

# Jesus Fellowship Grievance Procedure and Resolution of Conflicts

## Background

There is no such thing as a flawless family, a perfect workplace – or a totally heavenly congregation – we have proved it!

There are many reasons why conflict might arise in our church/community – opinions about doctrine maybe, but more often personality differences, past hurts, misunderstandings and the ‘stuck’ and ‘blind’ areas that we all have. Sadly, we also have to include more extreme behaviour like bullying and abuse.

Is resolving conflict the same thing as ‘church discipline’? No, not exactly, but they could be linked. Church discipline is the whole process of training, restraining, guiding and restoring. It’s mostly a creative, positive thing, but occasionally involves more serious measures.

We do not want a church/community where there is no discipline and training, like a society where citizens could flout the laws and absolutely no consequences would follow or a home where the children were allowed to do whatever they pleased with utterly no discipline imposed. Chaos would reign in either of these instances. We believe God calls us to be ordered (1Corinthians 14:33,40) and to live at peace with one another (2Corinthians 13:11).

Our Jesus Fellowship Vision Statement says we want to “gather a people whose lives are being transformed by Jesus”. But we are not naïve enough to just expect ‘heaven on earth’ as we all work out that transformation from old to new. It’s going to take effort and we’re going to need help from God and each other as we work it out.

So this process is our way of helping everyone in the Jesus Fellowship to be of ‘one heart and soul’.

**Our commitment** is to hear and respond to complaints within our church and community, to strengthen the informal “right of appeal” that already exists, so as to defuse difficult situations, and to help people who are struggling with community living or relationships within the church.

## **Those who may need to make use of this procedure include-**

- Church members (past or present)
- Community members (past or present)
- Relatives of vulnerable adults being cared for in community
- People who have attended church or community events and something has gone wrong

## **Potential grievances or areas of conflict could include-**

- Issues of pastoral or administrative unfairness or injustice
- Pastoral mismanagement or abuse
- Physical, mental or sexual abuse (though note that these would be dealt with according to our Safeguarding Policy)
- Financial or administrative complaints

- Issues of leaving New Creation Christian Community
- Issues connected with living in New Creation Christian Community such as relationship difficulties
- Church disciplinary process for leaders of various levels
- Lack of pastoral input and administrative delays

**Also to be covered by these processes are –**

- Oversight of relief of need on leaving community
- Financial support and loans

**Outline procedure (bearing in mind that the order may vary!)**

1. Attempt informal resolution at local level involving relevant pastors, assistant pastors and household leaders as needed. If that does not bring resolution, proceed to 2:
2. Approach the local Senior Leader with view to mediation. If the Senior Leader is unable to bring resolution:
3. The person with the grievance informs the Senior Leader that he/she wants to take the Procedure to the next stage (or the Senior Leader may initiate the Procedure himself). This means:
4. Referral to Pastoral Office who will
  - a. Listen to person with the grievance
  - b. Listen to those on the other side of the conflict
  - c. Listen to others concerned, including Senior Leader and/or Apostolic Leader responsible
  - d. In the cases where this would be best, arrange a roundtable meeting for all those concerned to be helped to talk the issues through. In other cases, the Pastoral Office may make recommendations or take action directly.
5. If dissatisfied with outcome, the person complaining can:
  - request reconsideration in the form of an internal review involving others
  - or request outside mediation, maybe from a Christian mediation service or via a respected Christian leader.

*Note – this is all completely different from the reporting of abuse of children and/or vulnerable adults, which is covered in the Safeguarding Policy of Jesus Fellowship Church and of the New Creation Christian Community.*

**Who covers the procedure?**

This process is covered by the Jesus Fellowship's Pastoral Department. This is currently led by Peter Taylor and is based at –

Jesus Fellowship Central Office, New Creation Farm, Nether Heyford, Northampton NN7 3LB

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