



THE VILLAGE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Village MCC believes that all members and attendees should act in loving and appropriate ways with each other. We have the responsibility to live as responsible parts of a loving community. The points below are intended to be a guide to the types of ways that we can achieve that.

We respect ourselves

We seek help for our addictions - whether they are alcohol, drugs or destructive behaviours.

We see ourselves as beautiful people, intentional creations of a loving God.

We seek out pastoral care when we need it, understanding that pastoral care is never meant to be an alternative to medical care.

We respect others

We respect, welcome and value all people who come to *The Village MCC*, whether they be members, regular attendees, or casual visitors.

We refrain from sexual relations with persons below the age of consent or those who may be coerced either by our positions in *The Village MCC* or by their own addictions or disabilities. (see CP Policy and Vulnerable Adults Policy)

We do not use our membership of the Church for inappropriate personal gain of any kind.

We show our respect of others by ensuring that physical or psychological abuse or violence is never a part of our relationships with each other.

We are honest and open with each other.

We respect the sanctity of other person's relationship covenants - whether they conform to our own ideas of relationship or not.

We ensure that the spaces and events associated with *The Village MCC* are free from sexual harassment, (i.e. any sexually related behaviour that is unwelcome, offensive, and which fails to respect the rights of others)

We refer people with problems to the pastor or a duly appointed and accountable lay pastor. We do not attempt to either counsel or problem solve ourselves.

Respecting the Church

We always use church funds or property appropriately.

We only engage in ministries that are approved by the pastor or board of trustees.

We attend and contribute regularly to the life of the church by giving money, time, and resources.

We refrain from deliberate or malicious acts which damage or bring harm to any person.

We do not initiate or perform a ministry which is unauthorized and unaccountable to *The Village MCC* in which the church is by act or implication associated with.

We do not undermine the authority and ministry of the pastor or those in Leadership positions.

Direct Dealing

The Village MCC is a very diverse group of people that come together as a congregation under Christ. In any church there can be difficulty communicating, but it's especially difficult in a community as diverse as ours. One of the ways we help to avoid misunderstandings and hurt feelings is by using direct dealing.

And what is direct dealing? Quite simply it is the practice of putting any problems we may have in the hands of those who can solve them, and not in the hands of those who cannot. If one person has an issue with another; (perhaps they were hurt by something they said or did), we encourage them to talk to them directly about the way they feel.

Of course this is often not possible. Someone may feel too hurt to approach another directly. They may feel intimidated or afraid of them. They may have already tried to talk to them, but felt that they were ignored or not taken seriously. When this is the case it is important that we take the problem to someone who can help to solve it, and not just to someone who will sympathetically listen. This helps to avoid the three main communication errors that can tear a congregation apart.

1 Triangulation - Triangulation usually involves three people who each take one of three roles: victim, persecutor, and rescuer. The person who's been hurt does not go to the person who hurt them, or to someone like a Pastor or church leader who can help, but to an uninvolved third person. This person is the 'rescuer' and listens sympathetically as the 'victim' complains at length about the 'persecutor'. In turn the 'rescuer' tells others what they have heard about the alleged 'terrible conduct' of the 'persecutor' and the helpless state of the 'victim'. This is what we call 'Gossip'. Nothing is resolved and the problem often escalates as others take sides.

The way out of this dilemma is simple. If we are hurt by someone we talk directly to them or to someone who can help us resolve the situation. The pastor, or an appointed pastoral carer, not only listens sympathetically but does so confidentially and may be able to help resolve the issue. Pastoral confidences are not shared with anyone outside of the pastoral team unless someone is in danger.

Of course someone may not want a resolution. They may simply want to hurt the person who hurt them. When this happens they may come to you for help doing just that. Of course it doesn't seem that way. In fact it may seem that they have come to you with the best of intentions, simply hoping that you will be kind enough to just 'listen'. We need to remember that it's easy to become the 'rescuer' and forget that, even though our intentions are good, we can become a part of an ever growing problem. We need to encourage the hurting person to talk to the pastor or a church leader, perhaps offering to go with them for moral support, and not letting ourselves be used as a tool for discord.

2 Pass-Through communication - This happens when we ask one person to convey a message to another, or accept a message from one person to another. "Please tell so-and-so that I won't be at their party", or "Please let so-and so- know I won't be able to do what I promised" etc. *f*

Truth is, if it's worth saying to someone, it's worth saying directly. We live in a world of cell phones and emails, if we're not using them it's probably because we don't want the responsibility of talking to someone directly. Pass-through communication leads to misunderstandings, lost messages, and hurt feelings. If someone asks us to pass a message on to someone else we should feel comfortable saying no. Saying something like "I might mix up what you've said, so perhaps you should call them yourself" often helps.

3 Anonymous feedback Anonymous feedback is a good way of manipulating a group of people so that you can control them. When someone does this they inadvertently commit idolatry. By placing themselves at the centre of the church, not Christ, they take God's place. The pastor or board become aware of this when a number of people come to them with the same complaint saying; "People are not happy with..." or "Lots of people don't like..." or "some people feel.... ". Yet, no one has come to a board member or pastor and actually said "I am not happy with.... "" " or "I don't like..... ".

Anonymous feedback is always rejected unless the sources can be verified. This is because it is so easy for one person to use this tactic to manipulate the church for their own ends. One person 'triangulates' with a number of well meaning people, asking them for their confidence. Many of these in turn go to the pastoral team with the complaint, unable to say 'who' has a problem because they don't wish to break the confidence. To the leadership it can seem like many people have the same complaint, whereas, in reality, it's just one person who has an issue but is using this technique to manipulate a number of other people to their own ends. This misuse of power is not acceptable. It is always damaging and hurtful.

Direct dealing helps us to recognize that anonymous complaints or issues are often the way discord is sown. We recognize these for what they are and only take complaints seriously if the source can be verified and the complaint justified.

And what if a complaint needs to be taken seriously? Certain behaviours are simply not acceptable at *The Village MCC* . These behaviours include:

Uncharitable behaviour - Any unfair criticism or malicious comments about another person or group of people can cause conflict and bring the reputation of the church into question. At all times we are ambassadors of Christ as well as ambassadors of *The Village MCC*. We have a duty *to* reflect the love of God in all our dealings, both within the church and in the larger community.

Discrimination - Sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other modes of discrimination based on attributes are unacceptable. Language and attitudes that directly contravene MCC's position on inclusivity are also always unacceptable.

Alcohol and/or substance abuse - Those whose behaviour in church is noticeably affected by the use of drink or drugs are putting their neighbours in an often unpleasant and unfair situation which impinges upon their right to a safe environment. Anyone found to be acting under the influence of drink or drugs, and whose behaviour is affecting others, will be asked to leave.

Cruising - No one attending church should be subjected to the romantic attentions of others when they are attending church or a church sponsored event. A church functions in much the same way as a family, and within families casual sexual relationships are always damaging. Romantic relationships may blossom within the church environment, however they are to be entered into with caution.

Harassment - This includes unwanted attentions of any kind. Harassment is defined by the person being harassed and should always be brought to the attention of the pastor or a board member.

If a person's behaviour is unacceptable then the pastor or a board member will caution them in an informal conversation.

If the behaviour is repeated then a more formal conversation will take place with the Pastor or a board member and with a third party present. This person can be any responsible non-involved member of the congregation mutually agreed upon by the former parties. It is the role of the third party to witness the conversation and to ensure that communication between both parties is effective. Are there valid reasons for the behaviour? Are there mitigating circumstances? Are both parties listening to each other and communicating in ways that open the conversation to God's Spirit?

If the behaviour is repeated then another meeting will take place, under the same circumstances as the last, but will include a written warning to be signed by all parties, that if the behaviour is repeated that the individual shall be excluded from the life of the church for a period of time (To be agreed by the board).

If the behaviour is repeated again then the individual is excluded from church life for the period agreed. Non members have no right to appeal, members may ask for a review meeting of the board. In such cases a decision is made by a simple majority vote.

Sexual offenders Register.

Anyone registered on the sexual offenders register must inform the pastor immediately when they visit the church so that safeguarding measures to protect both the congregation and the individual can be implemented. Initially this usually means allocating a board member or safeguarding officer to be a companion for the duration of the visit. If a person listed on the sexual offenders register would like to join in church activities on a regular basis then the church board, safeguarding officer, and pastor must agree to general consensus that there is adequate mature leadership in place at the church to ensure that effective monitoring can take place. If this is not the case then the church is currently not able to support the offender.

If the church can that there is adequate mature leadership in place at the church to ensure that effective monitoring can take place then the board will;

- Draw up a contract to be signed by the person in question, their parole officer or mentor (as appropriate), the church secretary, the church safeguarding officer, and the pastor.
- If the church is without a pastor then no new offenders may be accepted into the general life of the church until a new pastor is in place and agrees to a contract.
- Any breach of contract and access to the church community is withdrawn.

It is not our intention to exclude any person from communion with the body of Christ. It is our responsibility to ensure that where such situations occur that the church is able to protect both the person in question and the community. Where the church is not in a position to do so it would be negligent to accept a responsibility it does not have the resources to fully exercise.

Confidentiality

Many Christian churches provide opportunities for a person to unburden themselves with a priest, minister or elder and offer a guarantee that such conversations are confidential. The most famous examples of

these are the Seal of the Confessional in the Catholic Church or the words spoken at the Mercy Seat in the Salvation Army.

The Village MCC understands that those that come from such Christian backgrounds may expect this from us. The Pastor can be expected to hold an absolute confidence if requested in accordance with limited confidentiality. However, the Pastor is free to raise the general issue with a supervisor or another appropriate person who would be external to the local congregation. If the pastor feels that it would be inappropriate to keep any information which indicates the person is a danger to self or others, s/he will make this very clear to the person concerned.

We provide a base level of pastoral care, and confidences are kept under the providence of 'need to know'. Most of us are not counsellors and will therefore have to make referrals for counselling to appropriately qualified members of the church or external agencies where appropriate. Any member of *The Village MCC* will not keep confidential any information which indicates that the person is a danger to self or others.

No information that relates directly to the running of the church or to the pastor should ever be kept confidential from the pastor. Any complaints or concerns should be raised directly with the pastor. If a complainant feels nervous or unsure they can talk to the Lay Delegate or a Board member first. The Lay Delegate or Board member will then either coordinate a supervised meeting with the pastor, or take the complaint to the board who will then decide what course of action to take.

Leadership

The Board of Trustees has an expectation of those who would like to serve in a position of Leadership. In the Bible (in the book of James 3:1), we are told that Leaders are held accountable to a higher standard than others. No Christian is required to be a Leader, but if we answer God's call to a Leadership position then we must accept the responsibility that goes with it. Whenever a person in leadership speaks, they do so with the authority of the church and are accountable to the church. If a person wishes to make personal comments in the church or broader community that conflict with the core values, vision, mission, or ethos of the church, then they are not suitable candidates for leadership.

Guests and Attendees are expected to behave appropriately within church and to respect our life and ministry. As they become more involved and learn more about us we expect them to show respect to our values, beliefs, and structures.

Members of The Village MCC must be baptised Christians who have completed classes for instruction in the beliefs and doctrines of the Church, under the direction of the Pastor and in accordance with the MCC By-Laws; and who pledge to strive to protect the unity of the Church; share responsibility for the work of the Church; attend services of worship regularly; and financially support the Church.

Leaders, Coordinators, Board Members and the Lay Delegate are those who are elected, or appointed, to office who fulfil their membership vows; accept corporate responsibility; exemplify positive faith; deal directly with those with whom they disagree; grow spiritually as people; pray for the Pastor, Board members and other leaders; live morally mature lives; agree to be mutually accountable to other Board members and the pastor; and maintain appropriate confidentiality.

The Pastor is expected to adhere to the same standards as Leaders of Teams, Members of the Board and the Lay Delegate AND to uphold the Code of Conduct required of MCC clergy.

Complaints

From time to time an issue may arise where someone wishes to complain about the behaviour of another. These complaints should be made, and dealt with, in a spirit of love which models health and openness.

The Board of Trustees may remove, by majority vote, any member who is guilty of disloyalty or unbecoming conduct, or take such appropriate disciplinary action against them as it deems necessary. The action of the Board of Trustees may be appealed to a General Meeting of the Church, PROVIDED THAT, such appeal is received by the Secretary within FOURTEEN days of the decision of the Board.

Any concern about a person either appointed by the Board or the pastor should first be raised with that

person. If that is not possible, or the conversation does not produce a resolution, the complainant should speak to the pastor and seek their view. The pastor should, if appropriate, arrange a meeting between the complainant the person being complained about and her/himself. If this does not produce a resolution a formal complaint of disloyalty, unbecoming conduct or dereliction of duty can be made by means of a petition submitted to the Board and signed by 55% of the active members of the congregation. Any such petition shall not be signed by any member of the Board. The Board shall validate the signatures on any such petition and shall have the authority to procure any further information that is required for a fair investigation of the complaint. The Board will then resolve the complaint by a majority vote. The Board may also have the power to initiate a complaint without the need for a petition. The Board shall have the power to reprimand or remove from office any Team Leader.

Any concern about a Board Member or Lay delegate should first be raised with that person. If that conversation does not produce a resolution the complainant should speak to the pastor and seek their view. The pastor should, if appropriate, arrange a meeting between the complainant, the person being complained about and her/himself. If this does not produce a resolution a formal complaint of disloyalty, unbecoming conduct or dereliction of duty can be made by means of a petition submitted to the Board and signed by 55% of the active members of the congregation. Any such petition shall not be signed by any member of the Board. The Board shall validate the signatures on any such petition and shall have the authority to procure any further information that is required for a fair investigation of the complaint. The Board will then resolve the complaint by a majority vote. The Board may also have the power to initiate a complaint without the need for a petition. The Board shall have the power to reprimand or remove from office any member of the Board (except the pastor) and any Lay Delegate. Any person removed from elected office in this way shall have the right of appeal to a General Meeting of the Church, PROVIDED THAT any such appeal is received by the Secretary, or in his/her absence by the Lay Delegate, within 14 days of the removal from office.

Any concern about the pastor should be raised, in the first instance with the pastor. If that approach does not produce a resolution, or if the complainant feels that they are not able to go alone to see the pastor, then they should ask a member of the Board to sit in on the meeting. If this meeting does not produce an effective resolution the complainant may wish to approach a UFMCC Elder This is a grave step and the complainant will be liable to pay for the cost of any investigation if it is felt by the elder to be frivolous.

Conclusion

The Village MCC believes that God wants our people to thrive, and that those elected by the congregation to manage the day-to-day affairs of the church have a responsibility to create a suitable environment for that purpose. In all situations the leadership of the church strive to deal with issues as they arise. They strive to hold in balance the needs and expectations of all God's people, deal directly, honestly and assertively with difficult situations, and pray at all times for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.