

## WESTCITY CHURCH

### POLICY DOCUMENTATION

# CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION POLICY

#### **The Goal**

The purpose of the **Community Conduct (Code of Conduct)**, as part of the broader Westcity Healthy Church Framework, is to ensure that the Westcity community is empowered in a way that is congruent with Westcity mission and values, whilst adhering to relevant legislation and Churches of Christ WA guidelines.

#### **The Vision**

Westcity Church, within the Healthy Church Framework seeks to be an authentic, healthy church community that supports the work of the Holy Spirit in transforming individuals to become 'More like Jesus'. The Westcity community aspires to be a safe space where individuals in all stages of faith are able to rest, heal, grow, to recognize and practice their God given gifts and talents to the benefit of the wider community.

**CONTEXT**

In every community, there are time when issues arise, misunderstandings happen, and sometimes hurtful or offensive behaviour occurs between individuals. Westcity is focused on relationship building including in times of conflict. We see conflict as normal in human life and interaction. Knowing this, *Westcity Church* has formed this document and process to help our Church find godly and appropriate pathways to see issues and concerns addressed.

The core biblical values supporting this process are truth-telling (Ephesians 4:15.25), justice-seeking (Micah 6:8), grace-giving (Colossians 3:13) and peace-making (Matthew 5:9; Ephesians 4:2-3). The process is seen in operation in Matthew 18:15-20. It is a process that is not to be used as a weapon or demand but exemplifies how Jesus sees God’s presence in the process of resolution, and the significance that God places on finding restoration of relationship.

Once begun, such a process should be followed with care and a commitment to walk through the process step by step so that it does not become too drawn out or complex. At all times, commitment to the values outlined above need to anchor all actions and discussions.

A process like this can guide any individuals or groups wishing to restore relationship. However, within a church context and particularly among leaders, it needs to be agreed that leaders will be held accountable to follow it through. In some circumstances, depending on the severity, potential impact and under the oversight of the Westcity Board, parties may be asked to stand down from their roles or aspects of their roles whilst this is being done.

STEP	ACTION	DESCRIPTION	FOLLOW THROUGH
1	<b>Personal Reflection</b>	Offended party takes time to pray and reflect on the offence or injury received. In some situations, it is appropriate to overlook the offence. In other situations, important principles may be at stake and the situation needs to be taken further.	May or may not choose to lodge a grievance with no request for further action
2	<b>Wisdom &amp; Accountability</b>	If you are unsure about your response and feel the need for wise counsel, then this is often appropriate. The focus is on gaining clarity about the offence and the next step; all the while making sure you are accountable to act with integrity, wisdom and peacemaking.  We can help by proposing a godly counsellor, pastor, leader or mentor. This is a way of distinguishing this consultation from gossip or sharing to gain sympathy or biased support. This is inappropriate. <i>NB: Consider if power imbalance or potential abuse (see Complaint Procedure)</i>	Approach Senior Church Leader or Westcity Board Member for recommended person
3	<b>Informal Discussion</b>	A key step is to go to the other person informally and in private to share your concern. The attitude is to be one of trying to understand the perspective and viewpoint of the other person. Be willing to hear and receive an apology or respond to an offer of restoration if it is offered. If the matter is resolved, no further action is necessary.  If you are the perceived ‘offender’, be quick to listen and ensure you understand what the person is sharing. Guard yourself from simply reacting. If you need time to reflect then ask for it. If you can take responsibility then do so, or ask to meet again.	Private discussion and offers of forgiveness or apology <i>NB: Power imbalance most often requires person to be accompanied</i>

4	<b>Formal Discussion</b>	<p>If either party is feeling threatened, overpowered or unable to communicate clearly their position, then the process moves to a more formal process. This most often means involving a third party. Others are invited into the process as support people or informal facilitators. They are not advocates or mouthpieces for the complainant’s position.</p> <p>The meeting is pre-arranged and both people have the opportunity to have support people present.</p> <p>At this level, it is appropriate that some formal records are kept. And senior Church leadership including the Board is notified that this has happened.</p> <p>If resolved, then no further action is taken.</p>	<p>Formal meeting Pre-arranged Support persons as requested Facilitator Records kept Board informed</p>
5	<b>Formal Mediation</b>	<p>If formal discussions fail, then the Westcity Board is officially notified and with the agreement of all, a trained mediator should be appointed to facilitate a safe and open discussion.</p> <p>Opportunities for interpersonal reconciliation are given.</p> <p>Points of agreement and disagreement are recorded along with the outcome. Most often, it is anticipated, the two parties will come together and find a solution of grace, compromise and kindness. Keeping the agreement is a matter of trust on both sides.</p> <p>If agreement is reached, no further action required.</p> <p>A confidential report provided to <i>Westcity Board</i> as well as individuals.</p>	<p>Board officially notified Trained mediator Agreements and disagreements noted Formal confidential report to the Westcity Board</p>
6	<b>Arbitration</b>	<p>On other occasions, there continues to be a lack of acceptance of the charge or the apology. When this occurs, it is the responsibility of the <i>Westcity Board</i> to make an assessment of the next step.</p> <p>The Board may choose to interview both parties again and hear from witnesses. The case is examined and principles of justice applied. A judgement is given and both parties are called on to agree with the decision.</p> <p>This may mean dismissal for one or more of the parties.</p>	<p>Board process Interviews parties and witnesses Board arbitrates and makes recommendation</p>
7	<b>Civil Action</b>	<p>If the above step fails then the situation has moved beyond the ability of the community to handle it internally. It must be referred to civil courts. Both parties would normally stand down from any leadership positions whilst this was in process.</p>	<p>Parties stand down Proceeds to external court</p>

NB:

The reference in Matthew 18:17 of treating people like ‘tax collectors and sinners’ does not mean rejecting them from the church. It means ministering to such people like Jesus did – treating them with kindness, gentleness and invitation to join the forgiveness story of Christian discipleship.