



The Lakes Church

ABN: 40 227 130 382

We seek to engage personally with everyone in our community to help them start following Jesus, connect with his people, grow in knowing Jesus and serve in love.

Complaints and Grievance Policy

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Version Control

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Relevant Legislation:

- Industrial Relations Act 1996 (NSW)
- Occupational, Health and Safety Act 2000, No.40 (NSW)
- Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012 (Cth)
- The Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- The Workplace Relations Act 1996 (Cth)

Other References:

- Australian Privacy Principles Guidelines, OAIC, 31 March 2015 Ed., check website for latest information
- Human Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Act 1986
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/adb.nsf/pages/lawsindex
- The Lakes Evangelical Church Constitution

1. INTRODUCTION

The Lakes Church believes that all people are created in the image of God and are immeasurably valuable regardless of race, age or gender. We believe that God extends love and grace to all persons, and that we are called to likewise love and respect others. The Church does not tolerate any abuse, exploitation, harm, harassment or misconduct toward any person, as this behaviour is destructive to God's people and violates the love we know in Jesus Christ.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:17-21)

Conflict and disagreement will always be something we have to deal with in the church community because Christians are fallen, imperfect people under the process of renovation through God's saving grace. The Bible teaches that dealing with conflict is vital in our ongoing relationship with God and demonstrates the genuineness of our faith. Being a forgiven person should have a profound effect on how we deal with those who hurt us or disappoint us. Our secretly held grudges, our open hostilities, our gossip and backstabbing will cause harmful divisions and unhappiness within the church and must be dealt with if we are to be a healthy community.

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Heb 12:15)

The Church is committed to calling to account anyone who abuses, grooms, exploits, harms, harasses or engages in any misconduct towards another. The Church recognises that this behaviour occurs when power is used to take advantage of the vulnerability of another.

2. CHRISTIAN RATIONALE

This policy is based upon Biblical principles. Some key references include – Matthew 18:15–35; Romans 12:9-21; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ephesians 4:1-4 and 5:21 and Philippians 2:1-5. The policy should also be understood and implemented within the context of the love for one another that should characterise a Christian community (John 13: 34-35).

"If your brother sins against you go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he 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 he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;" (Matthew 18:15-17 NIV).

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:2-3 NIV).

The Lakes Church believes that members and regular attendees should exhibit the qualities of a Godly character and the lifestyle of a person committed to being a disciple of Christ. Grievances may arise when a member of staff fails to conduct him or herself in accordance with these qualities and standards. The Scriptures call us to hold each other to account for our behaviour while guarding our own and to be a witness to the world through this.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document sets out the policies and procedures of The Lakes Church in relation to how the Church manages complaints and grievances in the context of ministering together for the gospel and glory of God.

4. TABLE OF RESPONSIBILITIES (TO BE COMPLETED)

<i>Responsibilities</i>	<i>Evidence of Compliance</i>
Reference Group	
Receive and address grievances that are of sufficient significance to warrant being brought to the Group.	Complaints and Grievance Procedures Meeting Minutes
Admin Committee	
Ensure the implementation of this policy within the Church	Complaints and Grievance Policy
Ensure procedures are maintained for the proper collection, storage and use of information	Privacy Procedures
Ensure procedures are maintained for complaints, access & enquiries regarding Personal Information held by the Church	Privacy Procedures Privacy Policy Adoption of Meeting Minutes
Senior and Executive Pastor	
Provide guidance and advice	
Ensure compliance with policy and procedures for raising and responding to complaints and grievances	Complaints and Grievance Policy
Ensure any significant grievances are promptly reported to the relevant authority	Complaints and Grievance Policy
Policy and Procedure Coordinator	
Conduct annual review and report to Admin Committee	Complaints and Grievance Policy
Speak to the congregation annually about this.	
All staff, partners and attendees	
Compliance with policy and procedures for raising and responding to complaints and grievances	Complaints and Grievance Procedure
Each new staff member must, as part of their induction process, be briefed on the implementation of this policy	Staff Induction Records

5. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to these terms for the purpose of The Lakes Church Complaints and Grievance Policy

Feedback: opinions, comments, expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about the church, its services, staff, or its handling of a complaint

Complaint: the Church will treat a matter as a complaint where it:

- Is an expression of concern, dissatisfaction or frustration with the policies, procedures or quality of service provided by the Church, or the conduct of an employee or volunteer
- Is an expression of concern regarding an incident within the Church, or a safety matter
- Alleges misconduct, a breach of policy, or corruption on the part of an employee or volunteer
- Is an expression of offence or detriment as a result of a decision of the Church
- Is an expression of dissatisfaction with a decision of the Church, or how the decision was made

Complaints may be oral or written. Written complaints include those sent by letter or email.

Grievance: A grievance is a complaint or concern formally expressed by an individual or group in an organization about a personal or workplace issue. It may be about any act, omission, situation or decision that is considered unfair, discriminatory or unjustified.

Harassment: any form of ongoing behaviour that is not welcome, not asked for or returned, that offends, intimidates or humiliates a person

Complainant: any person making, or bringing, a complaint or allegation

Executive Pastor: is a senior leadership position within the church, responsible for overseeing the church's day-to-day operations, administration, and staff. This role serves as a bridge between the Senior pastor and the church's practical management of specific areas such as strategic planning and engagement and ministries like Children's and Women's Ministry. This role helps align church activities with its mission, enabling the Senior Pastor to focus on vision and spiritual leadership.

Vexatious Complainant: unreasonably persistent; or because of the frequency or nature of the complaint, hinders consideration of their, or other people's, complaints

Respondent: person requested to respond to complaints made about them

Witness: person bringing evidence

Stakeholder: person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the church

Investigation: the process by which a situation is examined, facts are established and verified. Evidence is gathered, such as witness statements and documentary proof, to be able to make a decision.

Procedural Fairness: the principles of procedural fairness guide fair and reasonable decision-making procedures when a decision may adversely affect the rights, interests or legitimate expectations of an individual.

There are two basic common law rules:

- the 'hearing rule' - the right to be heard, which includes the right to:
 - Know the case against them, including specific allegations and any other information which will be taken in to account
 - Know the way in which the issues will be determined
 - Respond to the allegations
 - Know how to seek a review of the decision in response to the allegations
- the 'bias rule' - the right to an impartial decision, which includes the right to:

- Impartiality in the investigation and decision making phases
- An absence of bias in the decision maker

6. GENERAL PRINCIPALS

- A. **Fairness:** The principles of procedural fairness are to apply to the way every complaint and grievance is managed and investigated. These principles include:
- Appropriate care will be arranged for complainants, and victims of alleged wrong behaviour; including the availability of support persons and counselling etc. if required.
 - Notifying the person about whom the complaint has been made (the respondent) of the complaint;
 - Providing the respondent with details of the allegations;
 - Giving the respondent an opportunity to respond to the allegations in writing and/or in person;
 - Considering all relevant information and ensuring the outcome is supported by evidence;
 - Allowing the respondent to have a support person attend any meeting convened for the purpose of investigating the allegations.
- B. **Promptness:** As far as practicable, a complaint should be dealt with promptly. Fairness requires that investigations be carried out without undue delay.
- C. **Confidentiality:** Executive Pastors, Administration Committee members, and others involved must keep complaint details and the existence of the complaints confidential when practical. All parties in an investigation should discuss the matter only with those necessary for resolving the complaint and providing pastoral care. Breaching confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action.
- D. **Impartiality:** The Executive Pastors and any investigator must be impartial; that is, not actually biased or perceived to be biased.
- E. **Free of Repercussions:** The Lakes Church does not tolerate victimisation of anyone who raises a complaint in good faith or participates in an investigation. Such behaviour is considered serious misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal. FIEC must ensure that those making complaints are not adversely affected

6.2 Interaction with Other Policies

- (a) This Policy is to be read alongside The Lakes Church Code of Conduct which sets the standard of behaviour to which members of Staff, Senior Pastors, Executive Pastors and the Administration Committee can be held accountable.

7. PROCEDURES

A Flowchart providing a summary of the complaints and grievance handling process is available in Section 8 below.

7.1. Complaint Procedure

- (a) A complainant shall raise the matter directly with the respondent in private, or with a trusted colleague, as soon as practicable and seek to resolve the matter of concern with grace and fairness.
- (b) If the matter involves allegations of, or suspected abuse, the matter is to be directly referred to the Senior Pastor or Child Safety Officer as per the procedures outlined in the Child Safety Policy.

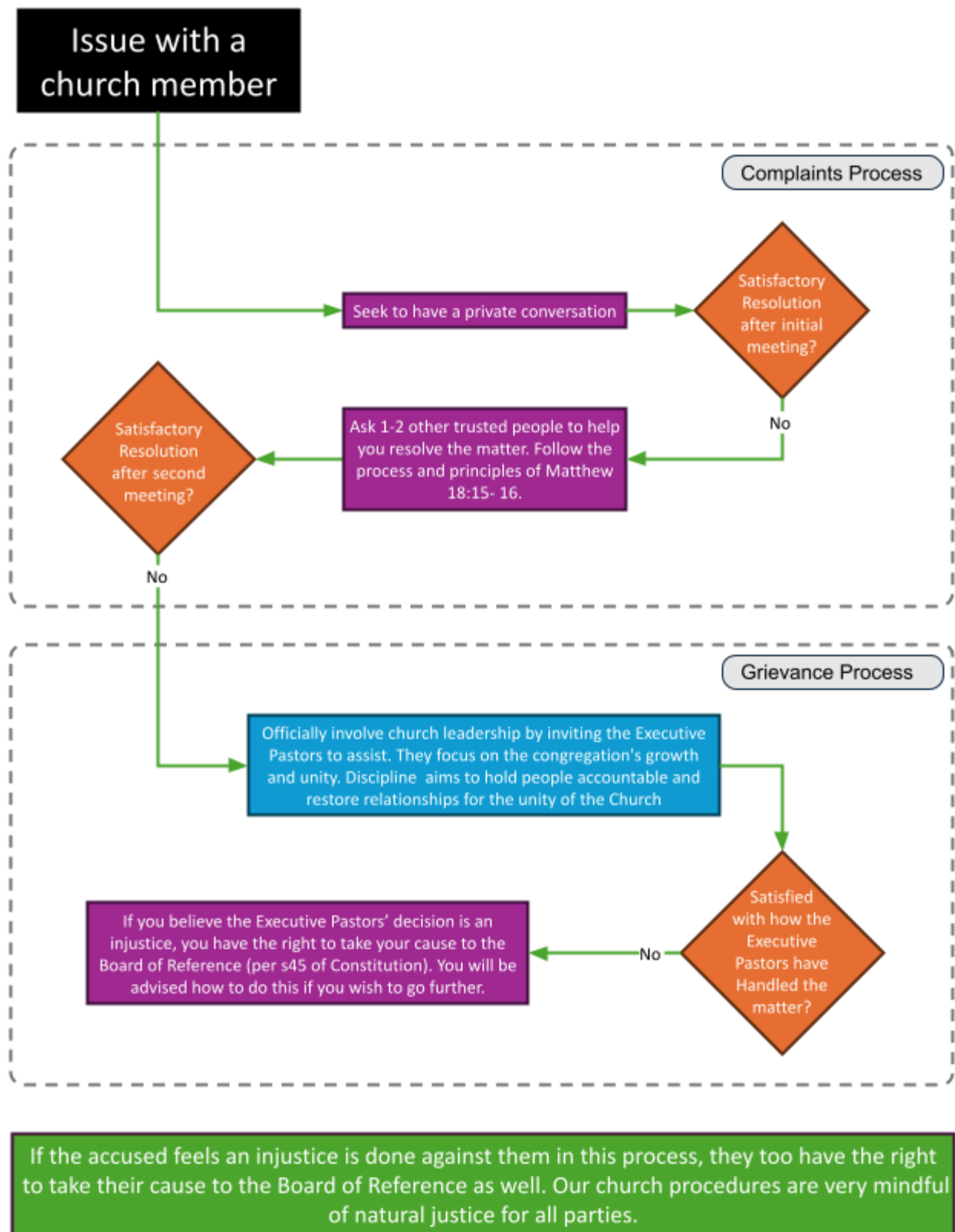
7.2. Grievance Procedure

- (a) If the complaint cannot be resolved, or is sufficiently serious as to warrant further attention, the complainant shall raise the matter formally in writing to the relevant authority.

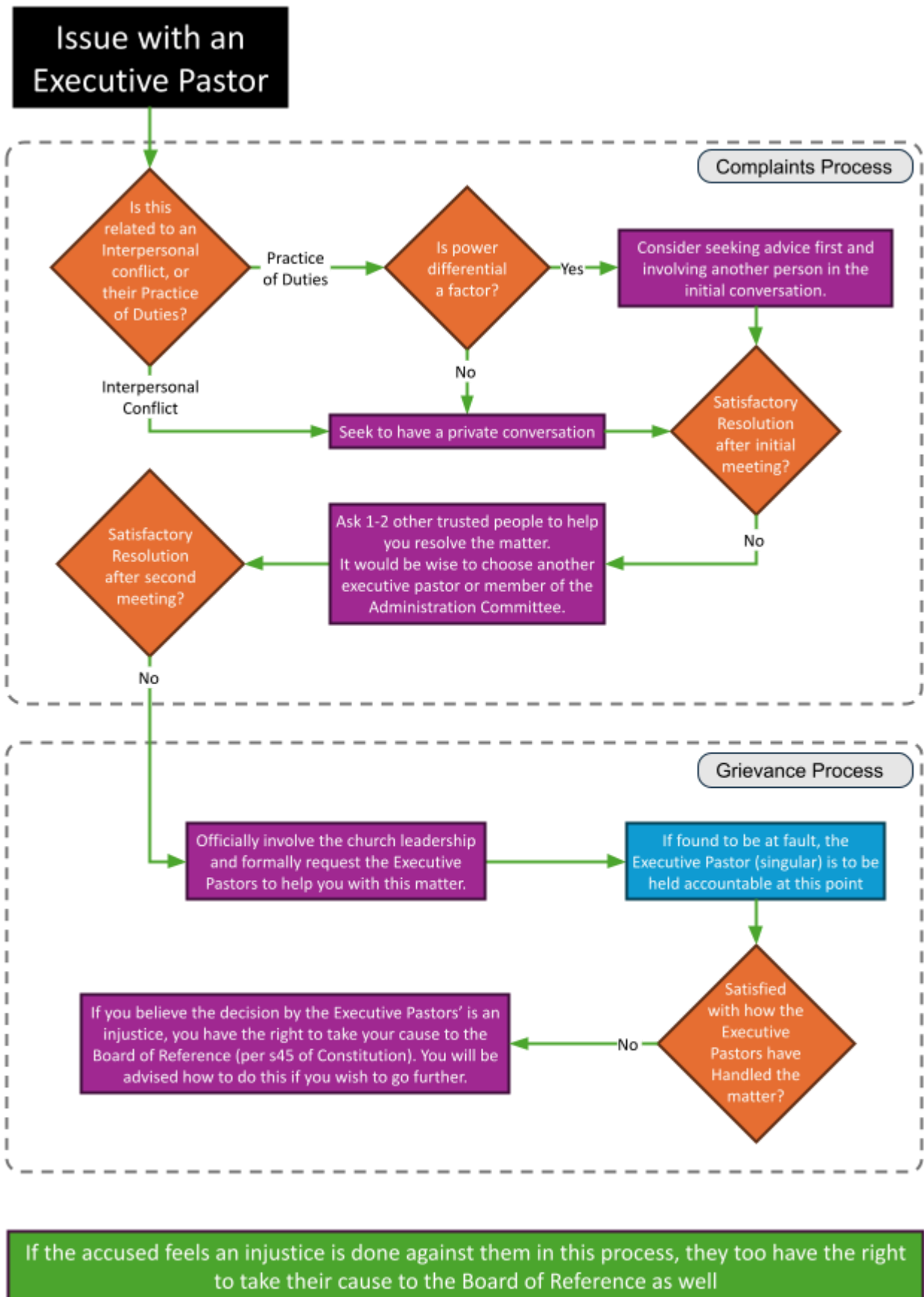
- (b) An appropriate investigation shall be commenced by the relevant authority with all parties provided sufficient opportunity to articulate their concern or provide their version of events.
- (c) At the conclusion of the investigation, the relevant authority will assess the validity and integrity of the allegations and the investigation and determine a resolution.

8. Complaints and Grievance Resolution Procedural Steps

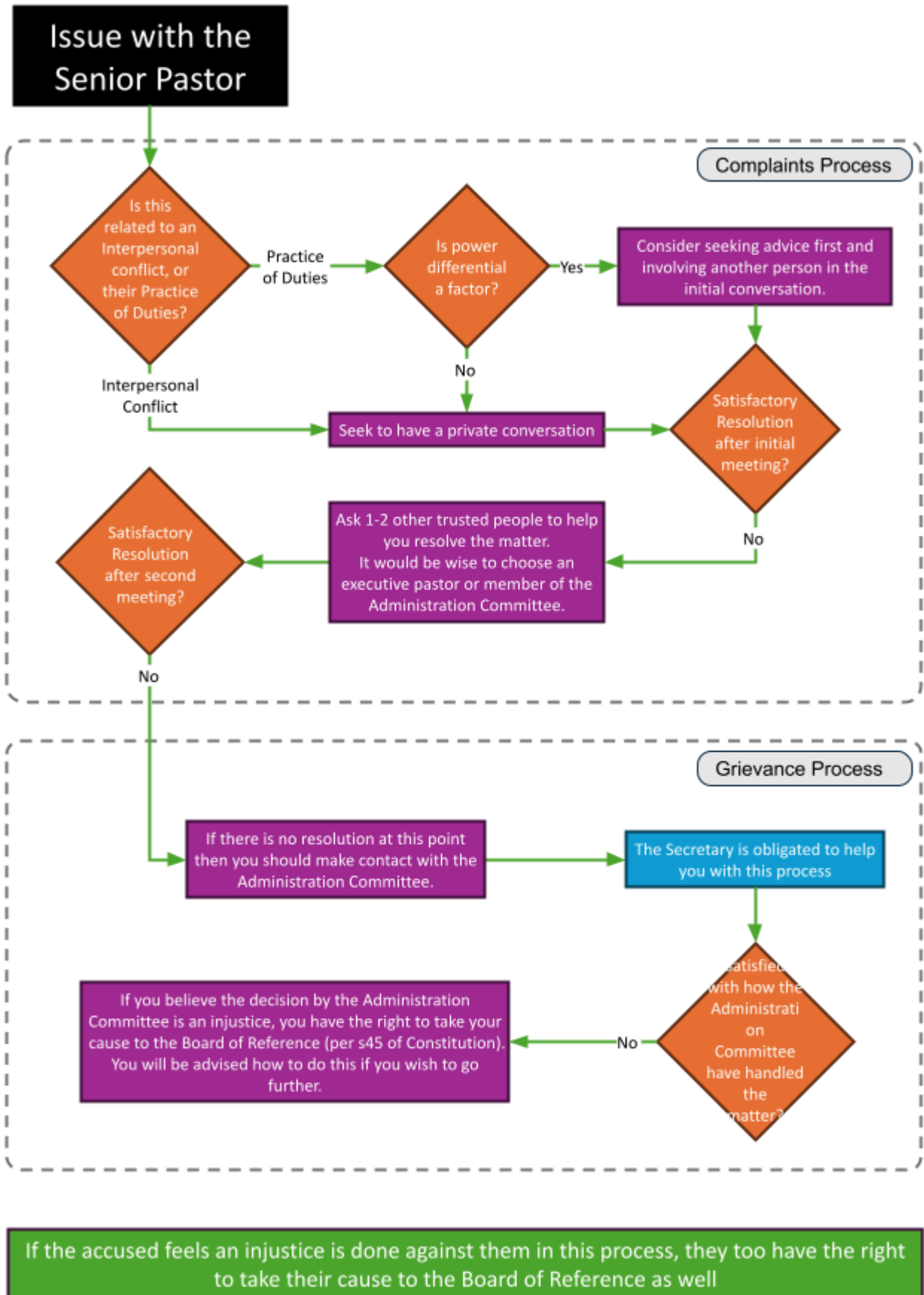
(a) Issue with a church member



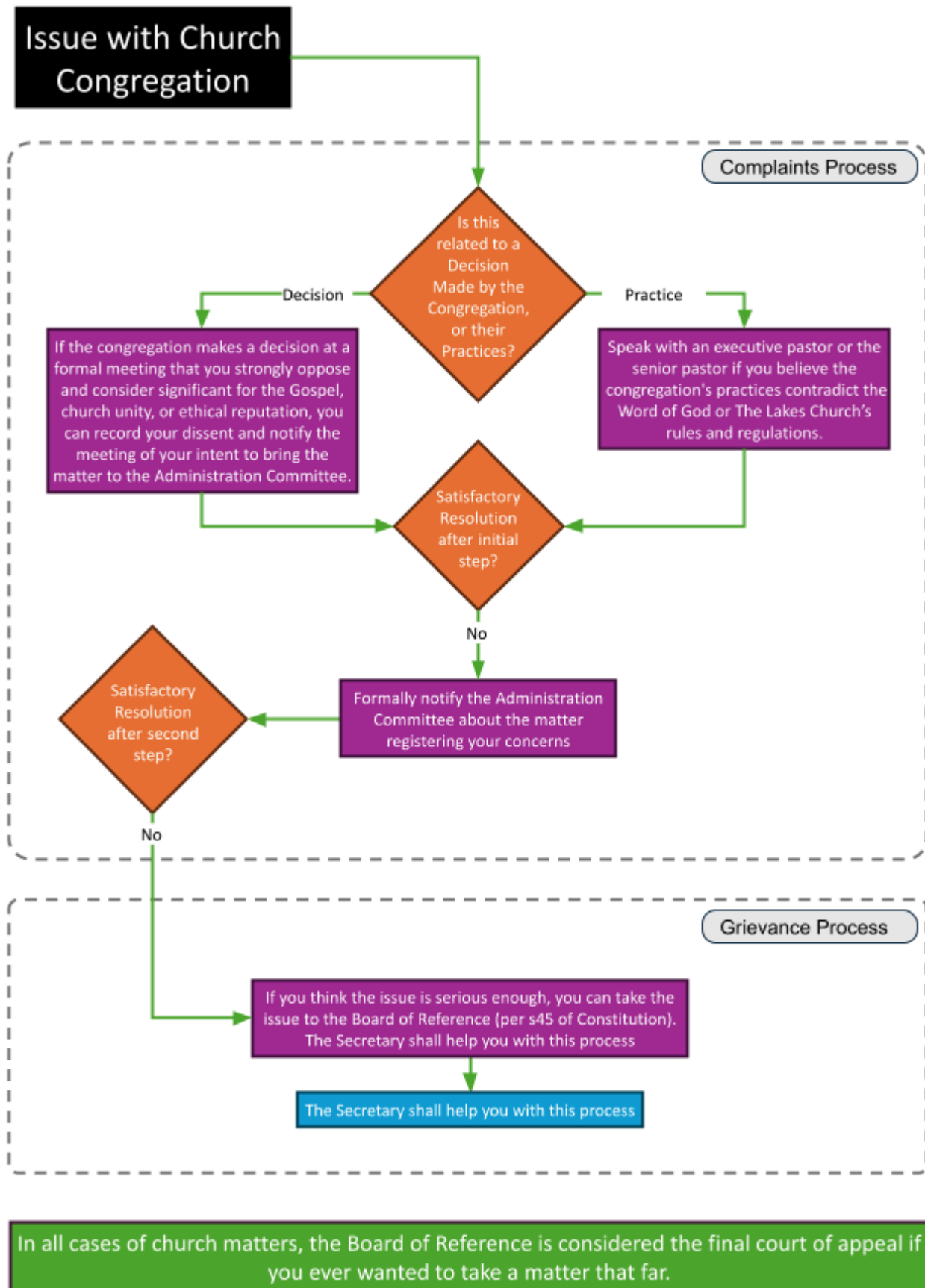
(b) Issue with an Executive Pastor



(c) Issue with the Senior Pastor



(d) Issue with Church Congregation



8.1. Pastoral Support

- (a) The Lakes Church understands that any grievance and/or the grievance investigation process can be a sensitive and emotional time that may cause challenges for an individual.
- (b) The Lakes Church will endeavour to ensure that independent pastoral support is available to all parties.

8.2. Record Keeping

- (a) If a matter becomes a formal grievance, all records—including allegations, investigation reports, interviews, and notes—will be securely kept by the investigator throughout the process. Once the grievance is resolved, the file must be forwarded to the Senior Pastor and securely stored to maintain privacy and confidentiality for all involved.
- (b) All personal information is to be handled in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles and where appropriate will be de-identified and destroyed once it is no longer needed for any purpose for which it may be used or disclosed.

9. POLICY REVIEW

The policy and procedures of this policy will be reviewed annually by the Policy Owner and changes tabled with the Administration Committee for approval.

10. POLICY DISTRIBUTION METHOD

Staff are advised of all policies by email when they are approved by the Church and noted and minuted by the Administration Committee.

This policy will be made available on The Lakes Church website and Policies Team Drive.