

MCC Newcastle Direct Dealing Policy

"If your sister or your brother sins against you, go and show them their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won your sister or brother over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If your sister or brother refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he or she refuses to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector."
(Matthew 18: 15 -17)

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 MCC Newcastle has adopted a policy for handling inappropriate behaviour in Church or at Church gatherings in the ways set out below.

How Should Church Leaders Approach Direct Dealing?

There are three steps to Direct Dealing by Board Directors and other Church leaders:

1. We should first go and raise a matter on our own with the person who has in some way infringed the rights or freedom of a Church attender.
2. If that approach does not work, we should take along one or two other trustworthy people, on whom we can rely to be discreet, tactful and level-headed. It would be normal for the Church Coordinator to take a respected Board Director along.
3. If this does not work, the matter becomes more serious. We should then take it to the full Board of Directors, which may take appropriate action – see section on Misconduct.

How Should Others Deal With Inappropriate Behaviour?

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

But the Board understands that some people are less able (for a variety of reasons) to assert their own rights and freedom in going on their own to those who have offended them.

1. When this is the case, a Church attender who has experienced inappropriate behaviour may go to a Board Director or another Church leader and ask them to accompany them to help resolve the situation.

2. If that approach does not work, the Church attender may ask the Board Director or other leader to take up the matter. The leader will follow the principles described above.

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 – Vulnerable people should not be subjected to the romantic attentions of others at Church. People attend Church in order to open their minds to God and to share their thoughts with fellow Christians. Any source of conflict within a casual relationship sometimes causes one of the parties to fall away from the Church as a result. This can be damaging to both parties and distract others, including those in leadership, from focussing on people's spiritual needs.

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.

With thanks to MCC Manchester on whose policy this is based.