



# ST. THOMAS MAR THOMA CHURCH

Stackpool Road, Southville, BRISTOL, BS3 1NW  
UNITED KINGDOM - Regd. Charity No. 1122211

*UK - Europe - Africa Diocese of the Mar Thoma Church*

*Vicarage: 24 Sherbourne Avenue, Bradley Stoke, Bristol BS32 8BB Tel. +44 (0) 117 9834521*

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## Complaints Handling Policy

### 1. General policy

- 1.1. The Vicar and Trustees of St Thomas Mar Thoma Church Bristol take complaints seriously and commit to deal with all complaints in a confidential, timely and appropriate manner.
- 1.2. Our policy is:
- 1.3. To provide a fair complaints policy which is clear and easy to use;
- 1.4. To make sure that Trustees, volunteers and staff are aware of this policy and know how to handle complaints;
- 1.5. To ensure in all cases that complaints are handled using Biblical principles and that wherever possible, disputes and disagreements are amicably resolved and that relationships are restored;
- 1.6. To gather information which helps us improve what we do in the future.
- 1.7. All complaints and any associated information provided will be handled sensitively, and in accordance with relevant data protection requirements. However, the Trustees reserve the right to involve external parties (including the police and other authorities) and to take legal advice where this is considered necessary.
- 1.8. The overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the Vicar and the Trustees of **St Thomas Mar Thoma Church, Bristol**.
- 1.9. In constructing this policy, the Trustees have paid due consideration to the Good Governance Code with the aim that the charity demonstrates internal and external complaints are handled constructively, impartially and effectively and it learns from mistakes.

### 2. Receiving complaints

- 2.1 Complaints may be addressed to the Vicar or the Hon Secretary either orally or by email to [bristolmtc@gmail.com](mailto:bristolmtc@gmail.com)
- 2.2 Where complaints are received by other contacts in the Church, complainants will be directed towards the Vicar, in the first instance.
- 2.3 At the time of receiving the complaint or within any initial response, complainants will be informed of the existence of this policy and provided with a copy if requested.
- 2.4 St Thomas Mar Thoma Church operates a safeguarding children and other vulnerable beneficiaries policy. Where complaints refer to people or activities covered by that policy, such complaints will be handled in accordance with both policies. In instances where the policies conflict, those contained in the safeguarding policy will carry precedence.
- 2.5 In the case of complaints made by a parent, guardian or other responsible adult to any member of the children's or youth ministry teams, these will automatically be passed to the Vicar. Such complaints will then be handled in accordance with the safeguarding children and other vulnerable beneficiaries' policy.
- 2.6 In certain cases and for the avoidance of doubt, the Vicar or Secretary may request oral complaints to be repeated in writing and reserve the right to share complaints with other members of the leadership team as they see appropriate.
- 2.7 Oral complainants must be informed that certain aspects of oral complaints will be recorded (either at the time or later) including but not limited to:



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- The name and contact details of the complainant;
- The date and time that the complaint was received;
- The substance of the complaint;
- Any formal relationship that the complainant has with St Thomas Mar Thoma Church Bristol

2.8 Oral complainants must be informed that although complaints will be handled confidentially, the Vicar may share these with other Trustees or members of the leadership team in accordance with this policy.

2.9 All complaints, together with any actions undertaken, will be recorded in a complaints log which will be reviewed by the Trustees on a regular basis. Any conclusions and further action required as a result of this review will be formally recorded in the minutes of a Trustees meeting.

2.10 Where the complaint relates to a specific person, the Trustees may choose to inform that person of the nature of the complaint and to receive a formal response from them. The name and any other sensitive information provided by the complainant will not be shared with the subject of the complaint.

### 3. Resolving complaints

3.1 Complaints will be acknowledged by the Vicar or Secretary or member of the leadership team within two weeks of being received and will include details of who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect to have a response. Any first response should include a copy of this policy if not already provided.

3.2 The Trustees will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within one month of receiving the complaint. If, because of ongoing investigations or for other reasons this is not possible, a progress update will be provided to the complainant within one month of receiving the complaint.

3.3 A definitive response will include:

- Actions taken to investigate the complaint;
- Conclusions drawn from the investigation;
- Actions taken as a result of the investigation.

### 4. Appeals and escalation

4.1 Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should inform the Vicar and Secretary of this dissatisfaction in writing within 1 month of receiving the response.

4.2 Due to the size of the Church, it is likely that the same group of Trustees that dealt with the original complaint will be responsible for reviewing the appeal. Wherever possible a different Trustee will take the lead in investigating the appeal.

4.3 As long as this notice of dissatisfaction is received within the timeframe set out in 4.1, the Vicar and/or Secretary will acknowledge this correspondence within two weeks and will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within one month. Notices of dissatisfaction that are received outside of that timeframe will be considered at the discretion of the Trustees.

4.4 If the complainant is still not satisfied with the response, they can escalate their complaint to the Diocesan Bishop, with a copy, to the Vicar, for his guidance and intervention as appropriate.

### 5. Adoption of this policy

5.1 The Trustees of St Thomas Mar Thoma Church Bristol formally accepted this policy at the Executive Committee meeting held on **3rd March, 2024.**