

Mediation Process – Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney

To: All members of the Aberdeen & Orkney Diocese

As you will be aware, following the recent publication of the Torrance Report into matters within the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney, the Bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church, sitting as the Episcopal Synod, have appointed a Steering Group to manage a process of voluntary mediation, which will aim to offer an opportunity to rebuild and restore a culture of trust and respect for all working within the Diocese.

It is acknowledged that there has been a significant period of disharmony within the Diocese which has caused immense upset, stress and distress for some people. In acknowledging this, the College of Bishops has determined that it is now appropriate to instil a period of calm, which will allow those concerned to be given an opportunity to discuss and potentially resolve their issues and concerns with others, quietly and confidentially, on their own terms and guided by qualified mediators. The University of Dundee's Mediation and Early Dispute Resolution Team have been appointed to work in the Diocese, offering the opportunity of mediation as a route for resolving relationship difficulties.

If you feel you may like to be involved in this process to help resolve difficulties or differences you have with another person in the Diocese, it might be helpful to have some background on the mediation service which will be available to you and also some information about mediation itself - how it works and what you may expect as possible outcomes.

Mediation and Early Dispute Resolution (EDR)– University of Dundee

EDR is a service which has been operating within the University of Dundee for 13 years.

All engagement with the mediation team is completely confidential. It is important to emphasise that the use of mediation, as an option to resolve issues, is an entirely voluntary process for all parties as well as being a completely confidential one.

Once an individual has indicated a desire to attempt to resolve their dispute through a mediated approach, an initial meeting will take place with a representative from the team. This is on a strictly voluntary and confidential basis. This meeting will help to clarify what mediation is, how it works and to establish whether the person wishes to proceed with a mediated approach to resolving their dispute. It should be noted that the mediators will only agree to taking forward a mediation if the initial dialogue with both individuals can establish that there are positive grounds to continue.

The Mediators

The mediators are all accredited by Scottish Mediation and have expertise in resolving workplace conflict.

Mediators do not make notes, do not keep records and do not report details of any discussion which may take place prior to or during a mediation, to any other person. They do not judge or give advice. They remain completely impartial throughout the process. They will try to help improve understanding on both sides of the disagreement by encouraging people to speak openly and honestly to each other about what they each feel has gone wrong. They give people the space to respectfully challenge each other's behaviours and then help each person think about what they would like to see happen, by way of reparation.

The mediators aim to listen and value people who might be feeling let down, upset or hurt about incidents or events which have occurred during their working lives. They also aim to provide the right environment to help a person think about what needs to be done to repair or improve a relationship breakdown.

Mediation Process

The mediation process allows both people to consider their future working relationship together.

The process provides people with a safe space to talk to the mediators and to each other. It requires each individual to be prepared to listen respectfully to the other person and in return they can expect their feelings and thoughts also to be heard. The confidentiality of the process ensures that anything said during a mediation discussion cannot be referred to in any other context.

A mediation is a managed discussion, encouraging individuals to talk openly without interruption or challenge. It aims to allow individuals to each acknowledge what has happened and enables them to be able to apologise if it's appropriate to do so. Resolving a dispute through mediation requires individuals to be willing to be open to discussion about the future. It is about considering *"I might be willing to agree to do this, if you agree to do that..."* It is not about saying *"I'm 100% right, you are completely wrong"*.

Finally, mediation may require people to be willing to compromise if their own interests remain protected. People may come to mediation with a fear of compromise, feeling they are in some way "backing down". Compromise is not a backing down. In the confidential environment of a mediation, it is a way for an individual to be proactive in mending the relationship without fear of external judgement. Instead, an individual is given an opportunity to demonstrate they are willing to treat the other with respect, by showing that they are willing to meet halfway in a negotiation.

In any organisation, no matter how big or how diverse, most people want to "get along" with others during their working lives. Adopting a careful and thoughtful outlook can rebalance trust and restore good working relationships with a willingness from both parties. It is not the differences that are the problem. The problem can arise from how we deal with and respect each other's differences.

The Steering Group would like to encourage individuals to use this opportunity of confidential mediation to help resolve the difficulties which currently exist within the Diocese. The Steering Group also wishes to ensure that individuals are supported appropriately during this period of dispute resolution and have made arrangements to offer confidential pastoral support and care to anyone who may wish to engage in this process. The names of people who are willing to act as Pastoral Listeners are below, together with their contact details.

If you feel you would like to consider using this offer of mediation in the context of what has been said above, please contact the EDR team at edr@dundee.ac.uk.

The Mediation Steering Group

David Strang CBE (Chair)
Rev Liz Crumlish
Morag Hendry

Contact details: MediationSteeringGroup@scotland.anglican.org

12 Oct 2021

Pastoral Listeners

The following people are willing to act as Pastoral Listeners:

- The Revd Canon Susan Macdonald ancrumsusie@gmail.com
- The Revd Canon Dr Iain Macritchie iain.macritchie@invernesscathedral.org
- The Very Revd Jim Mein jim@meins.plus.com
- The Revd Canon Kenny Rathband krathband@btinternet.com
- The Revd Canon Malcolm Round MJHRound@aol.com
- The Very Revd Graham Taylor dean@standrews.anglican.org
- The Very Revd Dr Elizabeth Thomson provost@saintpaulscathedral.net