

TRINITY NETWORK GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Next Review Date: February 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this procedure is to honour God, treat people with respect and encourage good, healthy relationships within all churches in the Trinity Network.

We believe that men and women are created in the image of God, enjoying a unique value and dignity, to live in a special relationship with God and his creation. This means that all people should be treated with love and respect. ([Genesis 1:26-28](#); [Psalm 145:17](#); [John 15:12](#)). .

However our old sinful nature continues to lead us into situations of conflict with one another. This makes reconciliation an ongoing challenge. Because we are reconciled to God, we have the opportunity to share God's ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-19). Christians can experience complaints, disputes and concerns as opportunities to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31), to serve others (Gal 6:2) and to grow to be more like Christ (1 Cor 11:11).

2. OVERVIEW

Open communication and feedback are regarded as essential elements of a satisfying, harmonious and productive environment.

Interpersonal Grievance

Trinity Network encourages employees who work at Trinity Church and volunteers¹ to resolve any issues or concerns that they may have at the earliest opportunity with the person involved, failing that, their immediate supervisor.

The preferred process involves employees and volunteers resolving issues to their satisfaction internally and at a local level, without feeling they have to refer to external organisations or to authorities for assistance.

However, there may be situations where it is not appropriate to resolve issues internally first, such as in situations of bullying, harassment or assault of any nature. In these circumstances staff and volunteers should immediately notify the Senior Pastor who will then in turn notify the Network Business Manager. The Network Business Manager will then notify the Senior Network Pastor and Network Board (if appropriate and required).

Everyone has a right to have a grievance heard without fear of unfair treatment or victimisation and to have their privacy protected.

The resolution of a grievance will be managed by a person who has the knowledge, expertise and authority to attempt to resolve the particular grievance.

Complaint or Concern around Leadership or Ministry Direction

There are times when church members have a concern that they would like to raise with church leadership which is not primarily personal but about a sermon, a change, an incident which occurred or a question of leadership or ministry practice. It is unrealistic in a large church to expect the Minister to deal personally with each of these matters. The Leadership and Ministry Complaints process is meant to assist church members with an appropriate way to raise and get a response to issues of concern.

3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide an avenue through which employees and volunteers can resolve work related complaints as they arise.

4. POLICY

This policy and procedures applies to:

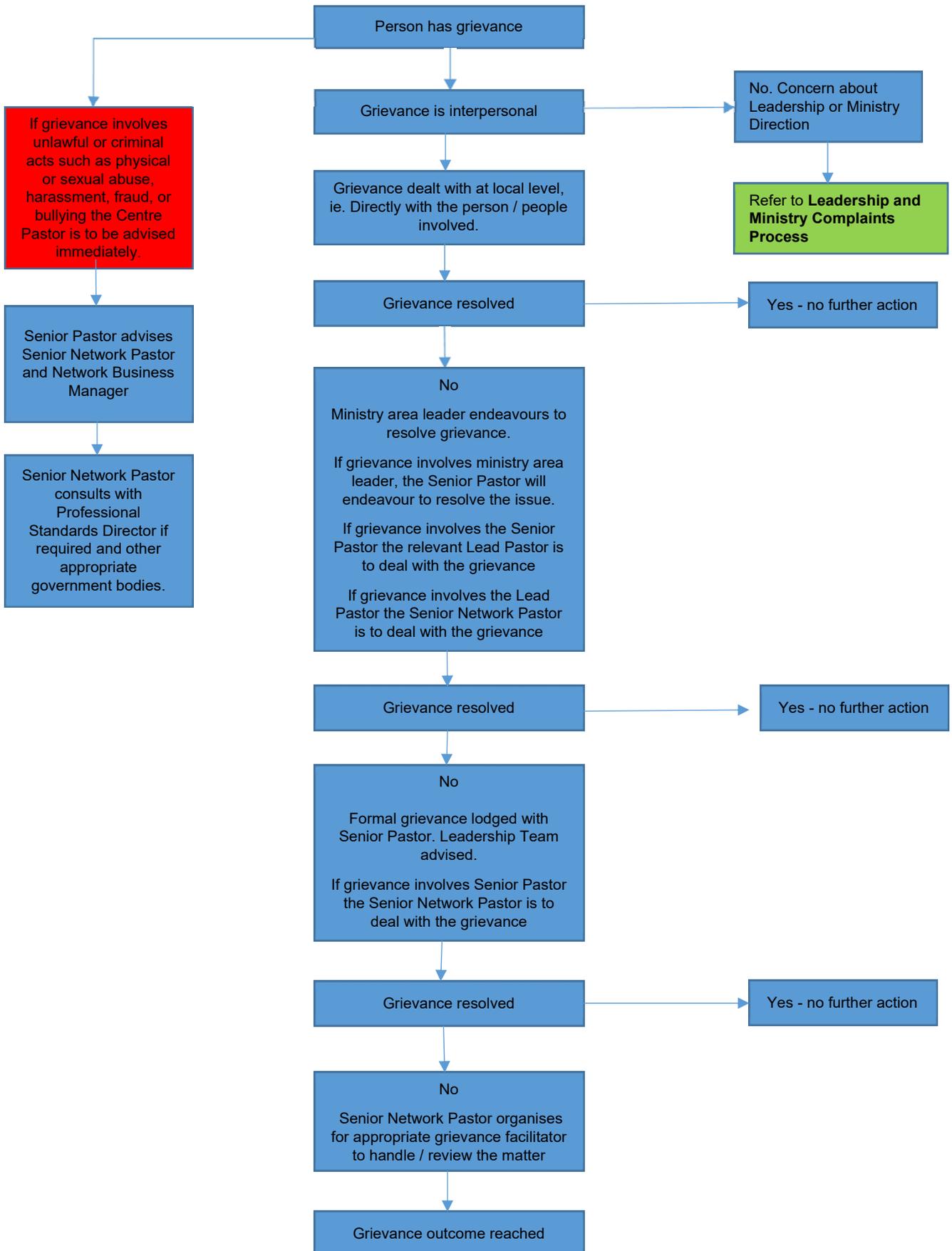
- All ministries and activities of the Church and Network
- All pastors, lay workers, employees, volunteers and visitors

Subject to the nature of the complaint, employees and volunteers should feel comfortable discussing issues with the Senior Pastor in accordance with the procedures outlined below. All formal avenues for handling of grievances will be fully documented and the employee/ volunteer's wishes will be taken into account in determining the appropriate steps and actions.

No employee or volunteer will be intimidated or unfairly treated in any respect if they utilise this Policy to resolve an issue.

5. PROCESS FOR RESOLVING GRIEVANCES

The following is the general process for resolving grievances.



6. RESOLVING GRIEVANCES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The purpose of this section is to assist in resolving grievances before they escalate to the stage of lodging a formal grievance.

Grievance or conflict situations involve two or more people with different expectations and views, each one taking a position and acting on what they believe is right. In addition, the organisation has a perspective that must also be taken into account.

The purpose of this section is to assist people to resolve grievances before they escalate to the stage of lodging a formal grievance. The objective is to provide information that enables them to act constructively on their own behalf to:

- Clarify and understand their situation
- Access the help they may need
- Choose the best approach to suit their situation
- Know when it's appropriate to escalate to a formal process.

What is a grievance?

Grievances are often the result of unresolved issues, problems or conflicts that have been avoided or not addressed to the satisfaction of those involved. Examples include a person:

- Feeling they have been unfairly treated by others;
- Being excluded or experiencing discrimination;
- Being the butt of continual jokes and/or taunted in a way that they find offensive;
- Feeling that decisions or processes in their group are unethical, or even illegal;
- Feeling afraid to complain about something about something because they fear the consequences from another person;
- Feeling that a decision that directly affects them doesn't take into consideration all of the facts, and that their issues or concerns haven't been heard.

How do we deal with grievances?

In the first instance, resolution of issues through personal action at the local level (ie. Between the people concerned) is encouraged. When someone feels that an action is unreasonable, unfair or has an unduly negative impact on the individual or group, they should take up their concerns directly with the people involved where possible. Early action at this level provides the best opportunity for a positive resolution.

Many issues arise every day. Which ones should be addressed?

We do also need to differentiate between a minor issue that creates passing annoyance or irritation and more serious issues. Issues that affect our sense of worth, challenging relationships, or threaten our future are examples of issues that need to be dealt with.

A way to decide if an issue needs to be addressed is to determine whether it is causing a problem that is likely to become worse if nothing is done to resolve it. For example, an increasing number of people are becoming involved? Is the situation intolerable? Is avoidance no longer an option?

When is resolution at a local level not an option?

There are some issues that should not be dealt with at a local level and immediately reported to the Senior Pastor who in turn will report to the Senior Network Pastor and Network Business Manager. This includes matters of unlawful or criminal acts such as physical or sexual assault, fraud, threatening behaviour or verbal abuse.

Privacy & Confidentiality

The policy states that people have the right to have their privacy protected and to be supported in dealing with grievances. In addition, they are encouraged and expected to act constructively on their

own behalf. If you discuss a sensitive issue with another person, request that they respect your confidentiality and be prepared to show the same respect for others.

What might be personal considerations when addressing grievances?

Many of us feel reluctant to address things directly. We're busy, or the whole thing just seems 'too hard.' We may feel trapped because the issue relates to someone in a position of power. At the personal level, we may feel apprehensive about making ourselves vulnerable or dealing with strong feelings. In these situations, because the outcome is uncertain, we may be unsure as to whether or not to proceed and the best way to do so.

What may be done about it?

- a. Clarify the grievance.
- b. Seek assistance
- c. Take personal responsibility in the situation.
- d. Discuss confidentially.
- e. Be open to new solutions.
- f. Make the first move towards a reconciliation.
- g. Create constructive solutions that will work for each person involved.
- h. Remain flexible and adapt to the process as it unfolds.

7. LODGING A GRIEVANCE – THE COMPLAINANT

What is a grievance?

A grievance is a notice to the Network is that a person is protesting against what she/he perceives to be an inappropriate, unfair or offensive act against him/her by another person, and that intervention by another person or higher authority is requested or necessary. Formalising a protest against someone in this way is a serious step.

What are the consequences of lodging a grievance?

If you lodge a grievance, you are essentially requesting that the Network takes control of the grievance resolution process. This means that while you are engaged as an active participant and contribute to the final outcome, the Network representative may need to take responsibility for directing the process or deciding that the matter cannot be appropriately resolved through this process.

How do I decide whether to proceed with a grievance?

Consider the following indicators to assist you to decide whether lodging a grievance is justified and appropriate:

- You have explored and tried different ways of raising or confronting the issue to no avail.
- The issue has become untenable; for example, it involves others, divides people, and/or continues to grow unabated.
- The behaviour of another is having a negative impact on you and continues without regard to your expressed wishes.
- Raising the issue with someone within the church or Network context would expose you to further abuse.
- You have tried different approaches but have been unable to resolve the issue satisfactorily.
- In your judgement, the issue requires intervention at a more formal level.
- The serious nature of the issue justifies or requires lodging a grievance.

In the final analysis, it is your decision whether one or more of these indicators justifies escalating the grievance.

Who will be involved?

Several people may be involved in a grievance resolution process:

- The person who makes the complaint (complainant);
- The person who is named and against whom the grievance is made (respondent);
- The officer who manages the grievance process (Grievance Facilitator), usually the Senior Pastor;
- Any person(s) authorised by parties to the grievance.

How do I begin?

You initiate a formal resolution process by lodging your grievance in writing with your Senior Pastor. (refer to the Grievance Notification Form at the end of this document). Alternatively, the Senior Pastor and the parties could agree on an appropriate Grievance Facilitator, eg another Church Worker or other mutually respected person. If your Senior Pastor is the subject of your grievance or is perceived to be in some way associated with it, then you may lodge the grievance with the next appropriate senior person, i.e. the Lead Pastor of the region.

There may be circumstances (e.g. risk to safety or unlawful conduct) where it is more appropriate to lodge your complaint with an alternative senior officer. Alternatively, the Lead Pastor and the parties could agree on an appropriate Grievance Facilitator, e.g. Senior Network Pastor or other mutually respected person.

If agreement can't be reached on who would be an appropriate Grievance Facilitator or there are special circumstances that make using this process inappropriate (eg risk to safety or unlawful conduct) then the person with the grievance could make a complaint to the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) without using the grievance procedure.

How to do I prepare a written grievance?

You may wish to talk through the issue(s) with someone you trust in order to clarify the grievance and consider the outcome or remedy you seek.

Write succinctly, using the following guide to help you:

- Describe the nature of the grievance.
- Give the details of the circumstances (Who? What? Where? When? How?).
- Provide evidence:
 - Do you have documentation?
 - Are there witnesses?
 - How else can you prove your allegations?
- State the outcome you seek.
- If your preferred outcome is not achievable, state a reasonable alternative.

What happens with my grievance?

The Trinity Network recognises the seriousness of receiving a written grievance and the need to manage the resolution process and settle the grievance in a timely and responsive way.

After you have lodged your grievance, the Grievance Facilitator will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the grievance and discuss it with you;
- Assess the nature and substance of the grievance;
- Work with you to determine the best approach;

- Takes steps to provide for your safety and wellbeing;
- Communicate about the process of resolving the grievance;
- Recommend options for a resolution of the matter, for example:
 - Conference with the parties to negotiate a resolution
 - Investigation of the facts
- Implement strategies for a final settlement of the matter.

What can I expect from the Grievance Facilitator (person dealing with the Grievance)?

You have a right to be heard and treated fairly and justly. The Grievance Facilitator is your point of contact in the process and you can expect to be consulted, given a timeframe for resolution, and kept informed about what is happening with your grievance.

How will my safety and confidentiality be ensured?

You have a right to have your privacy protected, but you also have a responsibility to respect the same right in relation to the other person(s) involved. You also have a responsibility to act with those assisting you, to create a safe environment for yourself during the grievance resolution process. You may, for example, consider having a support person attend any interviews with you.

You may talk about your grievance with a close friend, family member or mentor, however, be mindful that confidentiality must be adhered to throughout the grievance resolution process. This helps to protect personal privacy and assists in making people feel safe during the grievance resolution process.

What if I'm not happy with the final outcome?

You can apply to the Lead Pastor of the region or another mutually agreed person for a single review of the final outcome. However, you must provide sound reasons for your belief that the final outcome was not appropriate, adequate or reasonable in the circumstances. This person then makes the decision either to initiate a single review or to uphold the original outcome. It's important to understand that grievance resolution may not give you the exact outcome you want, but is intended to provide a solution that is both reasonable and acceptable in the circumstances.

8. LODGING A GRIEVANCE – THE RESPONDENT

If you are party to a conflict situation or have had a grievance lodged against you, this means that an action, behaviour or decision by you has been perceived by another person to be offensive, inappropriate or unacceptable. You may be unaware of any impact of your actions on another person and feel shocked, or perhaps you feel frustrated with the complainant and justified in your actions.

Regardless of the intent behind your decision or action, the other person has been directly affected in a way that has impeded your relationship. In the longer term, if such a situation continues, the relationship may become strained or dysfunctional. Conflict situations may not be welcome or comfortable, but are best approached as opportunities for reflection, learning and positive change.

Being engaged in a grievance situation at the local level.

Where situations that have a negative impact on relationships are ignored or remain unresolved, the issues may become blown out of proportion – people become polarised and strong feelings become entrenched. Once people have adopted polarised positions, it takes courage, positive intent, and skill to unravel grievances and find a resolution that satisfies all those involved. Each person involved in a conflict situation or grievance has a responsibility to address the difficulties associated with the situation so that energy is freed for the achievement of positive outcomes.

How do I approach the situation if I'm perceived to be the cause of a grievance?

Be proactive and, if possible, engage and resolve the situation before positions become entrenched.

- Recognise and address issues and differences at the stage where they elicit questions rather than accusations, and irritation rather than frustration or possibly rage.

- Respond rather than react. This is not easy if the confrontation comes as a surprise to you. Take a deep breath or take time out to consider the situation (see the toolbox exercise below).
- Be part of the solution, try to listen to the grievance from the perspective of the other person.
- Acknowledge the other person's experience and feelings and, importantly, what meaning the situation may have for them.
- State your own position clearly, using evidence to make your case, and describe how you feel rather than becoming defensive.

If a grievance is made against you.

In lodging a grievance, the complainant escalates the situation from possible face- -to- -face resolution to requesting intervention. If named as a respondent, you will be contacted by the Grievance Facilitator and given an opportunity to respond. Depending on the nature of the grievance, you may be invited to participate in a resolution process that will consider your response.

What can I expect?

You can expect, and have a right to:

- Fair and impartial treatment.
- Information about the allegations made against you.
- Reasonable opportunity to make a response.
- Communication about the process of resolving the grievance.
- Confidentiality.
- Advice and support.

What if I'm not happy with the grievance process?

If you believe that there has been a serious irregularity in the process, or that you have been the subject of prejudice or treated unfairly during the process, you may apply to the Archdeacon of the region or other mutually agreed person for a single review of the process. You have to provide sound reasons for seeking a review before the reviewer will make a decision on whether or not to initiate a single review.

Where can I get help?

There are people and resources available to assist or support you and provide information, advice or appropriate referrals.

You may wish to have a friend act as a support person for you or seek assistance from an independent professional or impartial third party who has no knowledge of the situation.

9. TIMELINES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE GRIEVANCE

The Grievance Facilitator should keep all parties informed of the progress of the resolution process and expected timelines for settlement of the grievance. It is expected that every effort will be made to effect resolution as soon as possible.

Within fifteen (15) working days of receipt of the grievance, the Grievance Facilitator is required to have either concluded the resolution process and settled the grievance, or informed the parties about the intended steps to manage the resolution process and the indicated timelines.

Appendix 1:

Clarifying the Grievance

This reflective exercise can be undertaken by each person directly or indirectly involved in a grievance situation. The aim is to broaden the perspective and understanding of the situation from all positions, and to help each person decide how to proceed.

- a. Describe or map the grievance situation:
 - i. What factors led to this situation?
 - ii. What continues to happen that is offensive or exacerbating the situation?
 - iii. What attitude do you hold, or what do you do to contribute to the situation?
 - iv. What is the effect of this situation on you and your work?
 - v. How does the situation affect others?
- b. Describe what would be happening differently if the situation were satisfactorily resolved:
 - i. How would you feel and how would you be acting?
 - ii. How other people would be feeling and acting?
 - iii. What would this mean for relationships?
- c. Look at the questions in a) and b) above again, this time answering them from the perspective of the other person involved in the situation?
- d. Determine the negative potential of the situation (will it worsen if left unresolved?), and decide whether to take action or let it heal with time.
- e. Plan to act constructively:
 - i. Identify your concerns. Consider the prospect of facing the situation. What is your greatest concern: for example, 'It's not a safe environment', 'I'll be made to look stupid', 'I'll be punished', 'The result will impinge negatively on me', 'The decision was reasonable, but I don't like it'.
 - ii. Describe the most positive outcome to be gained by directly addressing the problem/conflict or taking other action.
 - iii. Choose the people and resources that could help to address the issue. For example, more information from other policies and procedures, assistance and advice from others, someone to act as a mentor, or coach or to offer counsel, someone to act as mediator or observer.
- f. Summarise the factors that are clear or stand out for you, for example:
 - i. How the problem appears now
 - ii. The outcome you desire and next steps
 - iii. What you might do differently.

Grievance Notification Form

Confidential

This form is used to clarify your grievance and to provide initial documentation.

Personal contact details

Name: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____
Church: _____

Grievance details

Which of the following best describes the nature of your grievance? (Please tick)

- Discrimination/harassment/bullying issue
- Deployment/promotion/selection issue (relating to both volunteer & employee)
- Safety issue – accident/incident
- Conflict/unfair treatment

Outline of the issue(s):

What steps have you already taken to resolve the issues(s)? (Include the names of people you have approached for advice and/or assistance) Attach an extra page if necessary.

What resolution are you seeking?

Signature _____ **Date:** _____
(Complainant)

Submit this form to the Senior Pastor (or Lead Pastor of the region if the grievance involves the Senior Pastor) or other mutually respected person agreed upon.

Signature _____ **Date:** _____
(Facilitator)

Grievance Management Form

Grievance assessment

Nominated Grievance Facilitator: _____

Issues underlying the grievance:

Resolution

Resolution Options:

- Conference with the Parties – may be direct resolution or involve a mediator/facilitator/conciliator
- Formal Investigation – e.g. Grievance Facilitator
- External Agency

Action(s) taken: (Attach extra page if necessary)

Outcome

Outcome of action taken: (could include: to be heard, explanation given, apology, changed behaviour, Training, counselling, warnings, directives, system change).

Complaint settled: Yes / No

Follow up required: