

## Complaints Policy

Village Church seeks to be a church with a leadership culture that is healthy, humble and holy. Healthy in living out good works consistent with sound teaching (Tit 2:1); humble in leading under the rule of Christ the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:1-9); and holy in showing sincere brotherly love for each other (1 Pet 1:22-23).

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a fair, efficient and effective process for addressing complaints related to the conduct of leaders at Village Church.

This Policy is to be read alongside the Code of Conduct (**Code**) which sets the standard of behaviour to which our leaders can be held accountable. Any complaint made under this Policy must specify the section(s) of the Code which the complainant alleges has been breached.

This Policy does not seek to cover interpersonal conflicts between members and/or leaders or safe ministry concerns which are addressed by our Steps Towards Gospel Reconciliation and Safe Ministry Policy respectively.

Where a complainant alleges any criminal conduct, he or she is encouraged to report the matter to the relevant law enforcement agency. Village Church will all times comply with our mandatory reporting obligations under law.

### 2. Scope

This Policy applies to all pastors and employees of Village Church. The discipline of all staff who are not pastors is handled by the Senior Pastor. A complaint can be made under this Policy by anyone connected or not connected with Village Church including any members, visitors or the general public.

Complaints made under this Policy may not be anonymous and must be personally signed by the complainant. Other than complaints alleging a serious indictable offence, a complaint made under this Policy must be submitted within 2 years of the date of the alleged breach of the Code. This limitation does not apply to own motion investigations.

### 3. Principles

The following principles will guide the manner in which all complaints are handled under this Policy:

- 3.1. **Sensitivity and Care:** all parties should be treated with loving respect and dignity. An appropriate level of pastoral care should be offered to both the complainant and the respondent during and after the resolution of a complaint.
- 3.2. **Promptness and Timeliness:** as far as reasonably practicable, a complaint should be received, considered, investigated (if necessary) and decided upon promptly and without undue delay.
- 3.3. **Confidentiality and Discretion:** the fact and details of a complaint should be kept strictly confidential to the greatest extent possible. All parties should limit disclosure to those persons directly involved in resolving it or who are providing pastoral care.
- 3.4. **Impartiality and Fairness:** all complaints should be handled in an impartial manner, all parties should be fairly heard, and all persons involved in resolving the complaint should be free of any actual or apprehended bias.
- 3.5. **Free of Repercussions:** no person should be subject to victimisation or adverse treatment for making a complaint or participating in an investigation in good faith under this Policy.

### 4. Review Panel

The Review Panel is responsible for receiving, considering and if necessary, investigating a complaint made under this Policy.

The Review Panel comprises 6 people, who have been voted in by the congregation. At each AGM, these people are reviewed and voted to either stay or leave the panel. Where a position on the Review Panel becomes vacant during the course of a term, the Pastors and congregation may vote in another suitable person to fill that position. The Review Panel is to comprise at least:

- a. an overseer who is also on the Review Panel;
- b. a respected member of Village Church.

If a Review Panel member is the subject of or directly or indirectly involved in the complaint, or has a real or perceived conflict of interest in relation to the complaint, the Pastors and congregation may vote in another suitable person to temporarily fill their position on the Review Panel for the purpose of handling the specific complaint.

## 5. Complaints Procedure

If you are concerned about the conduct of a leader covered by the Code, you should follow the steps set out below and in Appendix A of this Policy.

### ***5.1 Step 1: Prayerfully reflect on the matter***

Take time to prayerfully bring this concern before the Lord. It is a very serious matter to bring an accusation against a church leader, especially if it is not supported by evidence (1 Tim 5:17-21).

Prayerfully ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I aware of all the facts?
- Is this an interpersonal conflict that should be resolved through the Steps Towards Gospel Reconciliation?
- Is there clear evidence or witnesses to support the alleged misconduct?
- Can I demonstrate that the leader has breached a section of the Code?
- Is this hearsay or gossip that I should wisely disregard?

### ***5.2 Step 2: Approach the Review Panel***

If, after prayerful reflection, you are unable to settle the concern in your heart, you should personally bring it to the Review Panel, or in the case that your concern is about one of the Review Panel members, to the Senior Pastor.

The Review Panel will help triage your concern and determine whether it is potential misconduct or an interpersonal conflict. He may then take whatever steps are necessary to resolve the matter, including but not limited to:

- i. bringing the concern to the attention of the leader personally;
- ii. arranging mediation between you and the leader;
- iii. requesting that the leader provide an explanation or apology; or
- iv. inviting you to submit a formal complaint to the Review Panel.

### ***5.3 Submit a formal complaint to the Review Panel***

#### ***a. Step 3: Submitting a formal complaint***

If the above step does not resolve your concern and you decide to make a formal complaint, you should submit it to the Review Panel or if your complaint is in relation to the Review Panel, you should submit it to the Senior Pastor.

Your complaint must be in the form prescribed by Appendix B. Specifically, it must be in writing, personally signed and include the following information:

- i. your name and contact details, and the nature of your relationship with Village Church and the respondent;
- ii. the name of the person you are alleging has breached the Code;
- iii. the specific section(s) of the Code that you allege the respondent has breached;
- iv. details of the alleged breach including when, where and how this breach is alleged to have occurred; and
- v. any evidence of or witnesses to the alleged breach.

#### ***b. Step 4: Receiving a formal complaint***

Upon receiving the complaint, the Review Panel will initiate consideration of the matter. The Review Panel is to consider whether the complaint is, prima facie:

- i. a matter of substance: it describes specific conduct, an incident or a pattern of conduct that can be verified; and
- ii. a matter of consequence: it describes specific conduct, an incident or a pattern of conduct that, if substantiated, would constitute a breach of the Code and which would have consequences for the respondent and Village Church.

If the Review Panel determines that the complaint is not prima facie a matter of both substance and consequence, it is to dismiss the complaint and advise the complainant of its decision.

However, if the Review Panel determines that the complaint is prima facie a matter of both substance and consequence, it must provide a preliminary report of its initial determination.

The Review Panel will seek to make its initial determination within four weeks of receiving the complaint, and will inform the complainant and handle its determination as soon as reasonably practicable.

***c. Step 5: Investigating a formal complaint***

If the Review Panel determines that the complaint is prima facie a matter of both substance and consequence, they will consider the preliminary report and either:

- i. dismiss the complaint as lacking in actual substance or consequence;  
or
- ii. uphold the initial determination and direct the Review Panel to conduct a formal investigation into the complaint.

As part of its investigation, the Review Panel may interview the complainant, the respondent and any appropriate witnesses. It may also engage an external party to assist with the investigation.

Following its investigation into the complaint, the Review Panel is to write a report including any initial findings of fact and recommendations. The report must make a preliminary determination whether the alleged conduct contained in the complaint is in whole or in part:

- Sustained: the evidence supports a finding that the alleged conduct did in fact occur.
- Not sustained: there is not sufficient evidence to establish whether the alleged conduct did or did not occur.
- False: the evidence supports a finding that the alleged conduct did not occur.
- Vexatious: the evidence supports a finding that the complaint was made without reasonable grounds or was designed to harass, annoy, or cause delay or detriment to the respondent.

- Misconceived: the evidence supports a finding that the complaint was made in good faith but was based on a misunderstanding of the facts.

The Review Panel must seek to provide this report within four weeks of commencing the investigation.

***d. Step 6: Determining a formal complaint***

The Review Panel is to then make a final determination in relation to the complaint.

Where the respondent is found to have breached the Code, the Review Panel may take appropriate disciplinary action against the respondent including but not limited to:

- i. In the case of overseers: a warning, suspension or removal from office.
- ii. In the case of pastors: a warning, suspension or removal from office, or disciplinary action permitted under contract or by law.

The Review Panel is to advise the complainant and the respondent of the final determination including any action taken by the Review Panel in relation to the complaint. It will seek to do so within four weeks of receiving the Review Panel's report.

***5.4 Step 7: Accept the outcome or if appropriate, appeal to an external body***

Whatever the outcome, you should acknowledge that your complaint has been taken seriously and accept the final determination of the Review Panel.

If, however, you are unable to accept the outcome, you may seek recourse under civil law or raise a relevant concern with the Australian Charities and

Not-for-profits Commission. If your complaint is in relation to the conduct of the Senior Pastor and you are unable to accept the outcome, you may also seek recourse under the Complaints Policy of FIEC Australia.

## 6. Own Motion Investigations

Where the Review Panel receives information and forms a reasonable belief that a pastor, overseer of Village Church has acted in breach of the Code, it may refer the matter to the Review Panel for initial consideration and if appropriate, investigation and then determination by the Review Panel, according to the process set out from section 5.2b to 5.4 of this Policy.

## 7. Vexatious Complaints

This Policy should not be used by any person to make vexatious complaints. Vexatious complaints include complaints that are an abuse of the process set out in this Policy, submitted or continued without reasonable grounds, or designed to harass, annoy, or cause delay or detriment. If the Review Panel determines that a complaint submitted by a member of Village Church is vexatious, it may exercise church discipline against the member.

Village Church is under no obligation to consider or investigate a complaint any further once all avenues under this Policy have been exhausted.

## 8. Record Keeping

All records including the complaint, investigation reports, interviews, correspondence and file notes will be securely kept by the Review Panel during and after the resolution of the matter. All personal information will be handled in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and where appropriate will be de-identified and destroyed after a data retention period of 2 years from the formal conclusion of the matter.

## 9. Review

The Review Panel will monitor the effectiveness of this Policy and recommend any appropriate amendments from time to time to consider implementing.

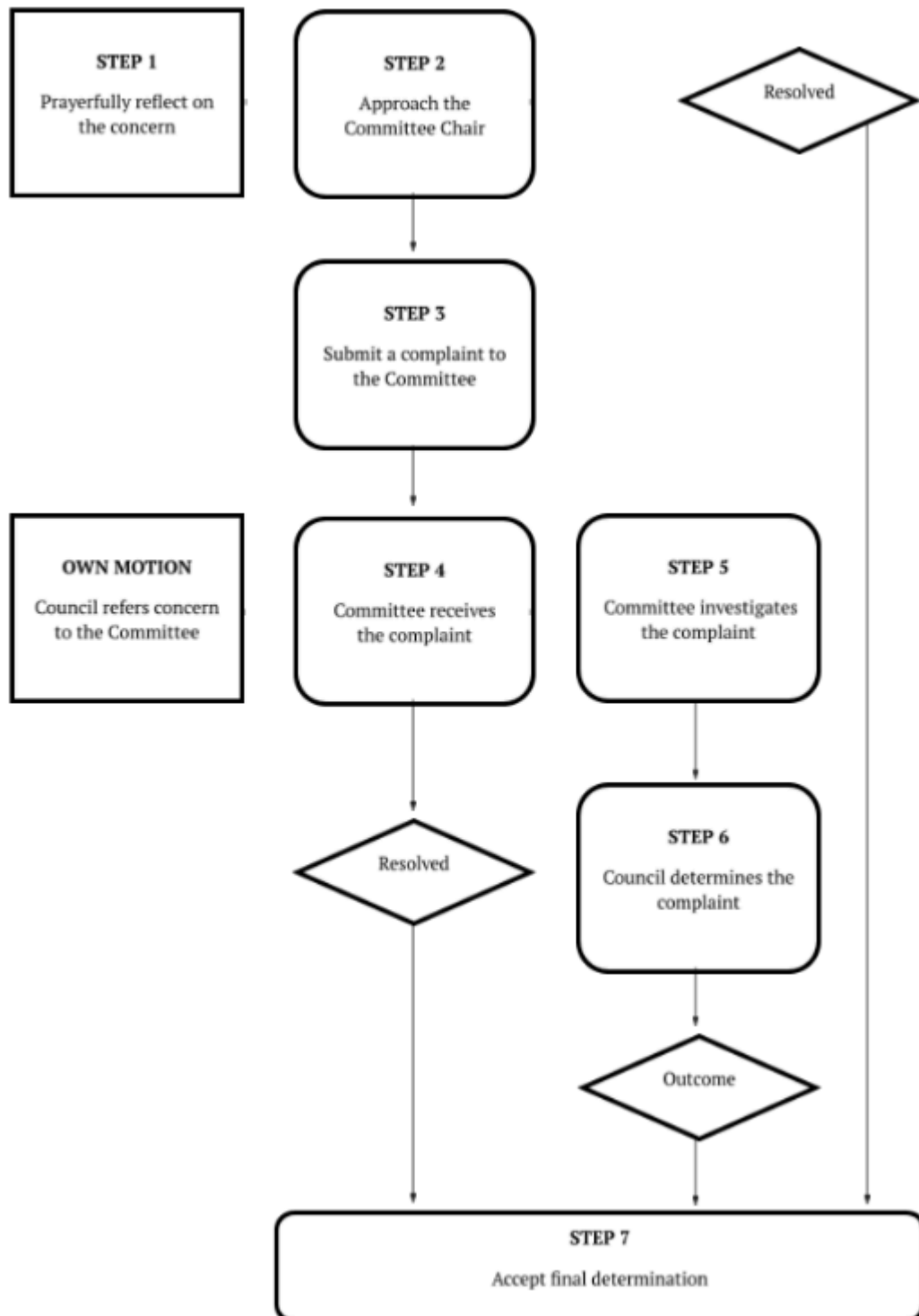
**Last Reviewed:** 17 January 2026

**Next Review:** 17 January 2029

# VILLAGE

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## Appendix A: Formal Complaint Process



## Appendix B: Formal Complaint Form

Please submit your form to the Review Panel at: [grievances@myvillagechurch.net](mailto:grievances@myvillagechurch.net) .

<b>Your details</b>	
Name:	
Address:	Phone:
	Email:

<b>Your complaint</b>	
Name of the person who is the subject of your complaint:	
Category (please tick):  <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Pastor <input type="checkbox"/> Pastor <input type="checkbox"/> Team Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Church go-er	Your relationship with the respondent:
Specific section of the Code alleged to have been breached:	

Details of your complaint:

- *Write what happened, when (dates) and where*
- *Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses*
- *Explain what impact this conduct had or you fear may have on you or others*
- *Provide any additional information that you believe might be helpful*

Have you tried to resolve this issue informally?	YES	NO
Have you approached the Review Panel with your concern?	YES	NO

If not, please explain why you have not tried to resolve this issue informally:

If you did try to resolve this issue informally or If you approached the Review Panel with your concern, what happened?

*State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome.*

What actions do you want taken in response to this complaint and what type of resolution are you seeking?

Signature:

Date:

*Village Church will handle your information in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and where appropriate will de-identify and destroy any personal information after a data retention period of 2 years from the conclusion of a matter.*