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## DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY

### Purpose

The purpose of this Dispute Resolution Policy is to clearly articulate to all members and adherents of Church@TheGabba the Church Leadership's expectations of all people who profess the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and who call Church@TheGabba their spiritual home, regarding dispute resolution.

This dispute resolution policy is designed to demonstrate the commitment of Church@TheGabba to resolving differences in a positive, constructive, and Christ-like manner, using the processes set forth in the book of Matthew, Chapter 18 and other parts of the Bible. The goal of the policy is, therefore, to create a framework for Church Leadership, staff, members, and adherents to work together to overcome any differences they may have and to find the common ground that is shared by us all in the teachings of Christ.

### Preamble

This policy is predicated on the Scripture passages of Matthew 18, Matthew 5:23-24, Colossians 3:12-17, and Ephesians 4:1-3.

For purposes of this policy, "conflict" is recognized and defined as being as simple as a difference of opinion, or it may involve a disagreement over church doctrine, or dissatisfaction with one or more of the Church Leadership, or dissatisfaction or disagreement with a decision by one its governing groups (i.e. Pastors, deacons, or members meeting), or an argument involving two or more individuals concerning the policies and direction of the Church. Regardless of the nature of the conflict, it is our prayer that the Church Leadership, members, adherents and staff of Church@TheGabba will follow the example of Jesus Christ in treating each other with love and respect, even when there is not agreement on an issue.

Recognizing that differences of opinion are inevitable in any human endeavour, however, Church@TheGabba calls on its members, attendees and staff to follow this policy so that when conflict does occur, Jesus will be honoured by our efforts to resolve our differences in love and maintain the unity of the body of Christ that is Church@TheGabba. (Ephesians 4:1-3).

Our goal is that the people of Church@TheGabba will not walk away from the church because of conflict but will work together to overcome differences and find the common ground we share in Christ. Such an approach is biblically mandated and serves as an example to the non-Christian world that we are indeed disciples of Christ (John 13:34-35).

### Policy

#### *1. Healthy Conflict*

Church@TheGabba recognizes that healthy conflict is necessary to keep an organization mindful of and focused on its mission. Healthy conflict is that in which people deal with their issues up-front and talk directly to those with whom they disagree. We expect that in all interactions with each

other, the people of Church@TheGabba will respect different ideas and views and will express disagreement with civility and Christian love, which means acting in the best interest of those we disagree with (1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 3:18).

Disagreements and unhealthy conflicts should be addressed as soon as possible. The longer conflict is unresolved, the harder it is to bridge the differences. Anyone who believes they are in a conflict situation and is unsure of how to proceed should first contact the pastor for guidance and counsel or, if the conflict involves the pastor, a member of the Church Leadership. The following steps must then be followed.

## *2. Self-Reflection and Prayer (Matthew 18)*

Jesus tells us to take time to examine our role in a conflict (Matthew 7:3-5, Mark 11:25, Romans 12:17-18). If any person in the Church has a conflict, he or she should begin in prayer and first ask God for direction. They should ask themselves whether they can let the conflict go. They should put themselves in the other's shoes and ask themselves what others may say they have contributed to the problem. They should also ask themselves what it is that God sees, and whether they are putting their personal ideas, thoughts and desires above what is best for the Church as a whole.

At this step, and at all succeeding steps that become necessary, own your issue. Anonymous complaints are not acceptable.

## *3. One on One Discussions (Matthew 18:15)*

Jesus says that when you have a conflict with another person you should go to that person and try to work out your differences personally and privately (see Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15). Therefore, if the matter is not resolved through self-reflection and prayer and there is still a disagreement or conflict, particularly a disagreement between two parties, the second step and the ideal response is for the two parties to meet together, face to face, to discuss the matter and seek common ground. (Matthew 18:15).

If any person in the church has a concern or a complaint about a member of the Church Leadership, such as a pastor or a deacon, the concerned person is strongly encouraged to discuss the matter directly with the leader involved (Matthew 18:15).

Each person should work hard to understand the other person's point of view, to listen to the other person without interrupting, and to try to work together to create solutions. Accept and respect that individual opinions may differ. In all interactions with each other, especially one-on-one discussions under this policy, the people of Church@TheGabba will respect different ideas and views and will express disagreement with civility and Christian love. (1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 3:18).

Gossip is strongly discouraged as dishonouring to our Lord Jesus Christ (James 4:11-12). One-on-one discussions under this policy should be focused on the issue or problem, not the person(s) involved. Additionally, each person in the meeting should speak for themselves, not an unknown group of people or "many people in the congregation."

Resolving conflict is impossible if one is unwilling or unable to forgive. If and when the matter is resolved, the parties agree to put the issue/conflict behind them, and move forward in a positive and constructive manner that allows them to stay healthy, spiritually and emotionally. This means the parties will open their hearts and minds to allow Christ to fortify their spirit, and they will commit to let go of the conflict and to not dwell on it or discuss it further.

If repeated efforts to resolve a dispute in private do not succeed, the Bible teaches that you should seek assistance from other Christians in resolving the matter through biblical conflict coaching, mediation, or arbitration.

#### *4. Objective Assistance / Mediation (Matthew 18:16)*

If the matter is not resolved through one-on-one discussions or if for any reason it is not possible to meet one-on-one, parties with a conflict or dispute should seek the assistance of a church leader to help facilitate the resolution process. The mediator should be a person who is accepted by all parties involved and he/she should be one who will not take sides, but will be neutral regarding the issues and conflict.

In the case of interpersonal disputes between members, the Pastors and Church Leadership may endeavour to assist in seeing the dispute is resolved in line with Scriptural principles. In the case of a dispute between the Pastors and the membership, an independent mediator may be selected. In the case of a dispute between the Pastor and a staff member, the Church Leadership may endeavour to assist in seeing the dispute resolved. If this is not successful then an independent arbitrator may be appointed.

Church staff and leaders may also recommend another party as mediator, possibly someone from outside the congregation or someone obtained through conference-related mediation resources (Matthew 18:16).

If and when the matter is resolved, the parties agree to put the matter behind them and move forward in a positive and constructive manner by committing to let go of the conflict and to not dwell on it or discuss it any further.

#### *5. Church Resolution (Matthew 18:17a)*

If the matter is not resolved through the assistance of an objective mediator or if, for any reason, it is not possible for the parties to meet with a mediator, then one or both of the parties may bring the conflict to the attention of a Queensland Baptist regional consultant for advice on any further course of action.

If and when the matter is resolved, the parties agree to put the matter behind them and move forward in a positive and constructive manner by committing to let go of the conflict and to not dwell on it or discuss it any further.

#### *6. Additional Issues*

All allegations involving child abuse must be handled as directed in Church@TheGabba's Risk Management Strategy – Working with Children & Young People.

Misconduct of an illegal or criminal nature must also be promptly reported to the police or other relevant secular authorities.

Mediators and people from Church@TheGabba asked to assist with any conflict resolution shall strive to propose constructive solutions. For purposes of this policy, "resolution" is defined as mutual agreement or understanding among all the parties in a conflict. When a resolution is achieved, the parties agree to put the matter behind them and move forward in a positive and constructive manner by committing to let go of the conflict and to not dwell on it or discuss it any further.

In all circumstances and at all stages of the resolution policy, the confidentiality of the parties involved in a conflict shall be respected.

There are some conflicts that cannot be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all of the parties. If all efforts at conflict resolution fail, concern for the well-being, openness, safety, and stability of the Church@TheGabba as a whole shall be given priority over the feelings or actions of any individual. Where a conflict cannot be resolved, the parties involved should let go of any anger or

disappointment that they have over the unresolved issue, and move forward focused on the common ground that is shared by us all in the teachings of Christ, rather than walking away from the church because of an unresolved conflict. If, however, they believe they are not able to stay at Church@TheGabba in peace, any party wishing to leave Church@TheGabba's fellowship is asked to do so lovingly, without rancour or bitterness, on the part of the person leaving or on the parts of those staying at this church, so that we may not bring disgrace on the name of Jesus (1 John 2:10).

In the case of serious misconduct, refer to the relevant section of the Church constitution.

## Definitions

<i>Church</i>	means <b>Church @TheGabba</b> and also includes the associated ministries and activities of the church.
<i>Church Leadership</i>	means primary governing group of the church such as the board, elders or deacons.
<i>Conflict</i>	means a difference of opinion, or it may involve a disagreement over church doctrine, or dissatisfaction with one or more of the Church Leadership, or dissatisfaction or disagreement with a decision by one its governing committees (i.e. Pastors, deacons, or members meeting), or an argument involving two or more individuals concerning the policies and direction of the Church.
<i>Resolution</i>	means mutual agreement or understanding among all the parties in a conflict. When a resolution is achieved, the parties agree to put the matter behind them and move forward in a positive and constructive manner by committing to let go of the conflict and to not dwell on it or discuss it any further.