches that the person(s) may choose to attend, of the facts that have led the church to resort to church discipline. This would be in order to preserve the unity of the churches and protect the other church from any threat to its own unity.

It needs to be stressed that all such actions:

- will be discussed with the individual(s) concerned (thought not necessarily agreed) and confirmed in writing prior to such action being taken;

- will progress up to the point where the person is believed to have addressed the issues that led to the need for church discipline to be applied;

- will be applied, not with the aim of punishing, but rather to bring the person(s) to repentance, reconciliation and restoration

- and, as far as possible, will be accompanied by continuing Pastoral visits by the Minister, ideally accompanied by any Deacon.

**4. Complaints from People hiring the Hall, Using our facilities or Neighbours.**

1. The exact natue rof the complaint should be put in writing and given to the Minister or Church Administrator as soon as is possible.

2. If the complaint can be dealt with by the Minister or the Administrator satisfactorily then it would end here. If it is not able to be satisfied, for example if it is of a serious nature, or the person complaining is not satisfied with the suggested outcome, then it will be taken to the Deacon’s meetings for consideration and resolving. The Deaconate will also suggest restorative actions.

3. The decision by the Deaconate will be final.