



## **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

*(Because of our different structures, alternatives for the Wesleyan Reform Union and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion are indicated in the text.)*

Biblical teaching extols unity and love amongst Christians. However, due to our fallen nature, this is not always realised. Jesus taught the principle of talking things through, and of establishing the truth of any dispute (Matt 18: 15-17). Two or three witnesses are required for an accusation to be brought about an elder (1Tim 5: 19). We are all recipients of the Lord's love, and should demonstrate that love amongst ourselves (1 John 3: 23).

It is hoped that minor matters can be dealt with by informal conversation. The procedures set out below should only be needed if some more serious matters remain.

### **A. GRIEVANCE**

*The object of this procedure is to provide you, as minister, with a means of having any grievance (you may consider you have) examined quickly and effectively and, if it is deemed to exist, to have it resolved (if possible) at the earliest practicable moment.*

**Stage 1.** If you have a grievance about a matter to do with your church employment you should first raise it in writing with a member of the local leadership or deaconate, or the Church Secretary, stating the alleged grievance. It is then the responsibility of that person to ensure that a meeting is held to address the situation within five working days of it first being raised. You have the right to be accompanied by another person of your choosing at this and any subsequent meeting. The grievance needs to be examined to see if it is legitimate, and then dealt with as soon as possible. A full reconciliation would be the ideal outcome.

**Stage 2 (Appeal).** If you feel the grievance has not been satisfactorily answered you should raise the matter in writing with the Secretary of the Ministerial Committee (WRU) / Trustee contact for the church (COH), who should meet with both parties within two weeks of the request, respond to the grievance, and make a recommendation about how it may be resolved.

**Stage 3.** If the matter cannot be resolved by agreement the matter should be referred to the Advisory Committee (WRU) / senior ministerial Trustee (COH), whose adjudication shall be final and will be implemented.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION**

If the issue is one of sexual harassment or discrimination it would be appropriate for it to be raised at Stage 1 with a person of the same gender as the minister. At subsequent discussions persons of both genders should be present.

## **B. DISCIPLINE**

It is hoped that with the start of regular church reviews minor matters will be raised and dealt with during that process, and what follows will be reserved for issues which are more serious or about which there is no consensus.

**Stage 1.** A local leader or the Church/Circuit Secretary will write to you detailing the area of dissatisfaction with either your performance or conduct, and invite you to attend a disciplinary meeting. You will have the right to be accompanied by another person of your choice. The meeting will investigate the matter and you will be given the opportunity to comment. A record of this will be kept. As a result of the investigation you may receive a written warning and be informed that there must be an improvement. If there is no improvement or the matter is not resolved the issue will be taken to Stage 2.

**Stage 2.** The leader, Church/Circuit Secretary will write to you again and invite you to a second disciplinary meeting, at which the matter will be reviewed. You will have the opportunity to be accompanied by another person and to comment. As a result of this review you may receive a written warning. A record of the meeting will be kept. If there is no improvement or the matter is not resolved the issue will be taken to Stage 3.

**Stage 3.** The leader, Church/Circuit Secretary will invite you to attend a further meeting stating that the possible consequences could be a final written warning or dismissal. A record of the meeting will be kept and the decision will be notified in writing. If you do not accept the decision you may appeal to the Secretary of the Ministerial Committee, who will appoint a group of people, including a representative of a church with a minister (WRU) / General Secretary who will bring it to the Trustees (COH). You have a right to appeal at any stage in the process.

## **GROSS MISCONDUCT**

If you are charged with an act of gross misconduct you will be immediately suspended on full pay while further enquiries are made by the Church Leadership. You will receive a written explanation of the alleged misconduct including the evidence for your suspension and you will be given the opportunity to meet with the Church Leadership before a final decision is made. Appropriate action will be taken in liaison with the Ministerial Committee (WRU) / Trustees (COH), as above.

If you are subsequently dismissed and you wish to appeal you must inform the Church Leadership who will then arrange a second meeting together with representatives of the Ministerial Committee (WRU) / Trustees (COH) to discuss the appeal.

### **Notes:**

Matters should be dealt with as quickly and discreetly as possible.

It is important that written records of each interview and at each stage are kept and are available to all parties upon request.

Decisions must be communicated in writing and be signed on behalf of both parties.

At every stage of these proceedings you will have the right to be accompanied by another person and to state your case.

**Under Employment Law**, similar procedures will need to be in place for any paid employee of a church, or denomination. The principles will also apply to voluntary church officers and office holders.