

COASTLINE VINEYARD CHURCH

Complaints Policy & Procedure (version 6)

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General Statement

Coastline Vineyard Church aims to provide its congregation and visitors with the best possible gatherings and activities (i.e. those provided by Coastline or officially endorsed and advertised by Coastline via our website or weekly news emails). We positively welcome any suggestions you may have as to how we can improve what we do and what we offer.

Try to resolve the issue informally

We all should be mindful that people can make mistakes so the launch of a formal complaint should only be a last resort. Our recommended approach is that should a problem arise, an informal verbal complaint should be raised with the person involved in the first instance or raised to the pastor/overseer of the ministry area, as appropriate.

We believe that in all things it is best to follow Scriptural principles for reconciling differences wherever possible before engaging in a formal complaints process.

If you are not satisfied with the response to the informal complaint at this level then you should escalate it to the Lead Pastor who will also try to resolve it informally. (If the complaint relates to the Lead Pastor then it should be referred to the Chair of Trustees – the Lead Pastor should not be involved in the process. If the complaint is also against the Chair of Trustees in addition to the Lead Pastor, another member of the Trustee Board should take the lead, and the Chair of Trustees and the Lead Pastor should not be involved in the process). Attempt(s) to address the complaint should again be made informally at this stage. The person leading the complaint process is hereby called the Nominated Trustee (it could be the Lead Pastor, Chair of Trustees or another Trustee).

There may be occasions when, after informal attempts to resolve the issue have failed, there is a need to resort to a formal complaint. This formal procedure should only be instigated when you believe there is no other alternative.

This is what you should do if you wish to make a formal complaint:

1. If you are not satisfied that it can be closed informally after raising it with the Nominated Trustee, you should now raise a formal complaint.
2. Your complaint should be made in writing (preferably via email), marked “Private & Confidential”, containing the details of your complaint, what steps you have already taken to resolve the complaint informally and your contact details. You should email it to the Nominated Trustee who will acknowledge it in writing, normally within 7 days. Please remember to keep a copy of your correspondence for your own records.
3. The response at this stage may be that the Nominated Trustee concludes that the informal efforts to resolve this complaint have not been exhausted and further informal efforts should be made. The formal complaint process will be put on hold, and then closed if the informal efforts resolve the matter.

4. If it is considered that a formal complaint is appropriate by the Nominated Trustee then he/she will raise the appropriate details of your complaint on your behalf with the person concerned.
5. The Nominated Trustee shall, in consultation with another Trustee, investigate the complaint..
6. The Nominated Trustee shall complete the investigation and communicate the outcome of the investigation to you within a reasonable time – normally within 20 working days.
7. You have the right, if dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, to raise an appeal within 5 working days of receipt of the communication regarding the outcome, which must be submitted in writing. If no appeal is raised within the 5 working day period following the issuance of the outcome response, then the complaint will be considered closed.
8. You may submit your case in relation to the appeal in writing via email or letter or present your written appeal personally to a Trustee panel comprising of at least 3 members of the Trustee Board (the Nominated Trustee will form part of this panel). If attending personally, you have the right to be attended by a friend or advocate to help put your case. (The Trustee panel also has the right to have an advisor present). The decision of the panel shall be final.
9. The role of the friend/advocate ends upon completion of the meeting, and is to ensure that the details of the complaint remain Private and Confidential.
10. Where appropriate, the Trustees will agree any necessary actions to make good the cause of the complaint.
11. All formal complaints and responses made to Trustees will be recorded and filed securely.
12. The full Trustee Board shall be informed at the first available meeting of the number and nature of any formal complaints and their outcome, and consideration will be given to the implications these have for the planning of future services, as part of Coastline Vineyard's self-evaluation.
13. Note that all documents associated with the complaint are to be marked Private and Confidential, and this remains in force during and after the complaint and appeal process.
14. The documents may be viewed by all members of the Board of Trustees, at the discretion of the Nominated Trustee, at an appropriate stage of the process. If the complaint is against a member of the Board that person is to be excluded from the process and any related discussions.
15. The person against whom the complaint has been raised has the right to see the complaint and other documents associated with the complaint, subject to the Nominated Trustee agreeing that this is appropriate.