

Church Grievance Procedure (for non-reportable matters – see attached flow-chart)

Pursuing Peace and Restoration in Christian Community

As members of Christ's body, our life together is shaped by love, truth, and reconciliation. In the course of ministry and church life, misunderstandings, disagreements, and grievances may arise. This is to be expected in a fallen world. But how we respond to conflict matters deeply. Jesus calls us to be people of peace, committed to restoring relationships in a spirit of grace.

This policy outlines a relational and biblically grounded process, based especially on **Matthew 18:15–17**, to help navigate conflict well within the life of our church.

1. Speak Face to Face First (Matthew 18:15)

“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.”

- If you have a concern or grievance, do not begin by talking to others about it. Instead, speak directly and privately with the person involved.
- This should ideally be face to face, not by email or text, and certainly not on social media.
- Pray beforehand, aiming for understanding, not just to be heard or to prove a point.
- Remember that most issues are resolved well with gentle, honest conversation.

: If You Cannot Speak Directly

- If the issue involves the Rector or another leader; or if you feel unsafe or uncomfortable raising the concern directly you may approach one of the Churchwardens.
- Wardens are your chosen leaders in the parish who can support relational peace and act as a bridge in sensitive matters.

Before contacting a Warden:

- Write down your concern respectfully and clearly.
- Include documentary evidence if available (dates, emails, observations).
- Wait at least 24 hours before submitting your concern, allowing time for prayer, reflection, and clarity of thought.

The Wardens or Rector may help facilitate a mediated conversation with the other party, or advise on appropriate next steps.

2. Take One or Two Others Along (Matthew 18:16)

“But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’”

- If the matter remains unresolved after your initial conversation, you may arrange a second conversation with the person, this time in the presence of one or two trusted people, such as a Warden or another pastoral leader.
- This step allows for fairness, accountability, and a greater chance of resolution.

3. Involve the Rector, Wardens, or Diocese (Matthew 18:17)

“If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church...”

- If the concern cannot be resolved at the previous stages, it may need to be formally brought to the Rector and Wardens, if not already involved.
- After that, with the support of the Rector and/ or wardens.
- This step ensures appropriate accountability and care is taken for both individuals and the wider church.

4. Treat as an unbeliever

To “treat them as an unbeliever” (Matthew 18:17) does not mean treating someone with contempt or hostility. Jesus commands us to love our enemies, and he is the friend of sinners. Therefore, we continue to love, pray for, and graciously call the unrepentant person to faith and repentance. At the same time, we can no longer affirm their profession of faith as credible or relate to them as a church member in good standing. Appropriate boundaries are therefore necessary, including removal from ministry and leadership responsibilities, both for the protection of the church and in the hope that loving discipline will lead to repentance and restoration.

A Note on Professional Standards and Reputational Harm

Some grievances may fall under Professional Standards or Code of Conduct matters. These issues must be handled with great caution and integrity.

Even before an outcome is determined, allegations, especially when shared widely, can cause lasting harm to reputations, relationships, and ministries. This is especially the case if a pastor is given leave when an investigation is underway.

All involved are urged to treat such matters confidentially, resist premature judgments, and avoid speculation. “Mud can stick,” even when claims are unfounded or unresolved.

We are called to love, believe the best, and wait for due process to take its course.

Confidentiality, Prayer, and Christlike Conduct

- Confidentiality is critical at all stages of this process.
- Gossip, slander, or passive-aggressive behaviour have no place in the body of Christ.
- Each step should be taken prayerfully, with a commitment to humility, truth, and love.
- The goal is always restoration, not punishment or division.

Final Word

As Christians, we are stewards of the unity and witness of the church. Conflict, while painful, can be an opportunity to grow in grace, truth, and reconciliation. We follow the One who made peace through the cross, and we are called to do likewise.

Church Conflict: Which Path?

Applying Matthew 18 or Referring to Professional Standards

A concern or conflict has arisen
in the life of the church

STEP 1: Is this a reportable matter?

Does the concern involve any of the following?

(Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn Professional Standards Policy)



- Abuse, harm or risk of harm to a child or vulnerable person



- Criminal behaviour



- Sexual misconduct or sexual harassment



- Corruption, financial misconduct or improper use of position



- Serious misconduct or a breach of the Code of Conduct / Behavioural Expectations



- Any other matter that, because of its seriousness, should be managed by the Diocese

YES

NO

GO TO PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Do not use Matthew 18

Report to the Professional Standards
Division as soon as possible.



Phone: (02) 6232 7850



Email: professional.standards@anglicancg.org.au



Web: www.anglicancg.org.au/professional-standards

The matter will be assessed and managed
in line with the Professional Standards Policy
and related protocols.

Remember:

The safety and wellbeing of people is always the
highest priority.

Behavioural Expectations apply:

- ✓ Demonstrate respect
- ✓ Act with integrity
- ✓ Value and protect each person
- ✓ Work together
- ✓ Take responsibility

Professional Standards will advise
on next steps.

APPLY MATTHEW 18

Relational and restorative path

Follow Matthew 18:15–17 as a guide for resolving
personal or relational conflict.



1 Private Conversation

Go to the person privately and gently raise the issue.



2 Take One or Two Others

If unresolved, take one or two others to help.



3 Tell It to the Church

If still unresolved, bring it before a church leader
or the church.



4 Treat as Unbeliever (Last Resort)

If the person refuses to listen, treat the matter as
you would someone outside the church.

Aim for restoration, reconciliation and peace
(2 Corinthians 2:11).



Throughout the Process

- Pray for wisdom and grace.
- Keep confidentiality.
- Document key steps and outcomes.
- Seek support from church leaders when unsure.

Need Help Deciding?

Contact Professional Standards
for guidance on (02) 6232 7850 or
professional.standards@anglicancg.org.au

"If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.
If they listen to you, you have won them over." Matthew 18:15 (NIV)

