

## **ST. ANDREW'S POLICY ADDRESSING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR**

The purpose of this policy is to restore harmonious relationships between people associated with St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Owen Sound when the relationship between two or more individuals has been harmed in any way because of inappropriate behavior or language.

Inappropriate behavior or language includes, but is not limited to: bullying (subtle or overt), name calling, undue pressure, intimidation, yelling, improper use of social media, breach of confidentiality, disrespectful behavior or language, racist or homophobic remarks, etc.

This policy applies to all members, adherents, Ministers, volunteers, Board of Manager members, Elders, staff, or anyone from the community using our church facility.

A complaint may be brought forward by the hurt individual, a witness, or a concerned third party. When a complaint is received, Session will initiate a process that hopefully will lead to restored relationships between the individuals affected. In addressing a complaint, Session is bound to always:

- 1) Follow the process outlined in this policy
- 2) Speak the truth in love.
- 3) Adhere to our values and principles
- 4) Be consistent in our actions in confronting such behavior
- 5) Provide care to those who were hurt and to those who have caused the hurt.
- 6) Report any alleged criminal behavior involved in the complaint to the police or the appropriate authority (i.e. CAS) immediately for their investigation.

All complaints will be addressed in the following way:

### **A: Initial Response**

The individuals will first be encouraged to meet together and discuss the incident in an effort to resolve the issue between them. If meeting alone is not comfortable or acceptable to either party, Session will provide 2 elders to facilitate a meeting between them to try to reach reconciliation.

If reconciliation is not achieved and the relationship not restored, the matter will be brought back to the Session.

The Clerk(s) of Session and/or the Minister within 5 days of a complaint being brought forward shall respond in writing:

**1. To the offended person:**

- a) to acknowledge receipt of the concern and to outline the process that will be followed.
- b) to inform the offended person that the details of the incident will be shared with the accused as well with the Session.

**2. To the person accused of inappropriate or offending behavior:**

- a) to outline the concern and the process that will be followed.
- b) to invite the accused to provide the Session or the Minister with any additional information regarding the incident.

**B: Second Response**

Session will call an emergent meeting within 14 days of the matter being brought forward. Session will prayerfully review the details of the complaint to gain a fuller understanding of the incident and then determine whether:

- 1. The complaint is valid and further action is required, or;
- 2. The Session requires more time to investigate the complaint further, or;
- 3. No further action is necessary at this time.

**C: Communication and Feedback**

The Clerk of Session and/or the Minister shall respond to both individuals within 5 days of Session's findings under Section B (above) that either:

- 1. Session has found that the complaint is valid and that further action is required.
  - a) In such a finding, Session may ask:
    - i) the accused to apologize to the offended person.
    - ii) the accused to seek forgiveness from the offended person.
    - iii) for a commitment by the accused not to repeat the offending behavior.

b) If none of the above results in a reconciliation, Session may take further steps, including but not limited to:

i) A meeting with the minister and/or 2 elders to reach reconciliation and restore positive relationships.

ii) A 'Leading with Care' workshop or other appropriate training such as cultural or sensitivity training or other educational opportunities. Additional reading material may be recommended.

c) If there is still no willingness to reconcile and restore positive relationships, or if the offending behavior happens again toward the same individual or toward another person, Session may call another emergent meeting to discuss the recurrent behavior and how to address it, including but not limited to:

i) Sanctions from any leadership or serving role within the church.

ii) A request not to participate in the life of church for a specified time.

**OR;**

2. Session has found that it needs more time to investigate the incident further and will specify a timeline to complete further discussions or investigations.

**OR;**

3. Session has found that no further action is necessary at this time as the matter has been settled to the satisfaction of both individuals, the Minister, and of Session.

#### **D: Right to Appeal**

If either party disagrees with a decision by the Minister they have the right to appeal it to Session.

If either party disagrees with a decision by Session, they have the right to challenge the finding. They can provide additional information regarding the behavior and request a meeting with the Session, the Minister, or the Interim Moderator, and/or 2 elders for consideration of the appeal.

**This policy will be reviewed annually or as needed.**