



The Society of the Holy Trinity

A collaboration of Anglican New Monastic Communities

POLICY FOUR

Maintaining Harmonious Living
COMMUNITY DISCIPLINE POLICY

The Society of the Holy Trinity

POLICY FOUR

Dealing with conflict and breakdown in Community Life

1.0 Conflict and Breakdown in Community Life

It is completely normal for there to be breakdowns in Community Life. We are unique individuals who bring all that we are into community. We are always a work in progress and as such our brokenness is both a gift to community and challenge. We receive the Rhythm of Life as an expression of the core values and disciplines that draw us together. Alongside this the various policies of the Community give us clear and transparent processes to help us hold the Community Life together.

The following process is designed to guide us prayerfully, dealing with each person as unique and in a pastoral and supportive manner, in addressing behaviour contrary to our Rhythm of Life.

This policy guidance aims to lay out a basic process in dealing with concerns about behaviour however or to whomever they are expressed.

In all matters, it is important that we all do not pre-judge each other and are open to listening well. All Members should be assured that any process of dealing with concerns will always seek to support the Member.

It remains an 'expected' of the Society that every associate, companion and participant is to have a qualified spiritual director and where necessary regular psychological or other support to maintain health and wellbeing.

Decisions and judgment calls referred to herein, unless otherwise specified, are to be made by the Standing Council (Prior, Subprior and Dean) or if required, a House Council (see Constitution). Only two of the three members of the Standing Council need to be present for it to meet. If for what are unavoidable reasons only one member of the Standing Council is available to make an urgent decision, then the Visitor or External Person will be able to stand in.

1.1. Raising Concerns

A member may observe in another member a pattern of behaviour, attitude and/or spirit that is contrary to the Religious and Community Life.

A number of channels are available for Members to raise concerns and be heard. Whilst we would expect that a concern would be first discussed within spiritual direction, then brought to the residential house meeting (if the person lives in the residential component of the community) or weekly community gatherings for those living outside of residential community, there will be situations where this will not always be possible.

1.1.1. Spiritual Accompaniment – A one-to-one meeting with the Prior or Sub-Prior.

1.1.2. Residential House Meal & Meetings – A place for growing in transparency of life with other residential members.

1.1.3. Community Weekly Meal – A place for discussion about the common life where all Members are free to bring concerns which affect all members.

1.1.4 Community Council Meeting – Regular meeting of the gathered community can include by agenda issues to do with community life together.

1.1.5 A concern about a member of the Community is raised by a person outside of the Community should normally be addressed to a member of the Standing Council.

1.1.6. A concern about the Prior, Sub-Prior or Dean which a member feels unable to discuss with the Council should be addressed to the designated external person. In situations where the Prior, Sub-Prior or Dean is also the Incumbent of the Parish, then a House Council will oversee the conflict management and/or resolution process and where the non-Incumbent members of the House Council will take the lead regarding such a process.

1.2. Grievances, Misconduct, Whistle-blowing etc.

For non-urgent issues in general the principles set out above would normally apply as a first port-of-call. The following are the routes to voice a grievance or other sensitive issue.

1.2.1. A Specific Issue

Any Member may speak directly to the Standing Council of Prior, Sub-Prior or Dean where there is a particular responsibility for the area in question.

Escalation

Any member may raise anything with a member of the Standing Council if a matter has not been resolved through speaking with the member, or if it is inappropriate to use that channel for a particular reason.

A member of the Standing Council who is informed about a specific issue should always be willing to listen well. If they are concerned about the issue in any way they should use line accountability and support channels available to them. If appropriate they should make a record of the issue and escalate where necessary.

1.2.2. Designated External Person

Should it be inappropriate e.g. in a situation of personal implication, any member may raise any matter with the designated external person.

The appointed external person will normally be the Archdeacon or a nominated person appointed by the Archdeacon in consultation with the Bishop Visitor. In the event that the Standing Council are not Licensed Clergy or Officer Holders of the Parish, then the External person will be the Vicar or Priest in Charge of the Parish.

1.2.3 Bishop Visitor

If there is a particular concern about a member of the Standing or House Council of the constituent community, then this matter can be raised directly with the Bishop Visitor if of a serious nature by the particular Standing Council.

1.3. Voicing Safeguarding Concerns

For matters concerning another person's immediate well-being, situations of potential abuse, harm or danger, or any other matter relating to Safeguarding, the Parish and Diocesan Safeguarding Policy shall always take precedence over this policy document.

1.4. Dealing with Non-Safeguarding Concerns

1.4.1. Step One

Once a concern about a member has been raised with a member of the Standing Council of the Community, they shall meet. The Standing Council may seek the advice of additional advisers as appropriate including liaison with the external designated person and the Bishop Visitor.

1.4.2. Step Two

If the Council agree that the concern needs addressing, then two persons will speak to the member privately to explore the concern together and seek to understand the situation and what help may be needed to address the issue. Members are responsible for engaging positively and prayerfully with challenge and taking responsibility for expressing their needs for help and support.

Steps One and Two are quite common when people live in a community of any kind, and an essential part of our growing together, as individuals and as a community.

It may be necessary at this stage to request particular actions or changes of behaviour from the Member, in which a formal record shall be kept and a time set for a review. See Appendix 1.

1.4.3. Review

Normally, at this point, a matter should be resolved to the benefit of the person in question, and to the growth of the life of the Community.

Should reasons for concern persist, then a meeting with the Standing Council would be convened to explore avenues for progress. A formal record of this meeting would be kept. See Appendix 1.

1.4.4. Action

Following the Review, the Standing Council may suggest or require a course of action from the member. If there is a concern with the health of the Member, then advice for urgent medical

examination or psychological assessment may be urgently recommended to provide the best possible care. If a mental health support arrangement is already in place the course of actions agreed in that document should be implemented, (See Appendix 2 for this template). In situations where there is an acute health need, the community should support the individual to access acute health care provided by the NHS services. For non-acute non-urgent health issues, the member can self-refer themselves to the St Luke's Health Care by (stlukesforclergy.org.uk) Members of Church of England Religious Communities qualify for this assistance.

A time should then be set for a second review.

1.4.5. Second Review

Members of the Standing Council should assess progress in an open discussion with the member. It will be important to discuss the direction of travel: Are things getting better, or worse? Is the member able or willing to see the issues and work on them constructively? Depending on the progress made, the possible outcomes are:

- No further action needed
This means the situation is resolved or is showing unambiguous signs of improvement and the regular life of the Community is likely to be sufficient support to continue improving. It may be appropriate to set a date for a further meeting to review the situation.
- Further Action as per 1.4.4
This may be more of the same Action, or a different approach.
- Ending of Residency or leaving the Community as per 1.4.6
- Other
The above outcomes are expected to cover most instances, but at the Standing Council's discretion another course of action may be appropriate, which may include specific actions and/or conditions. If so, a time for further review shall be set.

1.4.6. Ending Residency or leaving the Community

Should the problematic behaviour continue, or the member not engage in the agreed Actions as per 1.4.4, the Standing Council may recommend to the Bishop Visitor that the member ends the residency or leaves the Community which will require communication of this decision to the external named person and local Archdeacon.

1.4.7. Recurrences or New Matters of Concern

Should the same or a different matter arise with the same Member, this process shall resume with a review as per 1.4.5.

2. Grounds for Ending Residency or leaving the Community

A member may be required to end residency or leave the Community for the following reasons:

- 2.1. Following a process resulting in item 1.4.6 above
- 2.2. Following the failure of the process set out in 1. Breakdown in Community Life above
- 2.3. The public renunciation of Christian faith
- 2.4. Departing from the Rule of Life in a substantive way, or Code of Conduct as discerned by the Standing Council and or Visitor or other officers of the Diocese, which cannot reasonably be remedied within the term of Membership
- 2.5. Persistently abandoning or disrupting the common life of the Community
- 2.6. Refusing to return after repeated admonition and persuasion
- 2.7. Conviction of an indictable offence
- 2.8. Conviction of a summary offense, or substantive allegations, or investigation by a competent authority, of a crime, where: the offence or alleged offence be such that the member could not, according to the Community's Safeguarding policy, continue to participate in the mission of the Community to the most vulnerable in society.
- 2.9. Bringing the constituent community, the Society of the Holy Trinity, the Parish, the Diocese , the Church of England or a partner organisation into disrepute.
- 2.10. For jeopardising the safety and security of the residential house, members of the constituent community, members of the Society of the Holy Trinity, members of the Parish, and other Parishes, other members of the Diocese or vulnerable people encountered in the line of service as a member of this Community.
- 2.11. For some other valid reason at the Standing Council discretion in consultation with the external person and Bishop Visitor.

3. External Help

The Standing Council will endeavour to make available to a member access to reasonable external assistance as may be required in each situation. Possible support could include referral for: spiritual direction, counselling, medical or therapeutic assistance.

In situations where the Standing Council have instigated processes of community discipline with a particular individual, the Standing Council will ensure that the person has confidential access to an external Chaplain to the community for the purposes of pastoral support. The Chaplain is enrolled to provide time-specific targeted confidential pastoral support, and nothing further.

The Community is not responsible for funding external help. Although, support with a referral to the St Luke's Health Care Charity will be possible but will not result in a quick referral.

It may also be better or necessary for a member to leave the Community, in order to pursue a particular course of action or treatment outside of the Community.

Each case must be considered on its own merits, and to the greatest possible extent in consensus with the member.

The Community is not responsible for funding external assistance for any members, but will draw on the resources of the local Diocese as appropriate.

It may also be better or necessary for a member to leave the Community, in order to pursue a particular course of action or treatment outside the Community.

4. Acute Situations

As specified in other policies, each individual in the residential setting of the community should have held in reserve the financial resources to move quickly into other accommodation if required. In acute situations this may need to happen quite quickly.

5. Departure of a Member

5.1 Voluntary Departure of a Member

There is a range of reasons why a member may wish, or need, to leave the Community, including reasons of health and family situation. Each situation will be dealt with according to its own merits, normally by the Standing Council.

This is a serious decision that will affect not only the member, but the sisters and brothers to whom, in God, they have committed themselves for this time. Every effort should be made to make this discernment in Community, in transparency and charity to one another.

5.2 Ending of Residency or Leaving Community

If the Standing Council recommends ending of residency or leaving Community or a formal course of disciplinary action, the Standing Council shall make a recommendation to the Visitor and External Person that the person leave Residency and/or the Community.

5.3 When a Decision is Made

Once a decision is made for a Member to leave the Community, whether voluntary departure or ending of Residency or asked to leave community. For the wellbeing of the departing member and the remaining Community alike, that departure shall take place as soon as is practically possible, but taking care to assist the departing member in ensuring the new situations is one of safety and support. The member is leaving to a situation of independence from the Community, and this step in the process needs to acknowledge and empower that return to independence and therefore making these arrangements are primarily the Member's responsibility and the Community's role one of support and prayer.

5.4 Saying Farewell

It is always desirable if possible, for the whole Community to pray together with a person who is leaving the Community (whether by decision of Standing Council or own volition). However, each situation must be judged on its own merits and needs, so that this may not be possible or appropriate in some situations. For example, when an issue evokes a Safeguarding Policy investigation, such a meeting may not be possible and require the advice of the Parish and/or Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

In any situation the Community will be given time to process together what has happened and become reconciled with the situation as much as possible.

5.5 Release from Vows

In situations where the Member has been asked to leave the Community, pastoral considerations of each situation may merit the need for the formal release from the vows made at the beginning of the period of participation in the community. This can be done by letter or in a modified act of worship as agreed with the Standing Council.

5.6 Discretion and Confidentiality

In most cases, it is expected that a concern may be widely known in the Community, as issues that concern any one person are normally known to many more. Some situations may concern matters that need to be kept confidential from most or all other Members.

Each situation shall be dealt with, having a great concern for the integrity of the Member(s) concerned and the impact of disclosure on the wider Community.

All issues concerning any matter of safeguarding should be assumed to be confidential unless otherwise stated and members should seek to refrain from communicating about them outside of the due process. See safeguarding policy for relevant processes.

Any general dissemination of information to all, or a significant group, shall be explicitly agreed by the Standing Council.

6. Review of this Policy Guidance

Given the importance of this area of community life, this document will be subject to amendment and addition as advised by the Chapter of the Society, but also feedback and further work completed by constituent communities with their Diocese and with the Church of England Advisory Council for the Relations of Bishops and Religious Communities.

7. Appendices

1. Standing Council Record Sheet
2. Health Planning Record Sheet