United Church Ferndown's Complaints Policy

Accepted 19/11/2026

Introduction

The primary purpose of United Church Ferndown complaints procedure is to provide a process for dealing with complaints relating to the behaviour of, or activities and decisions taken by, the church's staff, charity trustees, or volunteers.

Please note that there is a separate complaints procedure for complaints about a nationally accredited Baptist Minister, Baptist Minister in Training, Nationally Accredited Baptist Church Worker, or a Nationally Recognised Baptist Pastor.

That procedure is available at:
www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/520969/Complaint_against_Accredited.aspx

You can find out if someone is a nationally accredited Baptist Minister by looking them up on the directory of nationally accredited Baptist Ministers at:
www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/504943/Ministries.aspx

General Principles

Wherever possible the church would prefer to follow Scriptural principles of reconciling differences. However, on occasion attempts to resolve an issue informally may fail or may not be appropriate. A formal complaints process is available for such cases.

Can I make a complaint?

Yes. You do not have to be a member of the church to make a complaint. If you believe you have reasonable grounds to make a complaint and you cannot resolve the issue informally or believe it would not be appropriate to do so, you can make a complaint.

What kind of complaint can I make using this procedure?

You can make a complaint about:

- The services that the church provides.
  For example, toddler groups, foodbanks, baptisms, weddings and funerals. Poor service might include dirty facilities or the trustees failing to carry out fire extinguisher tests or other health & safety requirements.
- The behaviour of a church employee, trustee or volunteer that has affected you or someone for whom you are responsible.
  For example, inappropriate language or behaviour; persistent late payment of bills; sexual harassment or unlawful discrimination.
- The application of church policies and procedures, or decisions made by the church, that affect you or someone for whom you are responsible.
  For example, the church withdrawing financial support for a community group.

What kind of complaints are not suitable for this procedure?

Safeguarding concerns relating to child or adult protection.

- Any safeguarding concern should be reported to the church's designated person for safeguarding following the church's safeguarding policy.

- A complaint about the conduct or service of an accredited Baptist Minister, Baptist Minister in Training, Nationally Accredited Baptist Church Worker, or a Nationally Recognised Baptist Pastor. (See above)
- An employment grievance. The grievance procedure in the employee's contract of employment should be followed.

How do I make a complaint and how will the church deal with it?

For general complaints, you should submit your complaint in writing using the church's complaints form (see Appendix 1). To request a complaints form, please email secretary@ferndown.church. If your complaint relates to the processing of your personal data or your rights under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), please email dataprotection@ferndown.church and your complaint will be handled in accordance with the church's Data Protection Policy. A complaints form will be sent to you by email where appropriate.

Your personal data provided in connection with your complaint will be processed in line with United Church Ferndown's Data Protection Policy and applicable law including the UK GDPR. A Privacy Notice is available at https://www.ferndown.church which sets out in detail what personal data we collect, how it will be used, who it may be shared with, your rights as a data subject, and how long records will be retained. You are encouraged to read this alongside submitting any complaint.

We will only collect and use information that is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary to handle and respond to your complaint. Where your complaint involves sensitive information (such as health, safeguarding, or other special category data as defined in law), please provide only the minimum details needed to explain your concern; such information will be processed strictly in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

On receipt of your complaint, the church, acting through its charity trustees, will:

- Acknowledge your complaint and tell you who will review it within 7 days of receipt;
- Within 21 days, begin the review, contacting you for further information if needed; finding out what happened, when it happened, and who was involved, and if necessary, interviewing people involved;
- Inform the person who is the subject of the complaint about the nature of the complaint unless this would seriously prejudice the review;
- Recommend what remedial action, if any, should be taken, giving reasons;
- Write to you informing you of the outcome of the review;
- Retain records of your complaint only for as long as necessary, in accordance with the church's Data Retention Schedule.

The church may, on occasion, receive related complaints, or several people may make the same complaint. Depending upon the nature of the complaint and when each complaint is received, the trustees may decide to consolidate the review or to deal with the earliest complaint first.

Where related complaints are consolidated, we will do so in a way that respects data minimisation, confidentiality obligations, and the rights of all individuals whose personal data is involved.

The more complex the complaint is, the longer it may take the church to respond. This is especially likely if the complaint relates to historic matters or several people need to be interviewed. Please understand that if the police investigate the person who is the subject of the complaint in relation to the same or related matters, the church may not be able to begin or complete the review until the police have completed their investigations.

Please be aware that the church may decide that it is under a duty to report the matter to statutory authorities or the Charity Commission. If this is the case, the church will write to you to tell you this.

The church will treat the facts and content of your complaint carefully and in line with the church's data protection policy. However, on occasion, the church may need to make a public statement about the subject matter of the complaint, report it to statutory authorities or seek professional advice, and consequently the church cannot guarantee to keep your complaint confidential.

You have rights in relation to your personal data including the right to request access, correction, restriction of processing, and in certain circumstances, erasure. These rights and how to exercise them are set out in our Data Protection Policy.

You should maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of your complaint, other than to seek professional advice if required. Once you have submitted your complaint and while the matter is being reviewed, you should avoid communicating with the person complained about.

What if I am not happy with how the church deals with my complaint?

You should write to the church secretary stating that you want to appeal and the grounds for your appeal. The church secretary will consult with the church leadership to determine if another member of the leadership team and a Regional Minister (Baptist) or a Moderator (URC) can review your appeal, and if so, how long it will take for that person to review your appeal. If the church is unable to allocate someone to review your appeal, the church secretary will let you know, and advise you instead to consider contacting the Charity Commission.

An appeal should not include new evidence unless you could not with reasonable diligence have provided that evidence when you first complained.

If your complaint relates to the processing of your personal data and you are not satisfied with our response, you may escalate your concerns to the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@ferndown.church. If the matter remains unresolved, you have the right to make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) — full contact details are provided in our Data Protection Policy.

If you are unhappy with how the church deals with your complaint, you may also choose to contact the Charity Commission.

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Vexatious Complaints

If the church concludes that your complaint is vexatious and you are a church member, the church may consider exercising church discipline. If you are not a church member, the church may not answer any further complaints you make.

Complaints Form

Name			
Address			
Phone Number		**Email**	

Date(s):	
Person(s):	
Complaint about:	

Briefly describe the nature of your complaint.

- State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint, what happened, when and where.
- Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses. Include any additional information that you think would be helpful.
- If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it.
- Explain what impact this decision has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom.
- Include any supporting information

Have you tried to resolve this matter informally? Yes ☒ No ☒

Explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally.

If you tried to resolve this matter informally, what happened?

- State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome.

Action sought:

- Describe what actions you want the church to take. While the charity trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what you are seeking.

The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church's Data Protection Policy. The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data in order to review and resolve your complaint. Your rights are explained fully in the Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice.

Date submitted		**Submitted to**	