

Northern Lights Metropolitan Community Church

Direct Dealing Policy

What is Direct Dealing?

Direct Dealing is a way of behaving in church which follows the example of Jesus Christ. It is about respecting the rights and freedom of other people and about taking personal responsibility for our own words and actions. It is also about setting an example to each other through healthy and appropriate behaviour.

Why is Direct Dealing Important?

Situations occasionally arise, which require some form of mediation or in which words or actions need to be challenged. Among the many important responsibilities of Board Directors and other church leaders, it is the duty to deal promptly with any inappropriate behaviour in church surroundings.

The Board of Northern Lights MCC has adopted a policy for handling inappropriate behaviour in church or at church gatherings in the ways set out below.

How Should Individuals Deal With Inappropriate Behaviour?

The Board encourages everyone to follow the approach set out below. In doing so, we also follow the example of Jesus Christ.

There are three steps to Direct Dealing:

1. If someone's behaviour is inappropriate first go and raise the matter privately on your own, with the person whose behaviour has affected you, to explain why that behaviour is not appropriate.
2. If that approach does not work, take along one or two other trustworthy people, on whom you can rely to be discreet, tactful and level-headed. This may be a member of the Board or church leader. Explain again why the behaviour is not appropriate and ask them to stop.
3. If this does not work, the matter becomes more serious. You will need to take it to the full Board of Directors. This may require you to write to the Board or attending a Board meeting to explain what happened. The Board may take appropriate action to investigate the complaint and discipline the individual concerned, in accordance with the constitution of Northern Lights MCC and the Harassment Policy.

Some Examples of Inappropriate Behaviour

A few examples of situations that can arise are set out below.

Careless talk – Any unfair criticism or malicious comments about another person can quickly involve other people and cause conflict throughout the congregation. Sexism, racism, sexual humour or remarks, or any other unjust comments around age, sexuality, ability or any other equality issue are

unacceptable. They directly contravene the position of both MCC Newcastle and UFMCC on inclusiveness.

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 adversely affects their right to a safe, welcoming and comfortable environment.

Cruising – People should not be subjected to the unwanted attentions of others at church. People attend church in order to open their minds to God and to share their thoughts with fellow Christians.

Harassment – This can include unwanted attention of any kind. It damages the church as people may stop attending. Some people are more easily offended than others, so harassment is what an offended person may believe is inappropriate, not what we or others consider is inappropriate.

Divisiveness and Discontent – This may include making inappropriate use of confidential approaches to other people, which prevents the church leadership from checking facts or finding out who else feels the same way about a matter. It also includes attacks upon the leadership of the church, which are selfish and designed to undermine the authority and ministry of particular leaders. This distracts the Church from its God-given mission. If left unchallenged, such behaviour puts people off from coming to church and can seriously damage the mental and physical health of those being attacked.

True diversity and dissent is honourable if expressed openly and transparently. Those who are honourable in their disagreements will live with a majority decision or, if the issue is so important to them, will honourably find a different congregation whose values they share.