**Eynsham Baptist Church**

**Complaints Policy and Procedure**

***To be reviewed by the Church Meeting on 19th January 2025***

***(This was approved by the Trustees on 2 July 2024)***

1. **Introduction**

The primary purpose of Eynsham Baptist Church’s complaints procedure is to provide a process for dealing with complaints relating to the behaviour of, or activities and decisions taken by, its trustees and volunteers.

Please note that there is a separate complaints procedure for complaints about the Minister. <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Publisher/File.aspx?ID=208600&view=browser>

1. **General Principles**

Wherever possible the church would prefer to follow Scriptural principles of reconciling differences. However, on occasion attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or not be appropriate. A formal complaints process is available for such cases.

1. **Can I make a complaint?**

Yes. You do not have to be a member of the church to make a complaint. If you believe you have reasonable grounds to make a complaint and you cannot resolve the issue informally or believe it would not be appropriate to do so, you can make a complaint.

1. **What kind of complaint can I make using this procedure?**

You can make a complaint about:

* *The services the church provides* (e.g.: groups, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Poor service might include dirty facilities or the trustees failing to carry out fire extinguisher tests or other health and safety requirements).
* *The behaviour of a church trustee or volunteer that has affected you or someone for whom you are responsible* (e.g. inappropriate language or behaviour, persistent late payment of bills, sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination).
* The application of church policies and procedures, or decisions made by the church, that affect you or someone for whom you are responsible eg the church withdrawing financial support for a community group.

***Note:*** You should report any safeguarding concern to the church’s safeguarding officer following the church’s safeguarding policy. <https://www.eynshambaptistchurch.co.uk/index.php/safeguarding/>

1. **What kind of complaints are not suitable for this procedure**

* Any safeguarding concern
* A complaint about the minister. see 1.

1. **How do I make a complaint and how will the church deal with it?**

You should submit your complaint to the trustees using the church’s complaints form. (see Appendix 1) either to trustees@eynshambaptistchurch.co.uk or by post to Eynsham Baptist Church, Lombard St Eynsham OX29 4HT

On receipt of your complaint the church, acting through its charity trustees will:

* Acknowledge your complaint and tell you who will review it within 7 days of receipt
* Within 14 days begin the review, contacting you for further information if needed, finding out what happened, when it happened, and who was involved, and if necessary, interviewing people involved.
* Inform the person who is the subject of the complaint about the nature of the complaint unless this would seriously prejudice the review.
* Recommend what remedial action, if any, should be taken giving reasons
* Write to you informing you of the outcome of the review.

The church may on occasion receive related complaints, or several people may make the same complaint. Depending upon the nature of the complaint and when each complaint is received, the trustees may decide to consolidate the review or to deal with the earliest complaint first.

The more complex the complaint is, the longer it may take the church to respond. This is especially likely if the complaint relates to historic matters, or several people need to be interviewed. Please understand that if the police investigate the person who is the subject of the complaint in relation to the same or related matters, the church may not be able to begin or complete the review until the police have completed their investigations.

Please be aware that the church may decide that it is under a duty to report the matter to statutory authorities or the Charity Commission. If this is the case the church will write to you to tell you this.

The church will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with the church’s Data Protection Policy. <https://www.eynshambaptistchurch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/EBC%20Data_Protection_Policy.docx>

**Note:** On occasion, the church may need to make a public statement about the subject matter of the complaint, report it to statutory authorities or seek professional advice, and consequently the church cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential. You should maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of your complaint other than to seek professional advice if required. Once you have submitted your complaint and while the matter is being reviewed, you should avoid communicating with the person complained about.

1. **What if I am not happy with how the church deals with my complaint?**

You should write to the trustees stating that you want to appeal and the grounds for your appeal. The trustees will determine if another member of the leadership team and Independent Association Regional Minister can review your appeal, and if so, how long it will take for that person to review your appeal. If the church is unable to allocate someone to review your appeal, the trustees will let you know and advise you instead to consider contacting the Charity Commission.

1. **Vexatious Complaints**

If the church concludes that your complaint is vexatious, and you are a church member, the church may consider exercising church discipline. If you are not a member, the church may not answer any further complaints you make.

APPENDIX 1

**Eynsham Baptist Church Complaints Form**

**Your details**

Name:………………………………………………………………………………………..

Address:…………………………..…………………………………………………………

……………………………..…………………………………………………………………

Phone:……………………………Email address:…………………………..……………

**Details of your complaint**

|  |
| --- |
| Date(s): |
| Person(s): |
| Complaint about: *Briefly describe the nature of your complaint.* |
|  |
| Supporting information:  *State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint, what happened, when and where. Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses. Include any additional information that you think would be helpful.*  *If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it. Explain what impact this decision has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom. Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful.* |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| Have you tried to resolve this matter informally? Yes  No  |
| *Explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally.* |
|  |
| If you tried to resolve this matter informally, 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.* |
|  |
| Action sought: |
| *Describe what actions you want the church to take. While the charity trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what you are seeking.* |
|  |

The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church’s data protection policy. The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data in order to review and resolve your complaint.

Date you submitted your complaint to the church: …………………………