

# Whistleblowing Policy

We believe that each person matters to God and we are committed to reflecting God's character in maintaining the highest possible Biblical standards of integrity and accountability in the work we do.

Everyone serving at Emmanuel Church is obliged to conduct themselves in keeping with these high standards and to treat others with dignity and respect. Whether you are a member of the public, or are a member of the church, we invite you to report any concerns you may have about the behaviour of Emmanuel Church staff or volunteers.

This policy is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 which protects employees and workers who 'blow the whistle' on malpractices within their organisation.

Whistleblowing, or public interest disclosure, is when an individual reports suspected wrongdoing which may cause harm to others or to the organisation. Obvious examples of such improper actions include theft, fraud, abuse, breaches of health & safety.

The disclosure should be made 'in good faith'. In other words the disclosure must be made out of real concern about wrongdoing. Knowingly and maliciously making false accusations for ulterior motives is not whistleblowing. The whistleblower should reasonably believe the information and allegation is substantially true, even if the information later turns out to have been incorrect.

## **Types of Concerns:**

If you discover information which you believe shows serious malpractice, illegal actions, wrongdoing or unacceptable behaviours or practices by Emmanuel Church employees, volunteers or members, we ask you to report it.

Legislation protects those who raise legitimate concerns. No one who makes a report in good faith will be victimised for doing so. Your concern could be about things that are happening now, have happened in the past, or are likely to happen in the future. It is not necessary for individuals who raise the concern to prove the wrongdoing that is alleged to have occurred or is likely to occur. It could be about one of the following:

- A criminal offence
- The breach of a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual
- Failure in the protection of children or vulnerable adults

- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate concealment of information related to any of the above.

### **To report a whistleblowing concern:**

Concerns or complaints about a staff member should be addressed to one of the Ministers Richard Hagan (richard@emmanuelcanterbury.org.uk, 07932173904) or Dan Halpin (dan@emmanuelcanterbury.org.uk, 07986370819),

Dependent on the seriousness and sensitivity of the matter, and who is suspected of the wrongdoing, the individual can, if necessary, report directly to the Whistleblowing Officer.

The Elder who has been nominated as the church Whistleblowing Officer is Michael Cadge (mikecadge@hotmail.co.uk, 07419299493)

If the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer, it should be raised with the nominated trustee, Toby Parkin (toby.parkin@gmail.com, 07866664969)

When raising your concern, you can request that your identity is withheld. However, it needs to be understood that the church cannot act on anonymous allegations or take formal action in the absence of reasonably substantiated concerns. Your concerns should be reported as quickly as possible so they can be investigated and any appropriate action taken.

If an individual raises a concern which they believe to be true, the church will take appropriate action to protect the individual from any harassment, victimisation or bullying. Employees who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures.

Those who raise issues under this provision must have a reasonable belief that it is well founded. However, appropriate action will be taken if a malicious allegation is made. If an investigation is required, confidentiality will be maintained to the extent that this is appropriate and practical in the circumstances. The main exceptions are when the law requires disclosure, or when someone is at risk.

### **How the church will deal with the concern:**

How the concern will be dealt with, will depend on what it involves. It is likely that further enquiries and/or investigation will be necessary. The concern may be investigated by the church's Whistleblowing Officer, the Trustees, through the disciplinary process or it may be referred to the police, other agencies such as Social Services, an external auditor or an independent investigator.

It may be necessary for the individual to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

The church will give the individual feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation wherever possible.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed. Staff will not be treated or regarded any differently for raising the concern, and their confidentiality will continue to be protected.

*Agreed by Emmanuel Church Elders on 09/11/2022*