

## Complaints policy

### 1.0 Policy Statement

St. John the Apostle and Evangelist Church (St. John's) and the Parochial Church Council (PCC) is committed to its role of promoting the church's mission to the congregation and wider community. However, there may be a time when complaints relating to local parochial matters are raised, and this policy outlines our approach to handling such complaints.

This complaints procedure is for those who are unhappy about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them. Prior to using this formal procedure, the PCC encourages an informal approach to the Vicar or a Churchwarden to see if the matter can be resolved in that way.

### 2.0 Policy Principles

Wherever possible, the Church would prefer to follow Scriptural principles of reconciling differences and difficulties. 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 possible and appropriate. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally. If, for example, a person is dissatisfied with the service they have received, then in the first instance they should tell that person of their dissatisfaction. They should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns where justified. If a person remains unhappy, the member of staff will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior member of staff or member of the PCC.

However, on occasion, attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not be appropriate. This policy therefore puts forward the complaints process available for such cases, rooted in confidentiality, mutual respect, and collaborative working to achieve a suitable outcome.

### 3.0 Complaints covered by this procedure

This policy covers complaints made about:

- The services that the Church provides.
  - For example: baptisms, weddings, and funerals; dirty facilities; health and safety requirements
- The behaviour of a Church employee, trustee, or volunteer that affect you or someone for whom you are responsible.
  - For example: inappropriate language or behaviour; sexual harassment or discrimination.
- The application of Church policies or procedures, or decisions made by the Church, that affect you or someone for whom you are responsible.
  - For example: the Church withdrawing financial support for a community group.

### 4.0 Complaints not covered by this procedure

For complaints concerning the Vicar, please raise the matter with the Vicar. If the matter remains unresolved, you could contact the Bishop of St. Albans via [bishop@stalbens.anglican.org](mailto:bishop@stalbens.anglican.org). You may wish to read the Church of England's "I have a complaint about misconduct by a member of the clergy - what can I do" at <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2690>

For complaints concerning Safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, please refer to our [Safeguarding policy](#) and in the first instance contact St. John's Parish Safeguarding Officer on 07516 190 985 or [vicar@saintjohnswatford.org.uk](mailto:vicar@saintjohnswatford.org.uk). You can also contact the [Diocesan Safeguarding Team](#).

## **5.0 Making a complaint to the PCC**

Complaints should be made in writing to the Churchwardens by sending an email to:

Jill Bennett - [churchwarden1@saintjohnswatford.org.uk](mailto:churchwarden1@saintjohnswatford.org.uk)

Thomas Cockburn - [churchwarden2@saintjohnswatford.org.uk](mailto:churchwarden2@saintjohnswatford.org.uk)

The Churchwardens will ensure that your complaint is:

- Taken seriously.
- Handled fairly without bias or discrimination.
- Treated confidentially.

You should complain within 3 months of the event that you are complaining about. When submitting a complaint, please ensure to include the following:

- Your full name and address.
- What you think went wrong and how it has affected you, including details to show why you are feeling aggrieved.
- What (if anything) you think the PCC can or should do to rectify the situation.

If you prefer for someone else to submit a complaint on your behalf, the PCC requires written confirmation from you stating that you consent for that person to act for you.

## **6.0 How your complaint will be handled**

The Churchwarden will send an email to confirm receipt of your complaint within 7 working days of its receipt, tell you who will review it, and arrange for it to be considered by the PCC Standing Committee. If your complaint refers to particular individuals who are members of the PCC Standing Committee, they will meet without the individual being present.

The PCC will look fairly into your complaint, including seeking the views on the matter from any individuals, whether members of the PCC or otherwise, to which your complaint refers. The PCC Standing Committee may appoint one or more persons to look into the matter on its behalf, but it will be the Standing Committee that makes any final decisions. The PCC and any such appointed persons will treat the matter confidentially.

You may be invited by the PCC to present your complaint to them. If this occurs, you may attend with a friend / representative if you wish. The meeting should be held as informally as possible. The Chair will explain the

purpose of the meeting, introduce the members, and emphasise confidentiality. The meeting will be minuted by the PCC and minutes shared afterwards for ratification.

The Churchwarden to whom you submitted the complaint will write to you with the conclusion from the PCC's review and the reasons for that outcome. The Churchwarden will aim to respond to you in this way within 6 weeks of receipt of your complaint. If an outcome cannot be achieved within this timeframe, the Churchwarden will write to you to explain the reasons for the delay.

This will be the PCC's final response to your complaint.

Please be aware that the Church may decide that, depending on the nature of the complaint, it is under a duty to report the matter to statutory authorities or the Charity Commission. If this is the case, the Churchwardens will write to you to tell you this.

The Church will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with our [General Privacy notice](#) which outlines how your data will be handled. However, 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.

If you remain dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you may wish to consider contacting the Charity Commission as while the PCC is an independent body, they are a charity regulated by the Charity Commission. The Charity Commission can be contacted either via their [website](#) or by writing to them at Charity Commission

PO Box 211  
Bootle  
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## **7.0 Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed triennially, or sooner in response to new legislation, national policy development, changes to Churchwardens, or specific demand and feedback, at the first PCC meeting after the APCM.

## **8.0 Relevant and Related Legislation, Policies, and Resources**

- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulations 2019
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy 2024
- Safeguarding of Children and Adults in the Church 2018

## 9.0 Version Control

Version #	Author	Date	Summary of changes
01	Meg Murphy	October 2024	New policy