Christ Church Felixstowe
Whistleblowing Policy

Christ Church, Felixstowe, is committed to being open, honest, and accountable. We seek to encourage a free and open culture in our dealings between office holders, employees, and volunteers in the church.

This policy aims to help office holders, employees, and volunteers in the church to raise any serious concerns they may have about anything taking place in the church with confidence, and without fear of being victimised, discriminated against, or disadvantaged in any way as a result.

This policy is written in the context of the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (the "Act") and other legislation which protects employees and workers who 'blow the whistle' on malpractice within their organisation.

While it is unclear that the statutory protection afforded by the Act extends to office holders or volunteers, it is considered best practice for charities to extend similar protection to volunteers. Christ Church has decided to do this, and to extend the protection to office holders too.

This policy was adopted by the PCC of Christ Church Felixstowe on ___9th September 2025_____ and will be **reviewed every three years.**

Signature of the vicar:___Dominic Turner_____, on behalf of the PCC.

1. Who does this policy apply to?
This policy applies to everyone who works for or volunteers for the church.

2. What is Whistleblowing?
'Whistleblowing' refers to the disclosure of malpractice or suspected serious wrongdoing, as well as illegal acts or omissions, at work. Examples of areas of possible concern are the raising or disbursement of funds, the processes of commissioning work, or concerns around legal, statutory, or regulatory breaches, or unethical behaviour.

3. What types of concerns are covered by this Policy?
In order to be legally protected under the Act, and to fall within the scope of this Policy, your disclosure must be about a serious concern (known under the Act as a 'qualifying disclosure'). This means you have information and reasonably believe that one of the following matters is happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future:

- A criminal offence;
- A miscarriage of justice;

- An act creating risk to health and safety;
- An act causing damage to the environment;
- A breach of any other legal obligation, or;
- Concealment of any of the above.

You do not need to have proof that such an act has been, is being, or is likely to be committed. However, you must hold a reasonable belief that such an act has been, is being, or may be likely to be carried out.

If you feel unable to whistleblow using internal processes covered by this Policy, the matter may be reported directly to the relevant regulator, such as the Charity Commission or the Church Commissioners.

4. What concerns cannot be raised as whistleblowing under this Policy?
This whistleblowing policy does not apply to:

- **Complaints**: A complaint that is an expression of your dissatisfaction which calls for a response. Complaints should instead be raised with either the vicar, or a member of the PCC in the first instance.
- **Safeguarding concerns**: Such concerns are covered by our Safeguarding Policy. Please contact our Parish Safeguarding Officer, Chris Moran, by emailing safeguarding@christchurchfelixstowe.org.uk, or by telephoning 07841 207139.
- **Concerns about other organisations**: If you have concerns about other Church of England organisations, you should raise them through that organisation, following any whistleblowing procedures it has.
- **Employment related concerns**: This policy does not deal with any complaints employees may have about their own employment position, which should be addressed, in the first instance, through reporting the concern to the relevant line manager.

5. How to raise a concern.
You should raise your whistleblowing concern as soon as possible. This will make it easier to act and to enable any problems to be resolved or reported quickly.

You can make your disclosure orally but written disclosures are preferable as these will make the process more efficient and effective. In your disclosure, you should:

- Provide relevant context and background, including relevant dates, venues, names etc.
- State clearly the reason why the situation causes concern.

You must state clearly that you are raising your concern using the whistleblowing policy, and whether you wish for your identity to be kept confidential.

- Where requested, we will make every effort to maintain confidentiality. However, there may be cases where this is not possible (if, for example, the police are involved).
- If confidentiality cannot be maintained, you will be informed of this, and the reasons why it was not possible.
- Because of this, we prefer non-anonymous disclosures, as anonymous disclosures make it difficult to properly investigate concerns, protect employees, or give feedback on outcomes.

Your concern should be reported, in the first instance, to either your line manager (where appropriate), or to the parish Whistleblowing Officer. If the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer, you should contact the vicar.

6. Protecting the individual raising the concern.
We will take appropriate action to protect you from any harassment, victimisation, or bullying. Employees who raise a genuine concern under this policy will not be at risk of losing their job, nor will it influence any unrelated disciplinary action or redundancy procedures.

The matter will be treated confidentially, but if the concern cannot be resolved without revealing your identity, the Whistleblowing Officer (or vicar, where the matter concerns the Whistleblowing Officer) will discuss with you whether and how to proceed.

You should note that you will not be protected from the consequences of making a disclosure if, by doing so, a criminal offence would be committed.

7. How will Christ Church deal with the concern?
It is likely that further enquiries and investigation will be necessary. The concern may be investigated by the Whistleblowing Officer, or the vicar where the concern is about the Whistleblowing Officer, or it may be referred to the Parish Safeguarding Officer, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, the police, a regulator, other agencies, an external auditor, or an independent investigator.

Typically, the matters raised may result in one or more of the following outcomes:

- No action is required.
- Action is required / taken under another policy or procedure.
- An internal investigation is required under this policy.
- A referral to the police or other relevant statutory body.
- A referral to the Church Commissioners
- A Serious Incident Report being made to the Charity Commission.
- An independent enquiry.

It may be necessary for you to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

The Whistleblowing Officer, or vicar, will give you feedback on the progress and outcome of any investigation, where possible.

8. Allegations that are malicious or known to the individual making them to be false.
If it is found that you have knowingly or maliciously made an untrue allegation, or you are involved in any way in malpractice, wrongdoing, or illegal acts or omissions, the church will take appropriate action, such as referring the matter to the Diocese or the police if necessary.

If the suspicions are not confirmed by an investigation, the matter will be closed and a record retained.