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## PREAMBLE.

This policy is in two (2) parts.

Part 1 is the process in dealing with grievances and/ or conflict between a member of the congregation and a person acting in an official capacity for Andrews Farm Community Church (hereafter referred as AFCC).

Part 2 is the process in dealing with grievances and/or conflict between two (2) members of the congregation of AFCC.

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## Part 1.

### INTRODUCTION

How believers handle disagreements and engage in confrontation is one of the most important issues at work in the Body of Christ. Not only does such language and behaviour speak to our society and culture about the power of Christ at work in Christians and in the Christian church, but negative behavior, language and process is often the source of congregational schisms, broken relationships, and unhealthy churches. For these reasons, and a host of others, following biblical principles and teachings on this subject is vital to the life of any congregation.

The Pastor, Elders, Management Team, along with other teams and committees (hereafter referred to as a “prescribed person”) of the congregation is a servant of the church, with specific ministries assigned by the congregation. If the thoughts and/or aims of a congregational member differ strongly with the actions of any of the aforementioned persons or bodies, s/he must follow the accepted procedure for sharing grievances and airing differences. To follow this procedure is important, not only because it treats brothers and sisters in Christ with respect and love, but also it is a model to society and our culture of how Christians used biblical teaching in handling differences and conflict. While there are several scriptures which elaborate on the biblical teaching, the primary text is from Matthew 18:15-17, with a proviso from Galatians 6:1-2.

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV). - 15 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV). - 1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

It is important that the steps be followed in the prescribed, biblical order, and that no other parties be asked to give support or comment to this. If the aggrieved party has a position, that person should be able to maintain his/her position without the support or agreement of others (otherwise, they would not be maintaining their own position). Every effort should be made, at each step in this process, to achieve reconciliation and resolution in a effective and timely

manner.

When presenting a standpoint to a “prescribed person”, it is unnecessary and inappropriate to say such comments as, "Many others feel this way." If others feel this way, it is their responsibility to speak their positions for themselves. To do so, deprives them of self-representation or an opportunity for Christian growth.

Following these instructions, there are steps to be followed when a congregational member has a grievance with a pastor, elders or prescribed team of the congregation.

## **CONSTITUTION.**

Section 14 of the constitution states under the heading of Resolution Of Disputes; *“In the event of any dispute or difference causing serious division in the Church or any dispute between a Pastor and the Church that is not reaching satisfactory settlement, such a dispute or difference will be referred by the Elders, and may be referred by a resolution of the Members, for a decision to a moderator.”*

With this taken in mind and in context, the following processes must be adhered to.

## **PROCESS.**

### **Grievance with the Pastor**

If there is a grievance or a difference of opinion with the Pastor, one should first approach that person, to discuss the issue. This must not be a hurried statement on a Sunday when the Pastor is endeavouring to prepare for worship or perform their prescribed function.

One should make an appointment with the Pastor when a block of time and lack of interruptions will allow both parties to devote their attention to this important subject matter. It is the mutual responsibility of the aggrieved party and the pastor to be sure that the grievance is clearly understood and seek a resolution.

If the grievance is not resolved, the aggrieved party may submit their position to the Elders.

### **Grievance with an Elder**

If there is a grievance or a difference of opinion with any of the elders, one should first approach that person, to discuss the issue. This must not be a hurried statement on a Sunday when the Pastor is endeavouring to prepare for worship or perform their prescribed function.

One should make an appointment with that person when a block of time and lack of interruptions will allow both parties to devote their attention to this important subject matter. It is the mutual responsibility of the aggrieved party and the Elder to be sure that the grievance is clearly understood and seek a resolution.

If the grievance is not resolved, the aggrieved party may submit their position to the Pastor.

### **Grievance with a member of a ministry or pastoral care team or team member.**

If there is a grievance or a difference of opinion with a member of a ministry or pastoral care team or a team member one should first approach that person, to discuss the issue. This must not be a hurried statement on Sunday when the “prescribed person” is endeavouring to prepare for worship or perform their prescribed function.

One should make an appointment when a block of time and lack of interruptions will allow both parties to devote their attention to this important subject matter. It is the mutual responsibility of the aggrieved party and the person to be sure that the grievance is clearly understood and seek a resolution.

If the grievance is not resolved, the aggrieved party may submit their position to the Pastor.

## FINAL RESOLUTION PROCESSES. - If no resolution is met.

### Review by the Executive Team.

As a body of last resort with regard to grievances, one may request a special meeting with the Pastor and the Elders<sup>1</sup> (hereafter referred to as the Executive Team) to discuss the matter and promote a resolution.

The aggrieved party, the person may bring the grievance to the attention of the Executive Team. The appeal must be in writing with as much history as possible. It may be given to any member of Executive Team. That person receiving the written appeal must notify the other members of the appeal.

The Executive Committee must give careful consideration to the grievance stated and should judge whether the grievance should go further.

- If the Executive Committee deems the appeal has merit, then they will review all related correspondence and confer with all persons involved.
  - The Executive Committee may decide and request that all parties take suggested actions to resolve the grievance.
  - The Executive Committee may decide and request that the matter be brought before the Church Body.
- If the Executive Committee deems the appeal Does NOT have merit, then they will dismiss the appeal.

### Review by the Church.

The body of members of Andrews Farm Community Church (as defined by the Church's bylaws) is the body of last resort with regard to grievances. The Executive Committee may or may not decide to bring the concern to the congregation. At the special-called meeting of the congregation, all parties who have presented a concern, or who have been part of the charge of the concern, will be given a right to speak.

There must not be any behaviour or language that would not be fitting a believer to share with his brother and/or sister in Christ.

As per the AFCC Constitution (Section 6 "Members Meetings), Seven (7) days notice must be given for the meeting and a quorum shall be one quarter (1/4) of the current membership.

A congregational vote may or may not be taken. If a vote is taken; it shall be by show of hands and any resolution must be passed by a simple majority. There will be no absentee ballots received or accepted.

## CONCLUSION:

Whatever the results of this process may be, those results stand. Prescribed persons and the aggrieved parties must accept and abide by the results of the process.

Conversations, gossiping, and "sharing of Christian concerns" must cease.

There must be no use of petitions before, during, or following this process.

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Team is a group made up of the Pastor and the Elders. This committee is not a formal committee within the scope of the AFCC Constitution and will meet on Ad Hoc occasions. The members are included because of their Ex Officio positions.

Any deviation from the biblical principles of this process by any of the involved parties will negatively affect the outcome of the process, and will be taken into consideration during the consideration of the resolution of the issue.

This policy pertains to the handling of grievances related to the work and ministry of the church, and not to conflict between individuals. However, individual conflict resolution is also to be approached in the manner taught in Matthew 18:15-17, and elaborated on elsewhere in scripture.

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## Part 2.

### PERSONAL ISSUES – Dispute between individual members.

Not all issues should be brought forward to the AFCC management. Because we are a diverse group of people, personal issues between congregational members may arise. These matters are to be dealt with differently than congregational issues.

A congregational issue has the following identifiable characteristics:

1. A majority of the AFCC Executive Team can witness to several different members having raised the issue in a church meeting or with them in person.
2. The AFCC Executive Team themselves witness to the issue being of concern to the congregation.
3. A substantial number of individual members raise the issue of their own volition rather than having been prompted by the lobbying efforts of another individual in the church.
4. The issue is repeatedly voiced on different occasions by those persons described in items 1, 2, or 3.
5. The issue is especially voiced by trusted members of the congregation, by those who have proven commitment to the mission of the church over time, and/or by individuals or entities who are known to support the common good of the church in positive and constructive ways.

A personal issue alternatively has the following identifiable characteristics:

1. It is brought up as an issue by only one or a few people.
2. The issue is made known to the AFCC Executive Team only through or as a result of the lobbying efforts of a single individual.
3. AFCC Executive Team is unable to witness to the matter being a congregational issue as described above.

### **Biblical teachings are to be used.**

The aggrieved parties are to use the same Biblical teaching in handling differences and conflict as listed in Part 1.

Only when a concentrated effort to reach a consensus between all parties and no resolution is reached then the matter may be passed on to the Ministry Management Team (sic) (insert name of the committee comprising of pastor & elders)

### **Mediation may be used.**

If the AFCC Executive Team deems that an issue is personal and also believes that the church can

assist the person(s) involved, The AFCC Executive Team will refer the individual(s) to the appropriate ministry/program or staff persons for support.

The AFCC Executive Team will not reconsider personal issues from the same person(s) regarding the same content in subsequent discussions.

**Parties to work together.**

If the AFCC Executive Team deems that an issue is personal and also believes that the church cannot assist the person(s) involved, and then the onus is on the aggrieved parties to continue to reach an amicable agreement between them.

Office use only: -

Form: Grievance \_ Conflict Resolution Policy\_Process.

Composed Dec 2018.                      Review due                      Dec 2019                      Reviewed

By: R Smith                      By: \_\_\_\_\_                      By: \_\_\_\_\_