



**Taunton Baptist Church**

# **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

This policy is for use by any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in the groups or ministries of Taunton Baptist Church (TBC). This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as required.



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## 1. Policy statement

1.1 Taunton Baptist Church (TBC) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right where appropriate.

1.2 TBC's policy is:

- To provide a complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of a complaints procedure so that people know how to make a complaint (via church website and church public notice board)
- To make sure that staff, and the trustees, leaders of groups and ministries know what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps TBC to improve its ministry and procedures

## 2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of TBC.

## 3. Where Complaints Come From

- Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in the groups or ministries of TBC.
- A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.
- If an anonymous complaint is received, or if a complainant declines to give their name and contact details, the complaint will not be dealt with under this policy and procedure. Instead, the person receiving the complaint will decide whether any action or investigation is required and may refer the matter to the Church Secretary or other appropriate person. For example, an anonymous safeguarding complaint should be referred to the safeguarding lead, or a health and safety complaint should be referred to the Health and Safety officer.
- This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use TBC's Disciplinary and Grievance procedures.

## 4. Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.



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## 5. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Church Secretary. \*

*\*Note: If at the relevant point in time in any part of this Complaints Procedure there is no Church Secretary in post, then any reference to Church Secretary should be construed as a reference to any of the Church Elders, the Church Treasurer and the (Senior) Minister of the Church and such person shall fulfil the role given to the Church Secretary in this procedure provided that no person may fulfil the role of Church Secretary in a case where he/she is named in the complaint.*

## 6. Complaints Procedure

### 6.1 Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

- Written complaints may be sent to Taunton Baptist Church at Silver Street, Taunton, TA1 3DH or by email at [administrator@tauntonbaptist.org](mailto:administrator@tauntonbaptist.org)
- Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01823 333196 or in person to any of TBC's staff, volunteers or trustees.

### 6.2 Receiving Complaints

Complaints may be made through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address, and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to TBC (for example: church member, non-member, group attendee)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and the likely timescale (see 7.4)
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see Appendix 1

### 6.3 Preliminary Stage

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if it is possible and appropriate.



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Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the details of the complaint should be passed to the Church Secretary within one week.

## 6.4 Stage One

On receiving the complaint, the Church Secretary records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, s/he delegates an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. S/he should write to the complainant within a week, acknowledging the complaint and who is dealing with it and when they should expect a reply (i.e. within 3 weeks – see below). A copy of this Complaints procedure should be attached.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply in writing (which includes email) within three weeks, taking appropriate regard to confidentiality. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken because of the complaint.

## 6.5 Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can make a request to the Church Secretary that the complaint is reviewed by the Trustees. At this stage, the Church Secretary will appoint two appropriate trustees who have not been involved in the complaint to investigate.

The request for Trustee level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it by the Church Secretary. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The trustees who receive Stage Two complaints will investigate the facts of the case and this may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.



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Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within three weeks taking appropriate regard to confidentiality. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken because of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Trustees decide it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## **6.6 Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Church Secretary may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest. No one involved in a complaint will be appointed to investigate. If the complaint is about the Church Secretary s/he will not be involved in investigating, determining, or reviewing the complaint and the role will be taken by one of the Church Elders.

## **6.7 Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually by the Trustees to identify any trends or any other matters which may indicate a need to take further action. Records from a complaint investigation will be kept for three years from the initial date of the complaint in accordance with TBC's Data Protection policy.

## **7. References**

The following legislation and guidance documents were consulted in drafting this policy:

Charity Governance Code for smaller charities

<https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en>

Baptist Union UK

[https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/587220/Guideline\\_Leaflet\\_C18.aspx](https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/587220/Guideline_Leaflet_C18.aspx)

Data protection

<https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>

Signed:

Revd Richard Matcham, Minister

On behalf of the Trustees, as agreed at a meeting on:



## Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complainant before taking details of the complaint
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of TBC, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue. It may be that they do not wish to pursue a formal complaint
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it be likely to take and what it will involve
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal