

The **Methodist** Church 

COMPLAINTS & DISCIPLINE SYSTEM

A Simple guide for

THE LOCAL CHURCH

What is the Complaints and Discipline system for?

The need of the Methodist Church for a complaints and discipline process stems from the imperfect nature of human beings. The Church is a fallible community and its members on occasion behave in ways which are damaging to themselves and others and which undermine the credibility of the Church's witness. A complaints and discipline process is one of the means by which the Church recognises that all human beings are made in the image of God and are entitled to be treated as such, and by which it maintains its witness to the new life to which we are called through Christ.

Through the complaints and discipline process members of the Methodist Church are accountable to the Church in matters of faith and behaviour. The Church seeks to enable healing and reconciliation to take place through that accountability whenever possible. The Church also responds to the call through Christ for justice, openness and honesty, and to the need for each of us to accept responsibility for our own acts.

Has there always been conflict in the Church?

Matthew 18:15-20

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out that fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

(NRSV)

What is a complaint? A statement, in writing or not, made by any person to a member of the church (ordained or lay) which objects to things said, done

or not done by another member of, or a person holding office in, the Church and asks for action to be taken. It could also arise from an assertion that a person has a conviction or police caution which would bar that person from an official position in the life of the Church. The person told such information is described as the “recipient”.

What does a recipient do with the information? They should ask the question “Is there something I can do to help sort it out or does someone else need to know about this?” and also ask themselves “Do I need some support in this situation?”

Who should a recipient tell? If the situation cannot be easily resolved and the matter needs taking further, it should be reported to the “local complaints officer”, whose name and contact details should be in this leaflet. Generally this will be the Superintendent Minister of the Circuit. If another person has been appointed the Minister or Stewards will be able to tell you who that person is.

What happens next? Most problems can be sorted out relatively simply by discussion and sharing. The local complaints officer will explore whether reconciliation might be achieved. More serious complaints will be handled through formal procedures by people with appropriate skills, training and experience.

Is the system for everyone? Yes. A complaint may be made by anyone. The Methodist Church is committed to Equality and Diversity in all aspects of its life. Race, gender, age, disability, sexuality are no barriers when people seek fairness and justice in their dealings with those who are part of the Methodist Church.

Is further advice or help available? When a complaint cannot be sorted out locally help and assistance will be offered. Full details of the Complaints & Discipline system, information about the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church covering the system and a guide are also produced by the Church and can be accessed through the website: www.methodist.org.uk or by contacting the help desk on Tel: 020 7486 5502.

The Local Complaints Officer for this Circuit is:

Contact Details:

Complaints and Discipline, Methodist Church House,
25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR Tel: 020 7486 5502
governancesupport@methodistchurch.org.uk