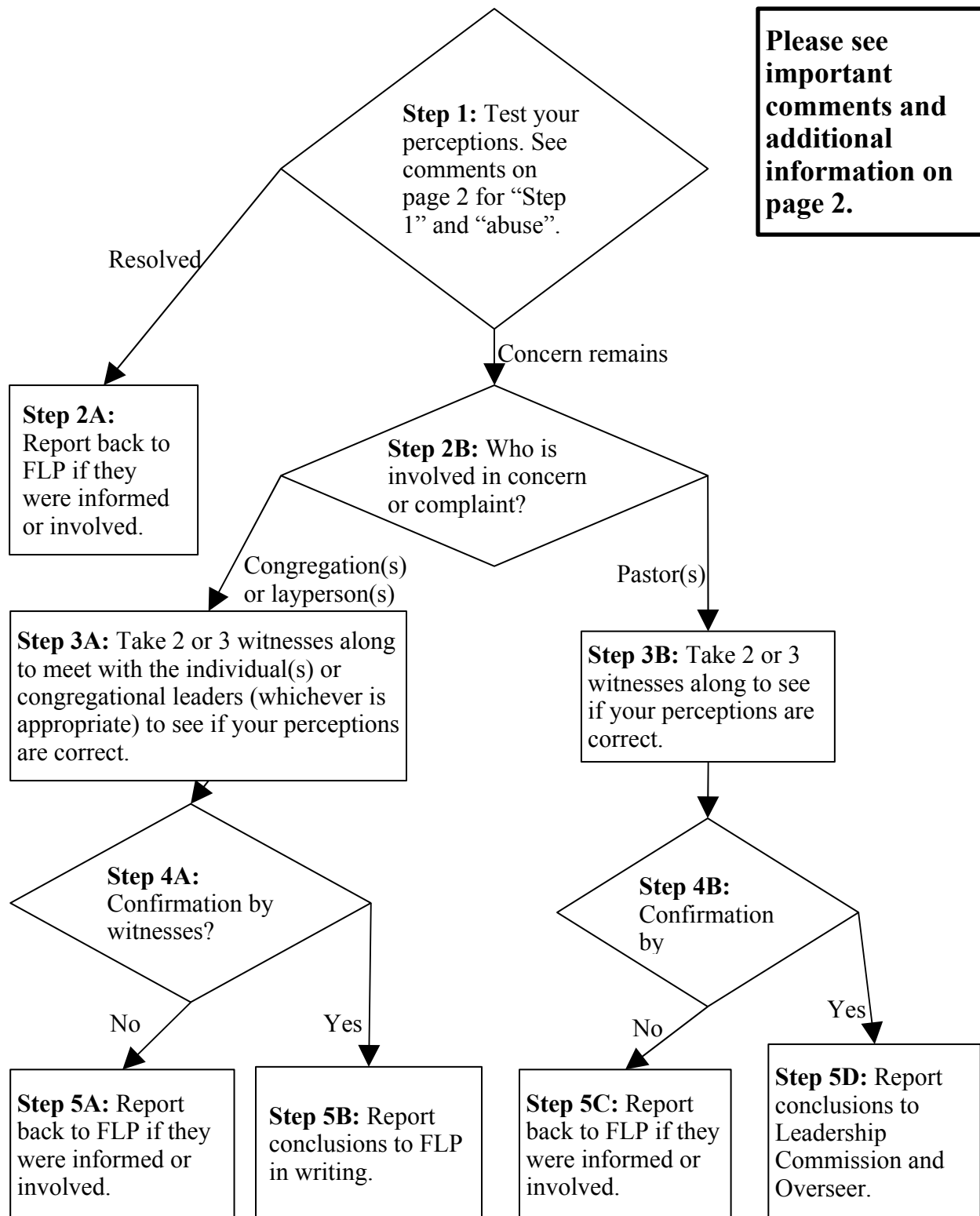


## Suggested Schematic for Dealing with Concerns or Complaints

A Supplement to:

*Reflection on and Implications of: Practicing Accountability in Allegheny Mennonite Conference*



## Additional Details and Comments Regarding Suggested Schematic for Dealing with Concerns or Complaints

**Preliminary comments:** The intent of this schematic is to illustrate generally how concerns or complaints might be dealt with if it involves two or more people from different congregations in Allegheny Mennonite Conference (AMC). There will be situations that arise that will call for a different approach than illustrated in this schematic.

**Step 1:** Test your perceptions. Did you see or understand correctly what caused the offense or concern? Seek clarification from the individual(s) involved. Review the *Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love* document and prayerfully try to apply it to your situation (this document is in the New Delegate Packet, on the Conference web site or is available from the Conference office upon request). Put your concern or complaint in writing (ask for assistance from a member of FLP, a pastor, your Overseer, or a trusted friend if needed). This written concern or complaint can be used when meeting with the person or group with which you are raising the concern or complaint (alternatively, you might mail it to them first). Hopefully, most concerns or complaints will be resolved during step 1.

Contacting FLP during step 1 is optional. FLP can serve as a “clearing house” so they are aware of the concern and FLP will know if there are other people raising the same concern. FLP can also provide assistance or suggestions if needed. FLP is committed to providing some kind of response within 30 days from the time the request is made, if the concern involves abuse the response should be faster.

**Step 2A:** Report back to FLP if they were informed or involved. Anyone involved up to this point should be informed when the concern or complaint has been resolved.

**Note:** Before investing a lot of time and effort in resolving an issue one may want to ask the following questions. Will a significant number of delegates agree with the concern or complaint? Does the issue have the potential to have significant impact on the life of AMC?

**Step 2B:** Who is involved in a concern or complaint: pastor(s), layperson(s), or congregation(s)? If the concern or complaint involves a credentialed person (licensed or ordained) then this becomes a matter to be dealt with by Leadership Commission or the credentialed person’s home congregation.

**Step 3A:** Take 2 or 3 witnesses along to meet with the individual(s) or congregational leaders (whichever is appropriate) to see if your perceptions are correct. Are they teaching or acting in ways that are inconsistent with the Bible (e.g., as understood in the Confession of Faith)?

**Step 3B:** Take 2 or 3 witnesses along to see if your perceptions are correct. Are they teaching or acting in ways that are inconsistent with the Bible? (e.g., as understood in the Confession of Faith)?

**Step 4A and Step 4B:** Do the witnesses confirm that it is a concern?

**Step 5A Step 5C:** Report back to FLP if they were informed or involved (and anyone else who was consulted during this process).

**Step 5B:** Report conclusions to FLP in writing, including whether you think delegates should be informed. FLP will decide if an ad hoc committee is needed, if, and how the concern should be presented to the delegates. FLP should report back to the individual raising the concern or complaint what the likely next steps will be in resolving the concern or complaint.

**Step 5D:** Report conclusions to Leadership Commission and Overseer in writing for possible review of credentials. Leadership Commission should report back to the individual raising the concern or complaint what the outcome of their investigation is regarding the concern or complaint.

**Alternatives:** In the event someone feels that FLP or Leadership Commission did not address a concern adequately they may send a letter to Coordinating Council expressing their concern (preferably with the signatures of the witnesses plus 3 more concerned individuals.) As a last resort, the home congregation, of the person bringing the concern or complaint, may bring the issue to the delegate floor.

**“Abuse”:** Does the concern involve physical or sexual abuse? The matter needs to be dealt with promptly, but with integrity. Does the person who was abused have witnesses? Is there any other way to verify what happened? Have others been abused? Immediately contact their pastor, overseer or the Conference Minister; if unavailable, contact a member of Leadership Commission. The appropriate parties are informed about the process or the outcome.