

Conflict Resolution:
Resources for the churches of the
Canadian Baptists of Western Canada



PASTOR-BOARD CONFLICT PROCESS

Don't you wish that the church could be immune to conflict? After all we are to be visibly different from the world. Yet within God's redemptive plan conflict remains an issue. It calls us to a faith that goes beyond feeling good around others, homogeneous personality typecasting and theological simplicity. While believing in the Lord Jesus Christ redeems us, we are transformed into his likeness as we go through the tensions of life, until the Lord calls us home. Exit interviews with those leaving the church confirm that our response to the conflict does more to confirm/rebuff our faith than do our words.

While no one of us has the capacity to erase conflict we are called as followers of Christ to become peacemakers in the midst of troubled times. We are to be at peace, and to make peace, no easy tasks in one's own strength. Yet we have been entrusted with specific resources that are intended to enable us to become peacemakers. For example, the resources of the new life we have through faith in Jesus Christ, the wisdom and conviction of God's Word, and the power at work in us through the Holy Spirit, all are intended to allow us to resolve conflict.

The redemptive community, known as the church, will not be immune to conflict. Clashes are to be expected for three reasons – 1. We are shaped by unique backgrounds and experience that lead us to see things from different perspectives, 2. The church is made up of fallen people whose conscious and unconscious choices/actions can bring discomfort to others. 3. We are engaged in, as Job discovered, a spiritual battle that is far bigger than what we imagine. For these reasons we should not be surprised to see conflict in the church. As church members adhere to the aforementioned resources, we can thank God there is hope in the midst of conflict.

The Bible tells us, "Love covers a multitude of sins." (1Peter 4:8) In short, as Christ followers empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are encouraged to cut our fellow believers some slack and choose to overlook many small and at times even larger matters. Periodically however we find ourselves offended to such a degree that we seem unable to just 'love and leave it.' The Bible does not shy away or condemn this reality but gives directions for how to process moments like this in Godly fashion.

Please take time to prayerfully read this passage listening to what God may say to you and then follow the steps outlined as you seek to resolve the concern you have. The attached *Conflict Resolution Flow Chart* will give you an overview of this process.

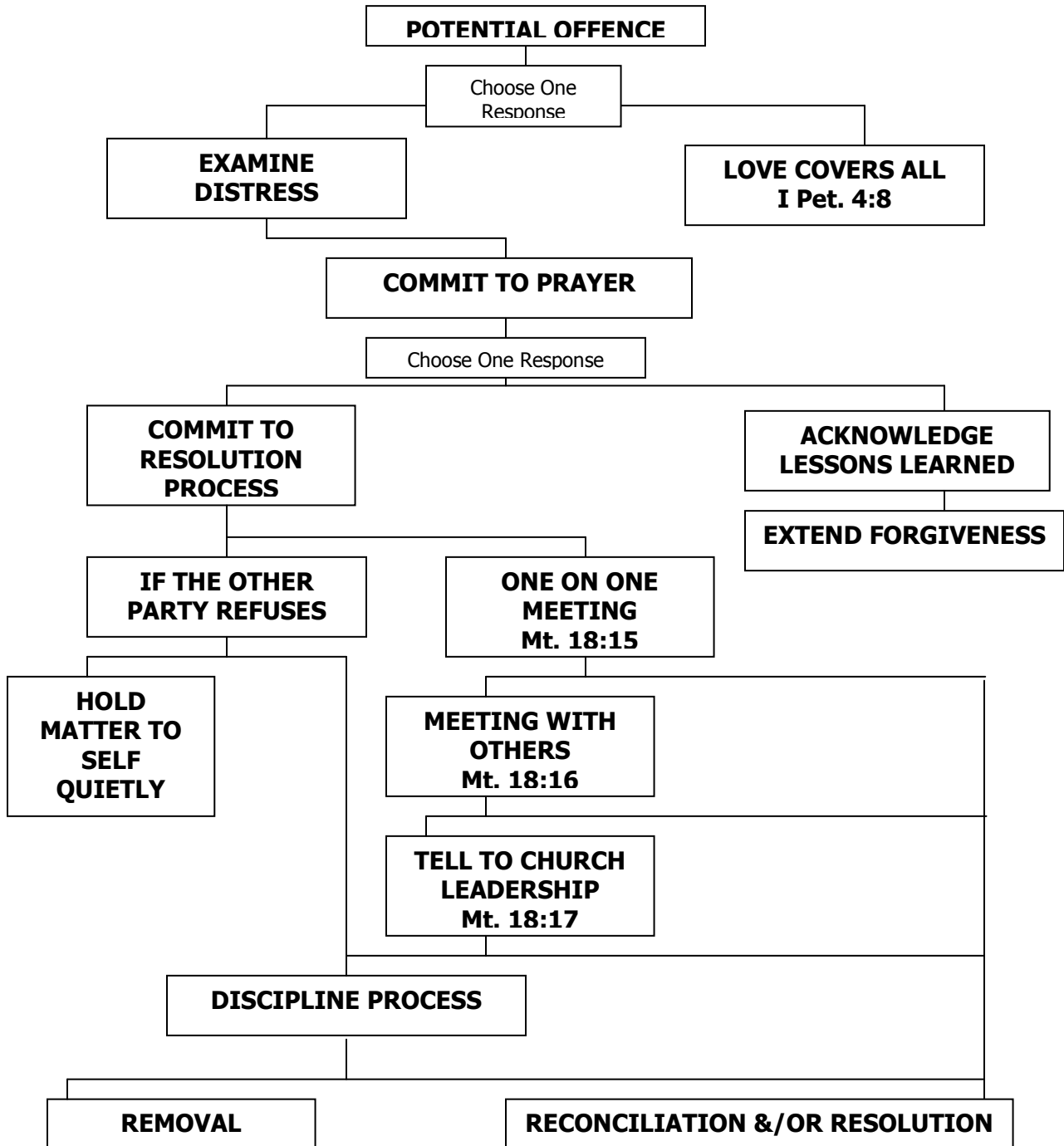
Be open to the fact that God may lead you at any point in this process to trust Him in a deeper way and extend forgiveness to the one who has offended you. May you know the participation of the Holy Spirit as He "Leads you into truth" just as Jesus promised!

Occasionally it is the pastor or one of the board members that have become the focal point for discomfort. When this happens we are obligated to follow the basic instructions for resolving personal difficulties as outlined in Matthew but before taking the matter to the larger context of the church (in this case the district office) we must honour another text, which states:

"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning". 1Timothy 5:19-20

If you feel the necessity of bringing a complaint against your pastor or one of the board members you will need at least two other people who will corroborate your concern. Obviously this is a serious matter.

FLOW CHART FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION



This document has been prepared by the CBWC Alberta Area Office – June 2004

**ACTION GUIDE FOR
RESOLVING RELATIONAL CONFLICT
WITH A PASTOR OR ELDER**

Please write the name of the Pastor or Board Member here:

If you believe this person has violated the Biblical standard of Christian Behaviour please outline in specific detail the circumstances, as you understand them. (Feel free to attach other pages if necessary)

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

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In keeping with the Biblical mandate of Matthew 18:15 which states:

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over".

Your next step is to schedule an appointment to speak personally and privately with this person.

At This Point Three Options Present Themselves:

1. As we pray about these kinds of things God shows us how to allow His love to overcome the difficulty through personal forgiveness. We then have the obligation to avoid gossip or slander so the evil one gains no advantage over us, or the rest of the church.

Here is the step you need to take in response to the above.

I have decided to rely on the Holy Spirit to enable me to forgive this matter completely and will not mention it to anyone else as I exercise my right to allow love to cover whatever offence I previously perceived.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

OR

2. Occasionally the responsibility to resolve difficult matters in a Biblical fashion appears daunting and we'd rather not follow through. We then are obligated to hold the matter in question to ourselves without discussing it with others or trying to persuade others to take action on our behalf. Should this not be possible I agree to either follow this action plan or be subject to a disciplinary process myself.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

(Continued next page)

OR

3. If you wish to proceed, please set up a meeting with the above individual.

Date of meeting #1: _____

OUTCOME:

IF THE MATTER WAS NOT RESOLVED PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

In keeping with the further directives of Matthew 18:16 which state:

But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

Your next step is to schedule another meeting with this person and this time to ask one or two other believers to accompany you so there will be resolution and or a larger perspective.

Date of meeting #2: _____

Please enter the names of those who have agreed to participate with you:

Name of witness 1 _____

Name of witness 2 _____

Outcome of meeting:

Signatures:

Your signature: _____

Witness 1: _____

Witness 2: _____

Date: _____

IF THE MATTER WAS STILL NOT RESOLVED PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:

Having followed the Biblical mandate for resolving conflict and having been unable to bring closure to this matter and in keeping with the further directive of Matthew 18:17 which states:

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

Your next step is to ask the church leadership to become involved. Because an accusation against a church leader is such a serious matter there is a higher standard for proceeding. You will need to have at least two other credible people with the same concern of their own (other than those you asked to witness the above proceedings) to take the next step.

In keeping with the Biblical mandate of 1 Timothy 5:18 remember:

"Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses".

If your concern is with an elder please submit your forms to your pastor. If your concern is with the pastor himself you should submit your forms to your Board chair. If necessary a Conflict Mediation Specialist from the Baptist Union of Western Canada or your Area Minister may become involved.

Please complete the following:

I hereby formally request the Church Leadership become involved to bring resolution to this matter.

I agree to participate fully with the appointed leadership in their stewardship of this matter. I agree to live by the decisions rendered.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____