

FORMAL PARISHIONER GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Introduction

Goal and Statement of Policy: *St. Mark's seeks to provide a safe place and community to all those who participate in our fellowship. We recognize that each individual -- whether female, male, transgender, or non-gender identified, regardless of race, national origin, or creed, regardless of age or disability -- has the inherent right to the safety and the integrity of their person while in our fellowship.*

As our nation wrestles with a history of violence, abuse and bias towards disenfranchised communities, it's especially important to provide parishioners a thoughtful process to address interpersonal grievances and have their voices heard. Therefore, we have developed a formal parishioner complaint procedure.

Complaints may be made against another parishioner, a parish leader, or a clergy member. The threshold for making and reviewing complaints is an individual judgment that must be based on the stated goal of providing a safe place and community to all those who participate in our fellowship.

In considering the question of whether to make a formal complaint or not, the aggrieved person might consider:

1. Do I feel safe and/or comfortable coming back to St. Mark's after X happened? If not, the parishioner should file a complaint.
2. Do I feel safe and/or comfortable being in the same service on Sunday (or serving on the same committee, etc.) as the person who said/did what I am concerned about? If not, the parishioner should file a complaint.
3. Is this something I can deal with/solve myself, or would I like to have help in resolving it?

All the parties are encouraged to honor the confidentiality of the process.

Executive Summary

The Formal Parishioner Complaint Procedure consists of four components:

1. Formal Complaint submitted to Senior Warden or Rector
2. Senior Warden and Personnel Advisor meet with the Complainant
3. Senior Warden and Personnel Advisor meet with the Subject of the Complaint (Subject)
4. Clergy mediation meeting with the Complainant and Subject

If the complaint is deemed not actionable or is outside the scope of this policy, the Senior Warden or Rector will notify the Complainant.

Penalties are assessed for repeat "offenders to the policy." Certain alleged behavior may warrant referral to local law enforcement authorities and/or, in the case of the clergy, the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (EDOW).

Records are maintained for at least two years after the conclusion of the mediation meeting.

The formal parishioner complaint procedure and its results will be assessed after one year. Going forward, the Vestry will be provided at least once per year, a report on the volume, nature and outcome of cases processed without any case details, strictly for analysis purposes and for use in strategic planning.

Step by Step

STEP 1: INITIATING A COMPLAINT

A complaint must be submitted in writing to the Senior Warden (unless s/he is the subject of the complaint). If the Senior Warden is the subject of the complaint, then the written complaint will be submitted to the Rector. If any member of the Personnel Committee is a party to the complaint then he or she will not participate in the process.

If the complaint is related to the Rector, the Senior Warden will consult with EDOW. If the complaint is related to any other clergy, the Senior Warden will consult with the Rector, who will then consult with EDOW. Depending on EDOW policy, the complaint procedure may proceed at St. Mark's as outlined below.

The incident must have occurred within the past 30 days. If the incident occurred more than 30 days from the initiation of the complaint, then the Complainant must provide a rationale for the delay in submitting the complaint.

The complaint must be submitted by email or by letter.

STEP 2: MEET WITH THE COMPLAINANT

If the actions in the complaint are clearly criminal in nature, the Rector and Senior Warden will immediately confer between themselves and with the Vestry Counsel and refer the matter to appropriate local authorities.

Within one week of receiving the written complaint, the Senior Warden and Personnel Advisor will schedule a confidential meeting with the Complainant. The Complainant will have the opportunity to state her or his complaint and to have a friend, witness, or other supporter present. The Complainant must provide prior full disclosure if s/he intends to have an attorney present.

The Senior Warden and Personnel Advisor may ask questions and seek other input (for example, by questioning others with knowledge of the situation) as a part of their assessment. In the end, they will assess the complaint, judging it to be actionable if a reasonable person would feel unsafe and/or uncomfortable in similar circumstances. If the Senior Warden and

Personnel Advisor deem that the complaint is actionable, then a written recommendation will be provided to the Rector and/or Assistant Rector for mediation or other action. The Complainant has the option to participate in mediation or not; if not, the process will stop after Step 3 and a summary of the complaint and response will be filed.

If the Senior Warden and Personnel Advisor deem that the complaint is not actionable or is outside the scope of the policy, they will notify the Complainant and explain that the grievance/issue does not meet the threshold for the policy.

STEP 3: MEETING WITH THE SUBJECT

If the complaint is actionable, within one week of the initial meeting with the Complainant, the Senior Warden and the Personnel Advisor will inform the Subject of the complaint and provide the Subject with an opportunity to respond in writing. The Subject's written response must be received prior to a confidential meeting with the Subject.

The Subject will have an opportunity to respond, in full, to the complaint. S/he may also invite a friend, witness, or other support to the meeting, but must provide prior full disclosure if s/he intends to have an attorney present. As a part of the meeting, the Senior Warden and Personnel advisor will ask questions and other input may be sought.

After the meeting with the Subject, the Rector, Senior Warden, and Personnel Advisor will decide whether the complaint should be referred to the Clergy for mediation or individual pastoral counseling, or if the complaint should be referred to local law enforcement authorities for further action. In the course of determining whether the complaint should be referred to local law enforcement authorities, the Senior Warden, Rector, and Personnel Advisor will confer with the Vestry Legal Counsel.

If the Subject rejects the meeting and/or mediation, then the Senior Warden, and Personnel Advisor will meet with the Rector and/or Assistant Rector to determine the next steps.

STEP 4: CLERGY MEDIATION MEETING

The Rector and/or Assistant Rector will meet with the Complainant and the Subject to mediate the complaint or grievance. Prior to the meeting, each party will write down his/her desired end-result.

The Mediation should have the overarching goal to "preserve our community" and for the "respect of every individual" involved in the mediation/arbitration of the complaint, grievance, or issue.

The Rector and/Assistant Rector will finalize the arbitration when both parties, within reason, achieve their desired resolution. If no resolution is achieved, then the Rector/Assistant Rector

Formal Parishioner Complaint Procedure

advises both parties to limit further interaction and informs them that a record of complaint and mediation will be maintained for two years.

If the steps have proceeded through Step 4 and the complaint is regarding unwelcomed behavior to include sexual harassing actions, racially, or gender offending comments, then the Subject will be put on notice that further incidents will necessitate further action at the parish level and potential referrals to local law enforcement authorities and/or EDOW.

The Rector will provide the Personnel Committee with a written summary and verbal briefing of the mediation and the end result. The Personnel Committee consists of Rector, Senior Warden, Vestry Liaison, and the Personnel Advisor.

PENALTIES

Any person who has made repeated disparaging, unwelcome, harassing comments or has taken actions in this vein or has had multiple allegations of the same, shall be considered as an "Offender" to the policy and will subject to one or more of the penalties below:

- Prohibited from attending any St. Mark's social functions (pub lunches, Parish retreat, picnics, dances, etc.), for a period to be determined but not more than two years.
- Prohibited from working with children at St. Mark's indefinitely.
- Referral to local law enforcement authorities for suitable action.
- Referral to EDOW for suitable action.

Other penalties may be deemed to be appropriate in individual cases.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

All Formal Parishioner Complaint Procedure documents and/or meetings are confidential and access is limited to the Personnel Committee and Vestry Counsel.

Documents will be maintained for at least two years, dated after the last mediation meeting(s) with the Senior Warden and Personnel Advisor.

The Personnel Committee maintains the documents in an access-restricted manner within the parish records.

The formal parishioner complaint procedure and its results will be assessed after one year. Going forward, the Vestry will be provided at least once per year, a report on the volume, nature and outcome of cases processed without any case details, strictly for analysis purposes, and for use in strategic planning.

Approved by the St.Mark's Vestry
November 26,2018