



Grievance Policy and Procedure

Taunton Baptist Church (TBC) realises the importance of good working relationships. It therefore tries to establish an atmosphere in which problems can be discussed and resolved and its aim is to encourage open communication. TBC also believes that it is in everyone's best interest to ensure that employees' grievances are dealt with quickly and fairly and that a grievance procedure enables individuals to raise issues with management that affect them in the workplace. The procedure is available to all TBC employees* and will normally be followed where a grievance arises to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all. This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as required.

** It should be noted that Baptist Union ministers are appointed to a ministerial 'office', so are not considered employees.*



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1. Policy statement

- 1.1 Taunton Baptist Church (TBC) will try to resolve, as quickly as possible, any grievance which an employee may have about their working environment, conditions, workload, decisions made by the trustees, Church members, manager or colleagues.
- 1.2 TBC would hope to resolve any grievance or potential disciplinary issue informally via a quiet word with the line manager/church secretary. However, where a grievance cannot be resolved informally then it may be pursued formally through the procedure outlined below.
- 1.3 The procedure is not contractually binding upon TBC and is provided for guidance only, but all employees should familiarise themselves with its provisions.
- 1.4 In the event that an employee submits a grievance during a disciplinary procedure, TBC may at its discretion decide whether to suspend the disciplinary procedure in order to fully consider the grievance, or to deal with both procedures concurrently, where the issues are related.
- 1.5 In appropriate circumstances, TBC may suggest mediation as a means of addressing a grievance. Mediation may take the form of a neutral mediator assisting parties to reach an amicable outcome to a grievance. Mediation will usually take the form of an open session between all affected parties and the mediator at which each party will state its case, followed by a series of meetings between each party and the mediator.

2 Grievance procedure

- 2.1 **Informal:** The employee should firstly raise any grievance informally with the person to whom they immediately report, who in most cases, will be best placed to respond to his or her complaint. If the employee's grievance concerns their manager, they should instead raise their grievance with the Church Secretary.
- 2.2 If the grievance is about the Church Secretary s/he will not be involved in investigating, determining or reviewing the grievance and the role will be taken by one of the Church Elders.
- 2.3 **Formal:** If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, the employee should raise the matter formally, in writing, giving full details of the nature of the grievance, with their manager (or the Church Secretary if the grievance concerns their manager). Where an employee has difficulty expressing themselves because of language or other difficulties, they may seek help from their manager or the Church Secretary.



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- 2.4 If a grievance is taken up with the Church Secretary, the Church Secretary may, at their discretion, appoint another Church Leader to consider the grievance. When stating their grievance, the employee should focus on preparing a factual account of their grievance.
- 2.5 **Hearing:** The manager or Church Secretary will invite the employee to a hearing in order to discuss the grievance as soon as reasonably practicable. They will ensure that the meeting will be held in private and the employee should make every effort to attend.
- 2.6 At the meeting, the manager or Church Secretary will invite the employee to outline their grounds for grievance and consult with them on how it may be resolved.
- 2.7 The manager or Church Secretary may adjourn the meeting if they need to carry out further investigations, after which the meeting will usually be reconvened.
- 2.8 **Adjournment:** The manager or Church Secretary will adjourn the meeting before any decision is taken about how to deal with an employee's grievance. The manager or Church Secretary will tell the employee when they can reasonably expect a response, if one cannot be made at the time. Usually, the manager or Church Secretary will confirm any decision or proposed action to the employee in writing within 10 working days of the hearing. If it is not possible to respond within the specified time period the employee will be given an explanation for the delay and told when a response can be expected. The manager or Church Secretary will set out clearly in writing any action that is to be taken and the employee's right of appeal. Where an employee's grievance is not upheld, the manager or Church Secretary will explain the reasons.
- 2.9 **Appeal:** If the employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of the first meeting, the employee should appeal in writing to the Church Secretary stating in full their grounds of appeal within one week of the date on which the decision was communicated. The Church Secretary will arrange a further meeting with trustees who have not previously been involved in the case.
- 2.10 Following the appeal hearing, the employee will be informed of the decision or proposed action. This decision will be final subject to any overriding decision by the Church Meeting. If it is not possible to respond within the specified time period the employee should be given an explanation and told when a response can be expected. There is no further right of appeal.
- 2.11 In this procedure document, references to the Church Secretary will, where appropriate, include the Church Secretary's appointee
- 2.12 If at the relevant point in time in any part of the procedures below there is no Church Secretary in post, then any reference to Church Secretary should be construed as a



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reference to any of the Church Elders, the Church Treasurer and the Senior Minister of the Church and such person shall fulfil the role given to the Church Secretary in this procedure provided that no person may fulfil the role of Church Secretary in a case where he/she may be the manager of the employee concerned.

3. Confidentiality

- 3.1 TBC aims to deal with grievances sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with a matter which is subject to this procedure.
- 3.2 The employee and anyone who accompanies them (including witnesses) must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure.

4. Companions at hearings

- 4.1 The employee may take a companion to any grievance hearing or appeal hearing under this procedure. The companion may be either a trade union official or a fellow employee. The employee must tell the person conducting the hearing who their chosen companion is, in good time before the hearing.
- 4.2 Employees are allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay to act as a companion. There is no duty on employees to act as a companion if they do not wish to do so.
- 4.3 If the chosen companion will not be available at the time proposed for the hearing the employee may request that the hearing be postponed to a day not more than five working days after the day originally proposed. If the alternative time proposed is reasonable, and the employee's chosen companion is able to attend, the hearing will be postponed until that time.
- 4.4 Whilst the companion may address the hearing and confer with the employee during the hearing, they do not have the right to answer questions on behalf of the employee.
- 4.5 If the employee's choice of companion is unreasonable TBC may require them to choose someone else, for example:
 - a) If in the opinion of TBC the employee's companion may have a conflict of interest that may prejudice the hearing; or
 - b) If the employee's companion is unavailable at the time a hearing is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days.



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- 4.6 TBC may, at its discretion, allow an employee a companion who is not an employee or union official (for example, a family member or a member of the Church).
- 4.7 The role of a companion may also be used to help overcome a particular difficulty caused by a disability, or where the employee has difficulty understanding English.

5. References

The following guidance documents were consulted in drafting this policy:

Baptist Union UK

https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/368689/Guideline_Leaflet_L08.aspx

ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures

<https://www.acas.org.uk/acas-code-of-practice-for-disciplinary-and-grievance-procedures/html>

Signed:

Revd Richard Matcham, Minister

On behalf of the Trustees, as agreed at a meeting on: