

## FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND – SHAWBOST

### COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Church strongly believes that a person with a legitimate grievance must be listened to, and their complaint should be properly and fairly addressed. 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.

We expect the highest level of Christian conduct from our leaders and office bearers. If your complaint is about Bullying or Harassment (of adults); you may find it helpful to consult the church Code of Conduct on the Church Notice Board and on the Church Website at <https://shawbostfreechurch.org/get-in-touch/>

If your complaint or concern is about **Safeguarding of Children or Vulnerable Adults**, please in the first instance contact the congregation's **Safeguarding Coordinator**, Mrs Maletta MacPhail.

**Contact details:** telephone – 0185171022; email – [maletta14@outlook.com](mailto:maletta14@outlook.com)

#### Complaints Procedure

##### Option 1 – Making a formal complaint to the Free Church of Scotland about the conduct of a Minister, Elder or Deacon

- send the complaint to the Conduct & Complaints Committee c/o Free Church of Scotland, 15 North Bank Street, The Mound, Edinburgh, EH1 2LS or via [complaints@freechurch.org](mailto:complaints@freechurch.org)

Formal complaints to the Conduct & Complaints Committee will be handled in accordance with the relevant Acts of Assembly.

**OR**

##### Option 2 – Raising a concern or making a complaint to the Free Church congregation of Shawbost Free Church

- about the conduct of a church member (but not a Minister, Elder or Deacon)
- about the conduct of a staff member (other than the Minister)
- some other matter

Please call or email the Minister or Session Clerk to discuss your concern or complaint before proceeding to the more formal steps.

**Minister & Session Clerk** – Rev. Malcolm Macleod. **Contact details:** telephone – 01851710216; email – [callum.macleod@freechurch.org](mailto:callum.macleod@freechurch.org).

**Interim-Moderator** – Rev. Calum Macdonald. **Contact details:** telephone – 01851710459; email – [calumkai48@gmail.com](mailto:calumkai48@gmail.com)

More formal complaints should be made in writing or by email, and the Session Clerk will ensure that the complaint is:

- treated seriously.
- handled fairly without bias or discrimination.
- treated confidentially.

The Complaint should set out:

- the full name and address of the complainant.

- details of what went wrong and how it has affected the complainant including enough details to show why they are aggrieved.
- what (if anything) the complainant thinks the church should do to put it right

If someone else complains on behalf of the complainant, the Session Clerk will need written confirmation saying that the complainant agrees for that person to act on their behalf.

### **How the complaint will be dealt with**

The Session Clerk will write or send an email to the complainant or nominated person to confirm receipt of the complaint within seven days and arrange for it to be considered by the Kirk Session. In the case of a conflict of interest (such as related parties) affected members of the Kirk Session will not participate.

The Kirk Session will look fairly into the complaint including seeking the views on the matter from any individuals to which the complaint refers. The Kirk Session may appoint one or more persons to investigate the matter on its behalf, but it will be the Kirk Session that makes any decisions. The Kirk Session and any such appointed persons will treat the matter confidentially.

The Kirk Session may invite the complainant to present their complaint to them. If so, they may attend with a companion if they wish. The meeting should be held as informally as possible. The Chair will explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce the members and emphasise confidentiality. The meeting will be minuted by the Kirk Session.

The Session Clerk will write to the complainant with the conclusions from the Kirk Session's review and reasons for that outcome. The Session Clerk will aim to respond as soon as possible, and normally no longer than 31 days after receipt of the complaint.

### **Completion**

Upon the completion of its enquiries, the Kirk Session will hope to have achieved one of the following outcomes (although this list is not exhaustive):

- The complainant is satisfied that the matters raised in the complaint have been resolved;
- The complainant and the respondent agree that the matter may be referred to mediation;
- The Kirk Session will have asked the respondent to modify his or her future conduct;
- The complaint has been dropped or dismissed; or
- The complaint having been dealt with, the matter is, despite no agreement having been reached, nonetheless concluded.

If the complainant is not happy how the Free Church congregation of Shawbost deals with the complaint the complainant should write to the Presbytery Clerk stating that they want to appeal and the grounds for the appeal. Contact details can be obtained from the Session Clerk or via the Free Church of Scotland Office ([offices@freechurch.org](mailto:offices@freechurch.org)).