

A Pathway for Raising Concerns About Leaders at St John's

“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” *1 Peter 5 v2-3.*

In 2021-22 the PCC established a Review Group to consider the culture and processes at St John's and identify what aspects of life at St John's are already helping us to be healthy, and where things can be improved, particularly in those areas of protection from abuse, the accountability of leaders and diversity.

One major theme which emerged from the evidence was the need for a clear and well known means for people to make known their concerns about leaders. Many contributors indicated they did not know how any concerns about a leader might be raised.

The Review Group regarded this as a serious gap in the processes at St John's, and that an internal process for raising concerns should therefore be established and well publicised as a matter of priority.

Who and what are we talking about?

By “leaders” we mean ministry leaders, team leaders, growth group leaders and anyone else in a position of responsibility to others in the church. We mean anyone who leads anything, regardless of whether they are paid or unpaid, in employed roles or voluntary roles.

By “concerns” we mean matters of harmful behaviour by leaders which are not strictly safeguarding matters (the Parish Safeguarding Officer and the Deputy Safeguarding Officer will continue to be the point of contact for safeguarding matters) but are nevertheless matters of concern and may enable patterns of behaviour from a leader to be picked up over time.

The types of harmful actions and behaviours from leaders that should be called out range from obvious ones such as bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination, to less obvious ones such as overbearing leadership, oppressive behaviour, heavy-handed treatment, exclusion, humiliating people, speaking harshly to people, ignoring people, showing a lack of kindness or gentleness in dealing with people. There is no complete list, but if you experience or see something in a leader's behaviour that you don't think is right, please do not sit on it but raise it with a member of the PCC.

Even if you don't think it's serious, reporting it may help us pick up on patterns of harmful behaviour from a leader which can be addressed at a much earlier stage than might otherwise have been the case.

Raising the issue with the leader

Normally we would encourage a person affected by a leader's harmful behaviour to raise the issue directly with the leader in the first instance. We know that people may, understandably, feel unable or unwilling to do so, or they may raise it and the leader's response may not address the concern. The next step might be to raise the concern with the person to whom the leader is accountable, but again the person affected might feel unable or unwilling to do so, or the response may not address the concern.

Raising the issue with PCC Members

The PCC comprise elected members of the church family and are of different ages and both male and female. To provide a more sensitive alternative to raising the issue directly with the leader, or the person to whom the leader is accountable, or in the event a person feels that the response does not

address the concern, PCC members should be contacted. Please contact one or several of them. They will listen to the concern and consider whether any action should be taken, or whether any pattern of behaviour is becoming clear, and if so what action should be taken. PCC members will also report the concerns raised to the Church Wardens to enable the Wardens to spot patterns and possible systemic problems.

If you have a concern about a Church Warden, then please raise this with the Vicar, Associate Vicar, or Lay Chair of the PCC.

If you do wish to raise an issue, then provided the PCC member is aware of your identity, you will be entitled to confidentiality should you wish. We do not want a fear of being singled out by a leader to prevent anyone from raising a concern.

The names of PCC members are listed at the foot of the “Who’s who” tab on the church website. Contact details are listed through the Admin/People Manager tab on the church website (you must be logged in to access this).

If you see or hear something in a leader’s behaviour that is not right, **please speak up**. If you are not the person affected, but you see that someone is affected by a leader’s behaviour, please encourage them to speak to the people named above or contact them yourself.

St John’s PCC

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