



1. Purpose

In every community there are times when issues arise, misunderstandings happen, and hurtful or offensive behaviour occurs between individuals. This is normal in human life and this process has been developed to assist in finding godly and appropriate pathways to see issues and concerns addressed.

The core Biblical values supporting this process are truth-telling (Ephesians 4:15-25), justice-seeking (Micah 6:8), grace-giving (Colossians 3:13), and peace-making (Matthew 5:9; Ephesians 4:2-3). The process is not to be used as a weapon or demand; rather, it exemplifies how Jesus sees God's presence in the process of resolution and the significance that God places on finding restoration of relationship/s.

Once begun, the process should be followed with care and a commitment to walk through the process step-by-step, ensuring that it does not become too drawn out or complex. At all times commitment to the values outlined above needs to anchor all actions and discussions.

Whilst this process should guide any individuals or groups wishing to restore relationship/s, within the ministry context, and particularly among leaders, it needs to be agreed that leaders will be held accountable to follow it through to its conclusion. In some circumstances, depending on the severity and potential impact, and under the oversight of the Elders and Church Board, parties may be asked to stand down from their roles or aspects of their roles whilst the process is followed and until its conclusion.

Importantly, parties involved must not be rejected from the Church or be treated as sinners. They must be ministered to as Jesus did, treating them with kindness, gentleness and the invitation to join the forgiveness story of Christian discipleship.

2. The Grievance Process

Step	Action	Description	Follow through
1	Personal Reflection	Offended party takes time to pray and reflect on the offence or injury perceived / received. In some situations, it is appropriate to overlook the offence. In other situations, important principles may be at stake and the situation needs to be escalated.	A. Overlook the offence. B. Go to step 2. C. Lodge a written grievance with no request for further action.
2	Wisdom and Accountability	If the offended party is unsure about their response and feels the need for wise counsel then this is often the appropriate course of action. The focus is on gaining clarity about the offence and the next step; all the while making sure they are accountable to act with integrity, wisdom and peacemaking. The Leadership or Elders can assist by proposing a godly counsellor, pastor, leader or mentor. This is a way of distinguishing this consultation from gossip or sharing to gain sympathy or biased support which is inappropriate.	Approach a Senior Church Leader or Church Elder for guidance and/or recommendation.



3	Informal Discussion	<p>A key step is for the offended party to approach the other person informally and in private share their concern. The attitude is to be one of trying to understand the perspective and viewpoint of the other person. The offended party must be willing to hear and receive an apology or respond to an offer of restoration if it is offered. If the matter is resolved, no further action is necessary.</p> <p>The perceived offender must be quick to listen and ensure they understand what the person who feels offended is sharing. Importantly, they must guard themselves from simply reacting. If they need time to reflect they should ask for it. If the perceived offender can take responsibility they should do so, or ask to meet again.</p>	<p>Private discussion and offers of forgiveness or apology.</p>
4	Formal Discussion	<p>Either party feeling threatened, overpowered or unable to clearly communicate their position indicates the need to involve a third party. Others are invited into the process as support people or informal facilitators. They are not advocates or mouthpieces for the complainant's position. A pre-arranged meeting must take place and both people afforded the opportunity to have support people present.</p> <p>At this level, it is appropriate that some formal records are maintained and that Senior Church Leadership, including the Board, is notified that this has happened.</p> <p>If the matter is resolved no further action is required.</p>	<p>Formal, pre-arranged meeting.</p> <p>Support persons, as requested.</p> <p>Facilitator Records maintained.</p> <p>Church Board informed.</p>
5	Formal Mediation	<p>If formal discussions fail, the Church Board must be officially notified. With the agreement of all, a trained mediator should be appointed to facilitate a safe and open discussion. Opportunities for interpersonal reconciliation must be offered.</p> <p>Points of agreement and disagreement must be recorded, along with the outcome. Most often, it is anticipated the two parties will come together and find a solution of grace, compromise, and kindness. Keeping to the agreement is a matter of trust on both sides.</p> <p>If agreement is reached, no further action is required. A confidential report must be provided to Church Board, as well as the individuals involved.</p>	<p>Board officially notified with a documented grievance.</p> <p>Trained mediator appointed.</p> <p>Agreements and disagreements noted.</p> <p>Formal confidential report to the Church Board.</p>