

BLACKWOOD church of christ

Procedure 1

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Procedure Purpose

This procedure is a guide to the Church in appropriate ways to resolve conflict that may arise from time to time through disagreements with another person or a disagreement about a decision. The procedure has been written from a biblical perspective and provides scripture verses to reflect upon.

It is not intended for any forms of conflict that would have a legal outcome. (See policy 12: Managing Complaints and Grievances.)

Procedure Statement

If you find yourself in disagreement with another person, disagree with a decision that has been made or feel hurt by another, the following steps will help you come to the situation with a right heart and mind in order to reach reconciliation with that person.

***Ephesians 6:12** for our struggle is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

Procedure

1 Preparing the heart

1.1 Prayer

1. Go to your Lord in prayer.

Pray about the situation and seek for yourself humility, forgiveness, love and the right action. Seeking the Lord to reveal if there was anything within ourselves that has triggered our hurt response.

As Christians the power of the Spirit to transform us, grow us and mature us in situations that are painful are astounding.

1.2 Seek Humility

Romans 12.2 *Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Stumbling blocks to conflict resolution can relate to pride. Pride reveals itself as stubbornness, unwillingness to listen to others, lack of empathy and even anger.

Humility is a fruit of the Spirit and one that can be so difficult to submit to. Part of humbling ourselves before our Lord is to be self-reflective. Are our intentions clean? Do our actions and words come from Godly motives?

Once we have taken the log out of our own eye, only then can we help the other person see the error or issue that has hurt us.

This step is the most significant in allowing us to move forward to our goal of forgiveness and reconciliation.

1.3 Forgiveness

Romans 12:17 *Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all*

This passage is clear that revenge is not an acceptable goal. Forgiveness is an act of the will through the power of the Spirit. It is a clear choice, an intentional act on our part. God offers us forgiveness for every wrong we commit. Everyone. He holds nothing back, leaves no sin out and offers it freely. Jesus taught us to remove the plank in our own eye.

Forgiving someone does not mean you ignore the wrong done to you – wrongs need to be addressed. It also does not require warm or affectionate feelings toward the person you believe has wronged you. Instead it is a turning away from acts of revenge and a conscious choice to will and pray for the good of the person with whom you are in conflict.

Matthew 18 21-22

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

Forgiveness is a significant element required for reconciliation.

1.4 Love

1 John 4:19 *We love because he first loved us.*

Seek the Father's love for the person. Ask God to allow you to see this person from His perspective – as a beloved child.

2 Taking action to resolve conflict

2.1 Go alone and speak directly with the person.

Matthew 18.15 *“If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone*

This can be incredibly hard to do, as our first reaction is to first talk to others to garner emotional support for your cause. Jesus didn't hide from conflict. He addressed Judas directly with facts. He gave Judas the chance to rethink his actions and come back into relationship with Jesus.

Matthew is very clear in **Matthew 18.15** that this is the only way to resolve a conflict between two people.

IMPORTANT: For each additional person, with whom we discuss the issue we are betraying the person with whom the conflict is with and affecting their relationship with others. It is a destructive process and harmful to the integrity of the Church family. It is therefore strongly discouraged.

When we have sought a right heart through humble submission to our Father and self-reflected, we can come to the discussion with a clear way of describing our hurt.

Example starter

When you said I felt hurt. I have given what you said great consideration and I would like to discuss it with you.

Seek clarity and pray together. Come humbly before your Lord for a solution to the conflict and reconciliation to each other. With the Holy Spirit we can also have that peace that surpasses all understanding in these difficult situations.

If the issue is not resolved progress to 2.2.

2.2 Go with two or three others if the issue isn't resolved.

Pray further and consider the two people that you could seek assistance from to speak with the person. Once again limiting the discussion to only these two people.

- Seek Confidentially on the matter. (This is an important step not to be overlooked.)
- Explain to them what happened.
- The steps that you have taken to prepare yourself and the outcome of your further discussion.
- PRAY TOGETHER seeking wisdom, love and compassion in the issue.
- Let it rest with them, so they can also pray about it.

Plan a time for the three of you to meet with the person and allow the person to bring a support person if they wish. Go to the meeting seeking a Spirit of love, compassion and understanding to prevail. **Matthew 5.9** *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

- Verify that a conflict exists.
- Pray and encourage each person
- Establish the goal is to come before God with love and compassion to resolve the conflict.
- Allow both people to be heard – seeking how they feel, what is God saying to them in this situation and what they want from the meeting.
- Summarize what has been said and validate their experiences.
- Seek solutions and what needs to change.
- Encourage each person.
- Pray to conclude.

If the matter is not resolved progress to 2.3

2.3 Take it up to the church

Bring the matter to the Eldership

Provide the Eldership with

- clear facts of the issue
- Who has been involved?
- What has been learnt in the process.
- Where is the reluctance in reconciliation?

The Eldership will prayerfully consider the situation.

3 Life together after conflict

When presented with a disagreement or conflict, the elders will do everything they can to listen to and care for all the parties involved. It may be necessary for the elders – having researched, consulted widely and prayed – to affirm or change a decision (made either by themselves or others). The elders will involve all concerned parties in this process, informing them what will happen and when.

When this process reaches its conclusion, and a decision is made, it is important:

- To acknowledge that not everyone will agree with the decision. These parties are still to be listened to and cared for, especially by the elders.
- That all parties respect the decision made by not undermining it, acting contrary to it or critiquing it among other members of the church. (This of course, does not mean that the people involved cannot talk to one or two close friends to help them through the process. It is important, however, that these conversations remain confidential and do not spread).
- That all parties understand that the decision is final (barring a significant change in circumstances). It is unhealthy for a church to continually readdress the same disagreements. If leadership has researched, consulted widely, and prayed, we need to trust that there is no better process for making the decision and allow it to stand.

Procedure References

Policy 12

Review of Procedure

This procedure shall be reviewed annually

Authorised by: **(Chair of Elders)**

Signature: **Date:**

