

HIGHLAND AVENUE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	Document ID # 2023-06
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TITLE: Discipline of Church Fellowship

APPROVED DATE: February 27, 2023

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 27, 2023

REVIEW DATE: February 27, 2028

Policy:

This policy and procedure is to provide general rules and guidelines for the discipline of the Church Fellowship

Procedure:

1. The church must properly and lovingly exercise discipline upon those who, in the judgment of the Executive Board members, have persisted in sinful behavior without demonstration of godly repentance. The purposes of church discipline are:
 - a. To seek the spiritual well-being of the sinning believers by calling them to Biblical conduct in their way of living
 - b. To maintain purity in the local church
 - c. To deter sin in the life of a believer

2. The procedure shall be according to Scripture (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:12) allowing reasonable time for repentance after every effort has been made to call, exhort, and admonish an individual towards repentance and restoration.
 - a. All discipline needs to be on an individual basis, done in love and humility, for the purpose of restoration (2 Corinthians 13)
 - b. The Executive Board shall be notified of any claim or allegation of serious misconduct or sinful behavior by a professing Christian who regularly attends this church, after all other attempts at reconciliation have been exhausted (see Matthew 18:15-20)
 - i. The first step should be a loving confrontation with the offending party and the brother or sister in Christ who has firsthand knowledge of the offense. This step should be done in love and humility and shall include prayer beforehand and during the conversation. An opportunity for repentance and restoration shall be immediately given and a reasonable amount of time

shall be granted for the offending party to pray and consider the exhortation towards repentance.

- ii. If repentance and restoration is not achieved after the first step, the second step in the process should be followed. The second step shall be to take one or two brothers or sisters in Christ with you to lovingly confront the offending party a second time. It would be helpful, but not necessary if one of these two individuals were the pastor, a staff member, or an executive board member. This too shall be done in love and a spirit of humility. The two or three brothers and/or sisters shall gather to pray for the offending party before lovingly confronting them again. It shall be clearly presented to the offending party that the sole purpose of the conversation is their repentance and restoration. Once again, a reasonable amount of time shall be granted for the offending party to pray and consider the exhortation towards repentance.
 - iii. If upon these first two steps towards repentance and restoration have failed to achieve their purpose, then the final step in the discipline process shall proceed to the Executive Board to bring the issue to the congregation. The proper steps for this final step are outlined in the following manner (Step c)
- c. The Executive Board shall investigate insofar as necessary in order to present the issue to the congregation. A special meeting shall be called with the congregation to deal with this issue only. Matters of discipline should never be dealt with during meetings with the congregation's regular scheduled business. No details of the meeting shall be published in the church bulletin, nor placed on the announcement screens during worship. All details regarding any church discipline shall only be discussed during the special meeting. The offending party will be invited to the special meeting to answer the allegations and/or defend themselves. During the meeting, the offending party will be lovingly confronted again, a third time, this time only in the presence of the congregation. The discipline shall be presided over by the Pastor. The meeting shall begin with prayer, the offending party will be confronted again, in love and humility, and given the opportunity for immediate repentance and restoration. If repentance is achieved and restoration is made, then the matter is concluded and the individual shall be restored to the congregation and enjoy all the benefits of being part of the Covenant Fellowship. (An exception shall be made for any positions of leadership until an acceptable time can be determined by the Executive Board, based on the circumstances of the allegations in the restoration process). It is absolutely essential to remember that the discipline process is always for the purpose of restoration. The church must be as diligent in restoration as we are in matters of discipline. If, however, repentance and restoration are not achieved at this gathering with the congregation, the individual will be informed that he/she is no longer welcome at any gatherings of the Covenant Fellowship until the process of repentance and restoration is achieved. Until repentance and restoration is achieved, publicly, the person will be treated as an unbeliever, and as an outsider. We are to show mercy and compassion towards them, treating them with love, not judgment, and praying without ceasing for their repentance and restoration.

Discipline and Removal of Regular Members

- 3/26/2023
Change “Elder” to Executive”-entire document
- 9/25/23
Changes to document to coincide with changes to Bylaws