



Complaints Policy and Procedure

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Glossary

‘Concern’ and ‘complaint’ mean any expression of dissatisfaction that is communicated to the church and requires a response.

‘Concern’ is a low impact issue that is of importance, irritation or frustration to the individual, but the issue can be resolved quickly and without formal investigation.

‘Complaint’ is a formal expression of dissatisfaction or where a concern has been raised more than once regarding the same issue and by the same person.

‘Serious Complaint’ is considered serious if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Serious harm has been caused or is alleged to have been caused
- High risk of reputational damage, especially where our witness for the Gospel has been damaged
- High regulatory risk
- Is received from the Charity Commission or other external professionals
- Is considered by the complainant
- Is serious by nature

‘Investigation’ means a thorough, proactive and impartial investigation and consideration of all available facts and evidence relevant and pertaining to the complaint.

‘Complainant’ is the term for anyone who raises a concern or complaint.

‘Appropriate response’ means a verbal or written explanation given to the complainant advising them of the outcome of the investigation, together with the correction or remediation of any deficiencies or failings revealed by the investigation.

‘Timely manner’ means that a verbal or written acknowledgement will be given 24 hours of the concern or complaint being received. For any concerns raised, an acknowledgement should be given to the complainant as soon as possible. For low level concerns, this acknowledgement should be immediate or as soon as possible. For formal complaints, the acknowledgement should be no later than 14 days from receipt. In the event that an appropriate response cannot be made in this timescale due to circumstances outside of our control, a holding letter or statement should be provided, and a response should follow as soon as possible.

‘Leadership team’ the Eldership of Emmanuel Epsom.

1. General policy

1.1 The trustees of **Emmanuel Epsom Church** take complaints seriously and commit to deal with all complaints in a confidential, timely and appropriate manner.

1.2 Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints and serious concerns policy which is clear and easy to use;
- To make sure that trustees, elders, volunteers and staff are aware of this policy and know how to handle complaints;
- To ensure in all cases that complaints are handled using Biblical principles and that wherever possible, disputes and disagreements are amicably resolved and that relationships are restored. See Appendix 1 for Emmanuel Epsoms statement of faith.
- To gather information which helps us improve what we do in the future.

1.3 All complaints and any associated information provided will be handled sensitively, and in accordance with relevant data protection requirements. However, the trustees reserve the right to involve external parties (including the police and other authorities) and to take legal advice where this is considered necessary.

1.4 The overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the trustees of **Emmanuel Epsom Church**.

1.5 In constructing this policy, the trustees have paid due consideration to the good governance code referred to in the Charity Commission guidance on completing annual returns.

2. Receiving complaints

2.1 **Definition of a Complaint:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by an identifiable person, either verbal or written, including electronically, which requires a response.

This policy relates to complaints made by members of the congregation/public in relation to services provided by the Church. It does not relate to data subject requests under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/ Data Protection Act 2018 or a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Neither does it relate to staff grievances. These are all covered by separate policies.

2.2 A Complaint may be addressed to any trustee in writing or verbally. If the complaint is made against a specific trustee then they will not be involved in the investigation and consideration will be given to inviting another suitably qualified person into the investigation

2.3 A complainant must raise their concern within twelve months of the event, or within twelve months of the complainant becoming aware that they had cause for complaint. The Trustees have discretion to extend the limit where the complainant has sound reasons for not making a complaint within the time limit and where it is possible to investigate effectively.

2.4 For complaints not relating to Emmanuel Epsom, the complainant will be notified and advised to contact the appropriate organisation.

2.5 Where complaints are received by other contacts in the church, complainants will be directed towards a member of the leadership team in the first instance.

2.6 At the time of receiving the complaint or within any initial response, complainants will be informed of the existence of this policy and provided with a copy if requested, this should be done as soon as is reasonably practicable.

2.7 Emmanuel Epsom Church operates a Safeguarding Policy, Safeguarding Children Procedures, and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Procedure. Where complaints refer to people or activities covered by that policy and procedures, such complaints will be handled in accordance with both policies and procedures. In instances where the policies conflict, those contained in the safeguarding policy and procedures will carry precedence.

2.8 In the case of complaints made by a parent, guardian or other responsible adult to any member of the children's or youth ministry teams, these will automatically be passed to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or if they are unavailable, the Church Safeguarding Coordinator, who may or may not be part of the leadership team. Such complaints will then be handled in accordance with the safeguarding children and other vulnerable beneficiaries policy, in accordance with the Safeguarding Children Procedure and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Procedure

2.9 In certain cases and for the avoidance of doubt, the **trustees** or leadership team may request oral complaints to be

repeated in writing and reserve the right to share complaints with other **trustees** or members of the leadership team as they see appropriate.

2.10 Oral complainants must be informed that certain aspects of oral complaints will be recorded (either at the time or later) including but not limited to:

- The name and contact details of the complainant;
- The date and time that the complaint was received;
- The substance of the complaint;
- Any formal relationship that the complainant has with **Emmanuel Epsom Church**.

2.11 Oral complainants must be informed that although complaints will be handled confidentially, the trustees may share these with other trustees or members of the eldership accordance with this policy.

2.12 All complaints, together with any actions undertaken, will be recorded in a complaints log which will be reviewed by the trustees on a regular basis. Any conclusions and further action required as a result of this review will be formally recorded in the minutes of a trustees meeting.

2.13 Where the complaint relates to a specific person. The trustees may choose to inform that person of the nature of the complaint and to receive a formal response from them. The name and any other sensitive information provided by the complainant will not be shared with the subject of the complaint.

2.14 Complaints excluded by this Procedure:

- Verbal complaints which are resolved, to the complainant's satisfaction, by the next working day.
- Complaints which have been previously investigated by the Trustees under the Complaints process or by the Charity Commission or any other appropriate regulatory body.

3. Resolving complaints

3.1 Complaints will be acknowledged by the trustees or member of the leadership team within **two weeks** of being received and will include details of who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect to have a response. Any first response should include a copy of this policy if not already provided.

3.2 The Trustees will appoint a lead investigator (a trustee) who will provide a definitive response within **one month** of receiving the complaint. Where this is not possible due to ongoing investigations or other reasons, a progress update will be provided within **one month** of receiving the complaint.

3.3 A definitive response will include:

- Actions taken to investigate the complaint;
- Conclusions drawn from the investigation;
- Actions taken as a result of the investigation.

And could include the following:

- The fact that the complaint was taken seriously, and an appropriate investigation was undertaken.
- The complainant is to be thanked for their time.
- Condolences to be given, if appropriate.
- A summary of each element of the issues raised
- Details of policies or procedures followed
- A summary of the investigation and its methodology. What was done, what was looked into and to who was spoken to
- The findings to be set out under each issue raised
- The conclusion of the investigation
- Offer a meeting/follow up if appropriate with the date and time of any meeting
- Actions being implemented to put things right, with timetables and the person responsible for implementing the actions
- It is important not to be or sound to be defensive

3.4 The results of the investigation to be given in writing, unless there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. learning disabilities, visual impairment) and a record will be made as to when, how and what was communicated.

4. Appeals and escalation

4.1 Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should inform the **trustees** of this dissatisfaction in writing within 3 months of receiving the response.

4.2 The Trustees will appoint two trustees (separate from the lead investigator trustee) who will hear the appeal and review the investigation.

4.3 As long as this notice of dissatisfaction is received within the timeframe set out in 4.1, the trustees will acknowledge this correspondence within **two weeks** and will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within **one month**. Notices of dissatisfaction that are received outside of that timeframe will be considered at the discretion of the trustees.

4.4 This appeal decision will be considered final.

At any time, the complainant can complain directly to the Charity Commission or any other appropriate regulating authority. The information about the types of complaints that the Commission can become involved with are set out on [their website](#).

5. Adoption of this policy

5.1 The **Trustees of Emmanuel Epsom Church** formally accepted this policy at the **Trustees** meeting held on 10th July 2017

Appendix 1

Basis of Faith

1. GOD

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator; Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

2. THE BIBLE

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

3. THE HUMAN RACE

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

4. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

5. SALVATION

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

6. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

7. THE CHURCH

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each

other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

8. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

9. THE FUTURE

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.