

Complaints Handling Policy

1. General Policy

- 1.1 The PCC of St. Margaret's Church, Rainham ('the PCC') take complaints seriously and commit to deal with all complaints in a confidential, timely and appropriate manner.
- 1.2 Our policy is:
 - To provide a fair complaints policy which is clear and easy to use;
 - To make sure that PCC members, volunteers and staff are aware of this policy and know how to handle complaints;
 - To ensure in all cases that complaints are handled using Biblical principles and that wherever possible, disputes and disagreements are amicably resolved and that relationships are restored;
 - To gather information which helps us improve what we do in the future.
- 1.3 All complaints and any associated information provided will be handled sensitively, and in accordance with relevant data protection requirements. However, the PCC reserve the right to involve external parties (including the police and other authorities) and to take legal advice where this is considered necessary.
- 1.4 The overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the PCC of St. Margaret's Church.
- 1.5 In constructing this policy, the PCC have paid due consideration to the Good Governance Code with the aim that the charity demonstrates internal and external complaints are handled constructively, impartially, and effectively and it learns from mistakes.

2. Receiving Complaints

- 2.1 Complaints may be addressed to any PCC member, or the Vicar or Churchwardens, either orally or in writing or lodged in the Church office at St. Margaret's Church, High Street, Rainham, Kent ME8 7JH
- 2.2 Where complaints are received by other contacts in the church, complainants will be directed towards the Vicar and/or Churchwardens in the first instance.
- 2.3 At the time of receiving the complaint or within any initial response, complainants will be informed of the existence of this policy and provided with a copy if requested.
- 2.4 The PCC operates a safeguarding children and other vulnerable adults policy. Where complaints refer to people or activities covered by that policy, such complaints will be handled in accordance with both policies. In instances where the policies conflict, those contained in the safeguarding policy will carry precedence.
- 2.5 In the case of complaints made by a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult to any member of the children's or youth ministry teams, these will automatically be passed to the designated Parish Safeguarding Officer who may or may not be part of the leadership team. Such complaints will then be handled in accordance with the safeguarding children and other vulnerable adults policy.

- 2.6 In certain cases and for the avoidance of doubt, PCC members, the Vicar or Churchwardens may request oral complaints to be repeated in writing and reserve the right to share complaints with the full PCC, or the Vicar or other Churchwarden as they see appropriate.
- 2.7 Oral complainants must be informed that certain aspects of oral complaints will be recorded either at the time or later including but not limited to:
- The name and contact details of the complainant;
 - The date and time that the complaint was received;
 - The substance of the complaint;
 - Any formal or informal relationship that the complainant has with St Margaret's Church.
- 2.8 Oral complainants must be informed that although complaints will be handled confidentially, the PCC may share these with other PCC members or the Vicar or Churchwardens in accordance with this policy.
- 2.9 All complaints, together with any actions undertaken, will be recorded in a complaints log which will be reviewed by the PCC on a regular basis. Any conclusions and further action required as a result of this review will be formally recorded in the minutes of a PCC meeting.
- 2.10 Where the complaint relates to a specific person, the PCC may choose to inform that person of the nature of the complaint and to receive a formal response from them. The name and any other sensitive information provided by the complainant will be shared with the subject of the complaint, unless there is good reason not to.

3. Resolving Complaints

- 3.1 Complaints will be acknowledged by the PCC, Vicar or Churchwardens within two weeks of being received and will include details of who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect to have a response. Any first response should include a copy of this policy if not already provided.
- 3.2 The PCC will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within two months of receiving the complaint. If, because of ongoing investigations or for other reasons this is not possible, a progress update will be provided to the complainant within one month of receiving the complaint.
- 3.3 A definitive response will include:
- Actions taken to investigate the complaint;
 - Conclusions drawn from the investigation;
 - Actions taken as a result of the investigation.

4. Appeals and Escalation

- 4.1 Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should inform the PCC of this dissatisfaction in writing within 2 months of receiving the response.
- 4.2 Due to the size of St. Margaret's Church, it is likely that the same group of PCC members that dealt with the original complaint will be responsible for reviewing the appeal. Wherever possible a different PCC member will take the lead in investigating the appeal. In exceptional circumstances the PCC may appoint an external investigator to deal with an appeal.

- 4.3 As long as this notice of dissatisfaction is received within the timeframe set out in 4.1, the PCC will acknowledge this correspondence within two weeks and will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within two months. Notices of dissatisfaction that are received outside of that timeframe will be considered at the discretion of the PCC.
- 4.4 This appeal decision will be considered final. At any time, the complainant can complain directly to the Charity Commission or any other appropriate regulating authority. The information about the types of complaints that the Commission can become involved with are set out on their website.

5. Adoption of this Policy

- 5.1 The PCC of St. Margaret's Church formally accepted this policy at the PCC meeting held on 22 January 2026.