Conflict transformation in the church

Julie Anne Grace
Interdenominational Theological Center

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations
Part of the Religion Commons

Recommended Citation
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE CHURCH

By

Julie Anne Grace
Bachelor of Arts, Saint Leo University, 1998
Master of Divinity, Interdenominational Theological Center, 2005

A Doctoral Dissertation
Submitted to the faculties of the schools of the
Atlanta Theological Association
In partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
at
Interdenominational Theological Center
2012
ABSTRACT

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE CHURCH

Julie Anne Grace
December 2011

This study examined conflict transformation as a viable method to resolve conflict and a viable tool to train church leaders to transform conflict into sustainable peace. Conflict between congregants, specifically between leaders, has become an especially relevant issue in the church. The church tends to view conflict as abysmal failure—an embarrassment that should be hidden. The reality is that it is only through conflict that one learns and grows. The growth edge is where authentic, honest relationships are developed, ego-selves restrained, and ego-groups transcended.

The author developed a training module titled “Conflict Transformation in the Church” to explore the attitudes of the leaders toward conflict. The overall training goal was to examine and change the attitudes of leaders viewing conflict from a negative perspective; i.e., avoid it and end it quickly, to an attitude of viewing conflict from a positive perspective; i.e., spiritual process that brings people closer to God and each other and sustains peace.

The training consisted of one nine-hour training session for forty participants involving leaders of church ministries and some members of ministries. The session included video and audio recording, group interaction, and discussion. The researcher used data from participants’ pre and post surveys and interviews to analyze changes in
attitudes and qualitative techniques to develop common themes/categories of information for the interviews.

**Analysis of the Data Provided**

Overall, this study supported previous research on this topic, which concluded that if church ministry leaders supported a coherent conflict transformation framework, their influence upon this foundation could be instrumental in changing the relationships, attitudes, interests, and discourses of the entire congregation. The dissertation’s hypothesis is that interaction between individuals belonging to the church, coupled with religious peace traditions, such as forgiveness and reconciliation, will reduce interpersonal and inter-ministry conflict. The researcher addressed various characteristics and manifestations of conflict by examining the root causes over a long period with the focus on transforming negative ways of dealing with conflict into positive, constructive ones. While the goal was a success of changing the lens by which leaders viewed conflict, there was not enough time to determine if the participants would actually practice the principles. Thus, in the future, the researcher intends to continue to present this church and others with subsequent training workshops on the same topic, “Conflict Transformation in the Church.”
DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation first to God who taught and brought me and sustained me through this journey. Further, I dedicate this work to my daughter, granddaughter, brother, and aunt for their encouragement, love, patience, prayers, and support throughout this journey. I further dedicate this work in memory of my mother, stepfather, grandmother, and aunt. Last, but not least, I dedicate this dissertation to my pastor and my church family.

J. A. G.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heart is full of gratitude for the people who have helped me on this journey. To start, my committee members have provided assistance, insight, perspective, and wisdom throughout this process. I would like to acknowledge the support of Pastor Charles E. Nesbitt, Jr., Sister Stella Dubose, Dr. Marsha Snuggishan-Haney, Dr. David Cann, Dr. Steven Rasor, and Dr. Edward Smith.

As well, I want to thank my family: My daughter, Michelle Reed; my granddaughter, Lachel Faison; my brother, Samad Khabir; my aunts, Mary Leah Scott and Elizabeth Reid; and my Godmother, Alyce Willis, for the encouragement, love, patience, and sacrifice given to me throughout this process and my life. They share with me a love of life and learning, and I truly would not have made it through this process without their understanding, encouragement, and love.

Finally, I want to recognize my friends and colleagues who have helped me throughout this program: my church family and Mother Velma Griggs for words of inspiration, Sister Cynthia McCrary for evaluation, feedback, and monitoring. I want to thank everyone for believing in me.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This study examined conflict transformation to determine if it was a viable method to transform conflict into peace and developed a training module to educate leaders in the church on how to transform conflict. The training was developed and conducted to stimulate a change in attitudes toward conflict from a negative perspective that encourages avoidance to a positive perspective that encourages humble confrontation focused on sustainable peace. The study is important because conflict between congregants, specifically between leaders, has become an especially relevant issue in the church.

Objectives of the Research and Training

Hypotheses

Conflict transformation theory attempts to identify the root causes of conflict and uses creativity to transform these causes. The root cause of conflict in the church is sin masked in lack of forgiveness, envy, and selfishness, just to name a few. Christians are not perfect, and when imperfect people get together, disagreements, hurt feelings, and misunderstandings are inevitable. If one’s expectation of others is too high, disappointment is inevitable and can cause further feelings of hurt and resentment. Responses one to another should be to forgive in kindness and compassion (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13) and in Christian love, which covers a multitude of sins, followed
by an increased commitment to serve one another (1 Peter 4:8-11). Once believers are committed to forgiving, loving and serving one another, they will see each other’s differences in a new light. If, however, they react to differences of opinion by taking sides and gossiping, the split widens, more harm inflicted, and the message compromises the world.

In summary, the hypotheses in this dissertation is the belief that educated interactions between individuals belonging to the church, coupled with religious peace traditions such as forgiveness and reconciliation, will reduce conflict in the church. Forgiveness emphasizes reconciliation, the offenders’ common humanity, and suffering. The project’s hypotheses include a foundational understanding of redemption, shared responsibility for conflict, and personal accountability to love one’s enemies as Christ commands.

**Research Questions**

Addressing conflict transformation in today’s world and specifically in the church is a challenge because, unfortunately in many instances, conflict begins with some type of violence or offense. In order to address this issue, researchers must first investigate the root cause of the specific conflicts to determine the reasons why violence is so prevalent in the church. The root causes are the main factors that identify the fundamental problems and strategies developed that may make a difference.

The student examined three leading institutions whose primary focus was to develop training course materials on this subject: The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (LMPC), “Life beyond Church Conflict” authored by Lloyd Elder, and the Just Peace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation. The student examined the syllabus
from the LMPC and course material of the other organizations. Each addressed common, key areas of conflict transformation to be included in training. The predominant areas are the nature and role of conflict, changing one’s attitude, causes of conflict, conflict analysis, conflict transformation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Each entity experienced success in teaching churches how to transform conflict into sustainable peace.

One of the research goals was to examine training material utilized by leading institutions in the field to determine their effectiveness. With that goal in mind, the writer developed the following research questions that served as magnifying glasses for her study:

1) To what extent is conflict transformation effective in training church leaders to engage in conflict with the outcome being forgiveness and peace?

2) How does one train leaders to transform conflict into reconciliation, forgiveness, and sustainable peace?

The project also addressed several sub-questions: Why do people fight? How do people fight? What are the tactics that keep those fights going? What are the main causes of church breakups? What are the main causes of relationship breakups? What can the church do to solve and prevent these conflicts? The answers to these questions required looking beyond the surface and into the causes, which are deep-seated and may be systemic as they relate to negative behavior. The church is deficient in dealing with conflict, yet it has the most powerful tool to transform conflict, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the unquestioned master at transforming conflict. The project will help believers to follow Jesus’ way, identify the tools provided in the Word of God, and begin the church’s transformation one member at a time.
Basic Assumptions

This project examined seven basic assumptions concerning leadership training in the context of conflict transformation:

(1) Education of leaders is necessary to recognize the attitudes and behaviors that lead to conflict and take appropriate steps to transform conflict into peace.

(2) A well-organized training program for both existing and potential leaders is essential for a successful leadership-training program.

(3) The development of skills and processes will empower current and new leader participation.

(4) A regular, periodic, formal evaluation process is important to provide self-reflection for each leader as well as an accountability tool for the ministry leaders.

(5) The dissemination of training skills methodologies will lead to conflict transformation.

(6) Empowering leaders to participate in the peace process develops a peace culture within the church.

(7) Peace ensues with the empowerment and mobilization of congregants to get actively involved in the process of transforming conflict and recognizing they have the power to shape church peace culture.

Intended Outcomes

The student applied the research of eminent conflict transformation scholars to the areas of leadership training in the church to determine the following intended outcomes of this project: 1) Leaders would demonstrate that they are comfortable with confronting conflict without fear; 2) Leaders, congregants, and the church would engage conflict using the principles of conflict transformation; 3) Leaders would view conflict as positive; 4) Leaders would seek to repair, develop, and sustain relationships with others;
and 5) Leaders would seek forgiveness and reconciliation in their relationships at church, home, and work.

**Definitions**

Transforming conflict in church life becomes one of the most significant and inevitable tasks of a servant leader in the ministry of Christ. The leaders must help create a fellowship of mutual trust, solve problems, claim opportunities, and keep the focus on kingdom mission. To do so with compassion, wisdom, and skill is what this paper is all about. There is healthy church life beyond conflict. Such transformation begins with the teachings of Christ, found in Matt. 5:25, “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way.” The passage ends with Matt. 18, which focuses on relationships within the church.

Conflict transformation refers to outcome, process, and structure-oriented, long-term, peace-building efforts, which aim to overcome revealed forms of direct, cultural, and structural violence. The most significant scholars/practitioners working in this field are John Paul Lederach (1995, 1997), Adam Curle (1971), and the conflict/peace researcher Johan Galtung (1996).

According to Lederach, conflict transformation “engages constructive change initiatives that include and go beyond the resolution of particular problems.” He adds:

It is scientifically sound because the writing and research about conflict converge in two common ideas: conflict is normal in human relationships and conflict is a motor of change. Conflict transformation is clear in vision because it brings into focus the horizon toward which we journey, namely the building of healthy relationships and communities, both locally and globally. This process requires significant changes in our current ways of relating.1

---

Conflict transformation moves beyond the aims of both the previous approaches, while at the same time takes up many of the ideas of conflict resolution, in particular, John Burton’s notion of conflict prevention. In his words:

Conflict prevention means deducing from an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of conflict, including its human dimensions, not merely the conditions that create an environment of conflict and the structural changes required to remove it, but more importantly, the promotion of conditions that create cooperative relationships.2

To transform means to make over radically in a different form or state; to change, commute, transfer, transfigure; to adapt, alter, modify, or refashion. Most of these synonyms are subsumed in the thesis of the study. In Lloyd Elder’s words,

Transforming church conflict is a shared leadership process where mutual trust is vigorously pursued; openness and acceptance are practiced; improvement or development is a constant objective; and values and principles form the foundation of the effort.3

Tom Porter adds, “Transforming conflict into a positive rather than a negative force is a spiritual pursuit and should to be grounded in the biblical principles of love of God, neighbor, and self.4

Additionally, the objective of the research was to examine the process of conflict transformation to determine if this is a viable method to educate church leaders to transform conflict. Research consisted of the examination of three models of resolving conflict: conflict resolution, conflict management, and conflict transformation. According to Augsburger in his book Helping People Forgive, conflict resolution has a

---


reconciliation component, conflict transformation has both forgiveness and reconciliation components, and conflict management has neither. Forgiveness is important because one can forgive without reconciliation, but one cannot reconcile without forgiveness. Thus, conflict transformation is the viable method to use to educate leaders in the church to transform conflict.

The objectives of the conflict transformation training are: 1) understanding the nature and role of conflict, 2) viewing conflict as an opportunity to grow and mature spiritually, 3) understanding the causes of conflict, 4) understanding conflict analysis, and 5) understanding the role of forgiveness and reconciliation within the conflict transformation process. The objectives point toward a view of conflict from a positive perspective in lieu of a negative perspective.

Sarah Savage’s article, based on Eolene Boyd-MacMillan’s Conflict Transformation Research Project in 2009, argues that the church tends to view conflict as abysmal failure—an embarrassment that should be hidden. She further purports the reality that it is only through conflict that relationships with one another and God are developed or matured. Additionally, conflict exposes the living raw flesh of human psyches. This is the location of the growth edge where authentic, honest relationships might be developed, ego-selves restrained, and ego-groups transcended.

In 2011, the World Council of Churches authored The Just Peace Companion, in which they describe the key characteristic or role of the church:

---


[an] instrument of peace and reconciliation and defined as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit, just to name a few. An instrument of peace is the way concerns, complaints, issues, conflicts and potential conflicts that arise within the congregation are identified, addressed and resolved.7

Ideally, the church as an instrument of peace displays features of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. The result is an environment of Christian love, respect, maturity, self-control, and spiritual discernment in the resolution of real or perceived differences among members of the body. Unfortunately, many congregations avoid conflicts and, therefore, have difficulty confronting issues in a spirit of Christian love, exemplifying the fruits of the spirit, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control” (Galatians 5:22-23). These congregations resort to avoiding conflict and never resolve the real or perceived interpersonal differences, which ultimately results in church environments that appear to contradict the characteristic of the church as an instrument of peace.

One predominant issue that contributes to some churches developing environments contrary to their role as an instrument of peace is the systemic practice of avoiding conflict. Some Christians are often compassionate to those well outside of the Christian fold. It seems common to human nature, however, to be intolerant of any disagreement with one’s sacred worldview. This intolerance is especially acute in a period of church decline when Christians should be more tolerant of differences. Many people in the church today feel threatened by such conflicts, including leaders, and many churches fear for their survival.

The church fails to be an instrument of peace when its members unsuccessfully struggle to overcome pain inflicted by other Christians and move forward toward

forgiveness and reconciliation. The result is systemic congregational conflict, often involving leaders of the church. Systemic conflict between leaders in Holy Baptist Church motivated this project.

This dissertation examined conflict transformation as: 1) a viable method to address conflict in the church, and 2) a viable resource to use in the development of a training module for leaders in the church. The training module educated the leaders in this church on how to transform conflict. Based on the evaluation further explained in Chapter IV, the training facilitated the process of changing leaders' attitudes toward viewing conflict from a negative perspective, e.g., avoiding conflict, to a more positive attitude, e.g., confronting conflict using biblical principles with the focus of transforming conflict into peace. The researcher began the examination of conflict transformation in September 2009 at a Baptist church located in College Park, Georgia.

The researcher examined three models for resolving conflict: conflict resolution, conflict management, and conflict transformation. For leading conflict transformation scholar Lederach, conflict resolution “carries with it a danger of co-optation, an attempt to get rid of conflict when people were raising important and legitimate issues.” In other words, conflict resolution implies conflict is bad and should be ended quickly. Conflict management implies that people might be directed or controlled. Neither conflict management nor conflict resolution deals with the source or root of the problem. Conflict transformation, on the other hand, does not seek to control, end, or suppress the conflict, but to transform. Lederach says the transformational approach is more than a set of specific techniques. It is about a way of looking and seeing, and it provides a set of lenses through which one may perceive the immediate situation, seeing past the immediate

---

problems, and viewing the deeper relationship patterns that form the context of the conflict. This goes beyond finding a quick solution to the problem at hand and seeks to address what is happening in human relationships at a deeper level. Additionally, Lederach says conflict transformation creates a platform to address the content, the context, and the structure of the relationship. From this platform, parties can begin to find creative responses and solutions.

The goal of conflict transformation is to transform conflict into something desired and focus on the context and relationship between the conflicted parties. The something desired in conflict transformation within the context of the church is forgiveness and reconciliation. These relationships are not only between the conflicted parties but also between the conflicted parties and God.

Chapter IV of this dissertation details the examination of these three methods of resolving conflict. The goal of this dissertation is to change the attitudes of the leaders of Holy Baptist Church to view conflict as a means to explore and address the root causes of conflict and, ultimately, to transform their view of conflict into something positive.

The remainder of this chapter provides a description of the researcher’s interest in this project, which includes the urgency expressed by stakeholders of the Holy Baptist Church to address conflict among leaders in the church, as well as the personal experiences of the researcher that confirmed the need to address conflict in the church.

**Researcher Interest: Personal Experiences**

The researcher was compelled to pursue conflict transformation as a viable method to transform conflict and develop a training module to educate the leaders in the church on how to transform conflict for two reasons: 1) personal conflict experienced in
the church, and 2) pursuant to the advice of an advisory board organized to examine conflict in this church. This paper gives an account of three experiences in conflict that drove the researcher to continue to pursue conflict transformation:

1) The researcher was a member for over twenty-eight years in the oldest black Baptist church in the history of America built by blacks for blacks. The congregation was reserved in the way they worshiped, e.g., not one utterance of “Amen” during sermons. The researcher organized the first gospel choir in the history of that church. The choir sang on only one Sunday, because the music, a gospel song, was a drastic change from the music to which the church had been accustomed. Consequently, the event caused one of the biggest church fights in the history of the church. To the researcher’s knowledge, the congregants never engaged in a discussion of the issues, and there was not one attempt to understand the positions, feelings, or perspectives of those involved in the conflict. The leaders of the church made the decision that the gospel choir would disband and, as a result, the church split. Young people and their parents left, the leaders asked the pastor to leave, and those who stayed have struggled to this day to overcome the pain inflicted upon the youth of the church by the Christians involved, specifically the leaders of the congregation.

2) The researcher was oppressed as a female associate pastor. She was Assistant Pastor for approximately eight years, taught Sunday school and Bible study, instituted a youth Bible study, and preached although she was not ordained. She and the senior pastor held numerous discussions on the subject of ordination and, each time, she was assured that she met the qualifications. Plans and arrangements were made for the ordination but, one or two days prior to the event, the ordination was cancelled without a reason, just a
promise that it would take place in the near future. Eventually, the researcher left the church without confronting the issue and thus left with unresolved conflict.

3) Another leader at Holy Baptist Church offended the researcher on numerous occasions. After much prayer, God confirmed to the researcher that the offense was genuine, and she searched the scriptures to learn biblically how to address the conflict. Among other instructions, the Bible specifically stated that she should go to the offender to discuss the offense. Unfortunately, she feared that the confrontation would turn violent and, instead, turned to a close friend of the offender and shared the conflict along with the intent to confront the offender. The close friend reminded her of the biblical instructions of going to the offender to discuss the defense. The researcher acknowledged the advice and confronted the offender. She spoke specifically to the behavior and, at the conclusion of the discussion, it appeared there was an agreement and the relationship was restored. Unfortunately, the offender shared a misrepresented version of the discussion with a large portion of the congregation and, because the offender had positional and influential power, many members of Holy Baptist Church perceived without question that the misrepresented version of the discussion was the truth.

In retrospect, the researcher pursued a quick end to the conflict, failed to engage in-depth discussions to understand the root cause of the conflict, and failed to follow the Word of God in Matthew 18:15, which states if a fellow believer sins against one, that person must go and show them their fault, just between the two of them. The purpose of showing the fault between the two is to protect the believer from the harm caused by gossip. The writer chose not to follow the Word of God and, therefore, suffered emotional harm caused by the gossip. Thus, personal conflicts experienced in the church
over a period of years induced the pursuit of conflict transformation in the project. The church conflict left the researcher yearning for some semblance of peace in the church and a determination to find out how to obtain and maintain this peace.

**Researcher Interest: Advisory Group**

Second, the researcher organized an advisory group from the church to assist her in identifying the most important needs in this church. The advisory group consisted of six members of the church: an ordained pastor, a leader in the youth department, the Superintendent of Disciples Ministry (Sunday school), a discipleship teacher (Sunday school teacher), a trustee of the church, a PHD in counseling, and a retired civil servant. Participants of the advisory group also held positions in their respective workplaces: a CEO, a PHD recipient, a director of an organization, a supervisor in a major corporation, a retired educator, and a retired military working in the office of Homeland Security. The researcher believed that persons with these qualifications would be skilled in lateral thinking, deferring judgment, and assessing ideas.

The research led theological reflections in which the advisory group engaged. Theological reflection is a method by which participants put their experiences into conversation within the heritage of the Christian tradition. Theological reflection is a tool used in the discernment of contemporary ministry. The goal of theological reflection is to help believers understand more clearly and act more effectively in ways that are faithful to the gospel of salvation; also, to become more competent in proclaiming the gospel, especially during the decision making process.

The researcher used the Whitehead model as the method to lead the group through the reflection. The Whitehead model is based on the book *Method in Ministry:*
Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry, by James D. Whitehead and Evelyn E. Whitehead. Their book suggests three models and three methods for theological reflection. The three models are Christian Tradition, the experience of the community of faith, and the resources of the culture. Their methods refer to attending, assertion, and decision. The researcher used the models and methods to reflect on the most important needs in the Holy Baptist Church context and to analyze her church.

The models, according to the Whiteheads, are three sources of information that are crucial to decision making in modern-day ministry: (1) the Christian tradition, (2) personal experience, and (3) cultural resources. Together, these models describe theological reflection as an examination of scripture and tradition to include how tradition influences interpretation of scripture, culture, and personal experiences. The Whiteheads’ purport that the goal is to live in the middle, informed by all three approaches to truth. All three are involved in serious reflection on life, God, and the world. God is only partially found in the individual models. However, when one considers all three models in conjunction with one another, one finds in ministry a more comprehensive understanding of God’s presence. For example, if the focus is only on scripture, then we force human experience and cultural information into understanding only scripture. In the same way, a focus only on experience looks down on anything authoritative, especially scripture. Likewise, a focus only on culture presents knowledge as power and control, thus everything has an explanation, scripture is trivialized, and experience is rationalized.

When engaged in the decision making process in the ministry or church context, the goal

---

is to employ the three models jointly, while simultaneously giving equivalent thought to the method of theological reflection.

The method within the theological reflection is a process by which the advisory group seeks shared discernment in respect to the ministry need. It requires participants to be in sync with personal feelings, fears, assumptions, and even their prejudices in respect to beliefs. It also requires that participants keep an open mind with respect to being receptive to what others have to say without casting judgment.

Assertion, according to the Whiteheads, is the second stage of the method of theological reflection and means participants must be willing to engage in dialogue with each other for the purpose of clarifying and expanding insight, sharing convictions, with standing the pressure of being challenged.\(^\text{10}\) This model proved to be an excellent vehicle to address the ministry needs of the church. The discussions were fluid, open, and challenging at times, yet the advisory group arrived at a unanimous decision regarding the identification of the most pressing need of the church. Chapter II addresses the details of the examination of the three most important needs.

**Preview of Remaining Chapters**

The researcher culminates this chapter by providing a preview of the remaining chapters. Chapter II, Ministry Context and Issue, encompasses a description of the ministry context, both internally and externally, along with the details of the ministry need. Chapter III, Conceptual Framework, addresses the literature review that concentrates on conflict transformation in the church, synthesis and summary, practical application in the ministry setting, and a concluding summary. Chapter IV, Ministry

\(^{10}\text{Whitehead and Whitehead, } Method in Ministry.\)
Project, provides a complete description of the ministry project to include evaluation and final results of the training. Chapter V, Summary and Conclusions, details the accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses, and other related information.
CHAPTER II
MINISTRY CONTEXT AND ISSUE

This chapter offers an adequate description of the context of the Holy Baptist Church. The broad description of the context provides clarity of the boundaries and issues that may undergird this project. This chapter provides a discourse that describes the ministry setting that includes the internal community church setting, the external church community within local surrounding area, and the larger external community that includes the city. The purpose of providing this information is to provide a perspective on the ministry context of the church. The researcher exposes the issue of conflict between church leaders and congregants by providing an in-depth explanation of the ministry issue.

Ministry Setting

The Holy Baptist Church was organized in the early 1800s by Rev. E. R. Carter who acted as moderator and organizer. He and four members from the Friendship Baptist Church laid the foundation for what is now Holy Baptist Church. The church resided at three different locations before residing at its present location. The Holy Baptist Church changed its name to identify with each location before adopting its present name. The Holy Baptist Church had thirteen pastors prior to the present pastor, who now has been the shepherd for twenty-seven years. The pastor led the church in purchasing a new
facility in order to accommodate growth experienced in both the congregation and ministries of the church and to more effectively fulfill the mission.

Current membership is approximately 1,500 with two Sunday morning worship services at 7:55 and 10:45. The congregation is middle-upper class, professional in terms of economic class. In many ways, the congregation follows the Baptist tradition, e.g., the Mother’s Board dresses in white every Sunday and sits on the left side of the church, while the deacons lead devotion by singing old familiar songs and lining hymns. Many of the members have family ties and these family ties define the unity or disunity that characterized the congregation over the years. There are five associate pastors, including three females who are ordained. All associate pastors teach a discipleship class (Sunday school class). The female associate pastors lead the Women’s Ministry, Outreach Ministry, and Christian Education Ministry, respectively. The current pastor celebrated his twenty-seventh anniversary in 2012.

Internal Ministries of the Church

There is a Multi-Generational Ministry for infants to young adults built on Jesus’ parable of the talents. The ministry provides monthly fellowship activities, quarterly Christian-based programs, recreational programs and activities, mentoring, Bible studies, and annual conferences. The pastor describes the Leadership Program as the ministry that empowers God’s children to become future leaders in the church, community, and the world.
The church has a bookstore that carries the latest gospel CDs, audio and video
sermons, adult and children’s Bibles, references books, African American art, calendars,
apparel, and a book the Pastor authored entitled No Leftovers.\textsuperscript{11}

A New Members Orientation Class starts with pictures of new members posted on
the picture board located in the administrative wing of the church. On the first or second
day of the beginning of an eighteen-week cycle, the Pastor and the Minister of Christian
Education visit the class to extend a warm welcome to new members. Later during the
cycle, the teachers who lead the three core courses—Major Doctrine, How to Study the
Bible, and Stewardship and Financial Freedom—visit the new members class to give
synopses of their classes and invite new members to attend their classes upon completion
of the new members class. The church also sponsors a monthly greet-and-meet for all
new members to meet the leadership and church members.

This year, the scholarship fund provided $1,600 to each of eighteen college
enrolled students who completed an extensive financial and management seminar. The
students will be required to donate their time and talents to the church when they return
for school breaks during the year, and especially during the summer months.

The video ministry provides CDs and DVDs of all services and activities that take
place. The church also has a computer ministry that provides oversight of the office
computers and manages the church website.

The drama ministry writes and produces plays for special occasions such as
Christmas, Resurrection Day, and Black History. There are other ministries, such as usher
board, sound, nurses’ guild, mothers’ board, and culinary.

\textsuperscript{11} Charles E. Nesbitt, Jr., No Leftovers (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2008).
The newly formed Cancer Ministry was organized to provide support for cancer patients. The cancer ministry provides a place for people to give and receive emotional, nutritional, spiritual, and other practical support, as well as to exchange information.

The church is committed to ongoing efforts to reach outside of its walls. Current ministries are expanded to include a long running radio broadcast, a computer ministry, men’s and women’s studies and conferences, a summer program that offers academics and fun for the young people, a clothes closet, and food bank ministries. The church envisions a practical approach of door-to-door ministry, as well as implementing outreach efforts utilizing the various print and electronic mediums of the day. In this way, says the pastor, the church will take advantage of every venue that God makes available.

If there were one word to describe what the pastor does at this church, it would be teaching. The pastor is a master teacher and takes his teaching role seriously. At every gathering of the church—worship, study, programs, fellowships, and other activities—the pastor emphasizes the vision for the church, which is “To Know Him and Make Him Known.” The pastor teaches that knowing him means discipleship and making him known means evangelism. One gets to know God by studying the Word of God in Bible study, discipleship classes, during worship, and study during private time at home. One makes God known to others through evangelism. The pastor uses different means to encourage the flock to mature in the faith, serve others, and evangelize. For example, since October 2011 until this day, the pastor has been teaching in both worship services and both Bible studies on the subject of prayer. It is through the power of prayer that Christians mature in faith. He taught a series on evangelism during the summer of 2011, forgiveness during the fall of 2010, and becoming servant leader in 2009. The pastor’s
focus on teaching is most evident in the curricula used in the discipleship classes every Sunday morning (Sunday school).

Volunteers and, at times, the Facilitator of the Christian Education Ministry wrote the discipleship curricula (Sunday school books), designed and tailored specifically for the church community. Participants are encouraged to complete the requirements of each class before moving to another class. The classes offered are three core courses: Major Doctrine, How to Study the Bible, and Stewardship and Financial Freedom. The next tier of courses is: Finding Favor with the King, Healthy Living, When God Builds a Church, 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, 12 Extraordinary Women and 12 Ordinary Men, and Who’s Pushing Your Buttons. Recently, the study of Genesis, Exodus, and the gospels of Matthew and Mark were added to the curriculum. Most recently, the church added Job, Ephesians, Comparative Religions, and End Time Prophecy to the curriculum to begin in the Fall of 2012. The curriculum includes a new member orientation class, a young adult class, and an interim class, which is a classic Sunday school option. The church set a goal beginning in January 2010 to institute a youth version of the adult classes of Major Doctrine, How to Study the Bible, and Stewardship and Financial Freedom. As of January 2010, the young children through young adults studied the Major Doctrines of the Bible. In 2011, the Christian Education Ministry moved them to Stewardship and Financial Freedom for children through young adults and How to Study the Bible commenced in January 2012.

Current Assets of the Church

The pastor emphasizes that members should tithe and give offerings on a consistent basis. Members who do not tithe are encouraged to increase their giving by
two percent of their income as often as possible until they reach ten percent. Thereafter, the congregation is encouraged to exceed the ten percent mark, which equates to the offering. The objective is to teach the biblical method to support the church (tithing) and to ensure financial resources are available when needed (timing) and as needed (amount); as well, to protect the church’s resources from impairment and ensure that they are spent according to mission of the church.

Tithing, like most other subjects found in the Bible, is fraught with controversy. There is much disagreement regarding tithing and, in the end, some of the members of the church believe what they want to believe and interpret the Bible to support their view and decision whether to tithe. Still, the message from the pulpit every Sunday is that tithing ensures the church’s ability to meet needs and gives back to God what already belongs to him. Believers honor this when they are faithful, cheerful givers. God rewards believers in countless way who acknowledge him as the true owner and giver of all that they have. During the tithe and offering moment, musicians play celebrative music, the choir sings cheerfully, and each person, row by row, moves to the music in an orderly fashion while singing as they bring their tithes and offerings to the altar. Although the economy is slow, some members have lost their jobs, and the financial incomes in some households have decreased significantly, the church is financially solvent, as evidenced by the following information regarding current assets and fixed assets.

Current assets are cash and other assets expected to be converted to cash, sold, or consumed either in a year or in the operating cycle, without disturbing the normal operations, as per normal business. These assets are continually turned over in the course of business during normal business activity. There are five major items included in
current assets: cash and cash equivalents, receivables, long-term investments, and fixed and intangible assets. The church has cash and cash equivalents that include currency, deposit accounts, and negotiable instruments, e.g., money orders, checks, and bank drafts. Receivables are reported as net of allowance for uncollectable accounts. As per their name, long-term investments are not to be disposed of in the near future. This group consists of four types of investments: securities such as bonds, common stock, or long-term notes; investments in fixed assets not used in operations, e.g., land held for sale; investments in special funds, e.g., sinking funds or pension funds; and different forms of insurance used as long-term investments.

Fixed assets are property, buildings, and equipment purchased for continued and long-term use. This group includes land, buildings, tools, machinery, and furniture, less depreciation. Intangible assets lack physical substance and are more difficult to evaluate. They include excellent biblical teaching/training, active ministries, food bank, clothes closet, music department, website, job announcements, active missions ministry, diverse membership (youth/elderly, couples/singles, upper/middle/lower class), educational workshops, informed congregation, tailored classes, church fellowship, community orientation, transportation, and personal and accessible leadership.

The ministries described in previous paragraphs all work together in balance and are necessary to minister to the congregants. These ministries are all part of the discipleship process, which is the church’s Great Commission. People come into the body of Christ through evangelism and then grow through equipping, encouragement, and growing in their relationship with Christ. Subsequently, they go out and evangelize to others who are then brought into the discipleship process (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans
This process brings full circle the theme of the church, “To Know Him and Make Him Known.”

Larger Area Surrounding the Church

The following describes the demographics of the city of College Park, located partly in Fulton and Clayton counties, Georgia. The 2009 Census figures set the city’s population at 25,000. Employers, however, may take advantage of a metropolitan labor force of more than 3,000,000 residents due to the location of Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport partially within the city boundaries. As well, the Georgia International Convention Center, owned and operated by the City of College Park, is within the city limits. It is a state-of-the-art facility and the second largest exhibit and meeting space in the state. Downtown College Park anchors the city with its historic Main Street business district. Through assistance from the College Park Development/Main Street Office, new specialty businesses now replace once vacant storefronts and transitional businesses.

College Park originated from a land grant awarded in 1846. It is the fourth largest urban historic district in Georgia with 867 structures on the Historic Register. The city’s historical collection consists of businesses, a cemetery, churches, a government building, homes, monuments, parks, a railway station, and schools. According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 9.7 square miles (25.2 km²), of which 9.7 square miles (25.1 km²) is land and 0.10% is water.

Economic Development: Economic Development promotes and markets the City of College Park to include Old National Highway (Georgia Highway 279) to developers and businesses. They work to recruit new business and grow existing businesses.
Labor Force: College Park is home to Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport, which employs more than 40,000 people, making College Park one of the largest employment districts in Georgia. Service-related employment (airport and hospitality related) remains the dominant growth sector in College Park, with more than 4,000 service-sector jobs created since 1991. The major businesses are chemicals, electrical machinery, fabricated metals, paper manufacturing, petroleum and related industries, plastics and rubber, and printing and publishing.

Population Statistics: As of the 2000 census, there were 20,382 people, 7,810 households, and 4,600 families residing in the city. The population density was 2,099.8 people per square mile (810.5/km²). There were 8,351 housing units at an average density of 860.3/sq mi (332.1/km²). The racial makeup of the city was 81.81% African American, 12.39% White, 6.68% Hispanic/Latino, 0.17% Native American, 0.61% Asian, 3.33% from other ethnic groups, and 1.69% from two or more ethnicities. There were 7,810 households, of which 35.1% had children under the age of eighteen living with them, 22.9% were married couples living together, 28.2% were female heads of household present, and 41.1% were non-families. A total of 30.1% of all households were made up of individuals, and 4.0% had someone living alone who was sixty-five years of age or older. The average household size was 2.59 and the average family size was 3.24.

In the city, the population was spread out with 30.2% under the age of eighteen, 14.4% from 18–24, 35.7% from 25–44, 14.9% from 45–64, and 4.8% who were sixty-five years of age or older. The median age was twenty-seven years. For every 100 females there were 92.9 males. For every 100 females age eighteen and older, there were 87.8 males. Within the church, the population of youth has increased tremendously since
the teen church was organized in 2009. There are few young married couples, a larger number of older married couples, and an exploding number of singles, especially single women.

*Income:* The median income for a household in the city was $30,846, and the median income for a family was $32,655. Males had a median income of $26,644 versus $22,412 for females. The per capita income for the city was $14,371. About 16.9% of families and 19.2% of the population were below the poverty line, including 23.4% under age eighteen and 20.3% age sixty-five or older. The medium income described for College Park is not consistent with the congregants of the church. As described earlier, most of the members are middle-upper class professional and retirees whose income has not been greatly affected by the economic crisis.

*Crime:* According to the annual Uniform Crime Report and the College Park Police Department, College Park had the highest crime rate in Georgia in 2008. The church partnered with the College Park Police to arrange for the visible presence of police officers periodically during the worship service. Additionally, the church provides security during the worship hour and when the church is open for other activities. In the advisory group meeting organized to identify the most significant need of the church, it was mentioned that their perception is that safety is not an issue for the members. Most members of the church feel safe when arriving at the church to participate in different activities during the day, evening, and at night.

*Parks and Recreation:* The City of College Park is serviced by two recreation centers—The Wayman and Bessie Brady Recreation Center and the Hugh C. Conley Recreation Center. Both centers opened in 1956 and were named in honor of prominent
city residents. When they opened, they were segregated; whites used the Conley Center and blacks used the Brady Center.

*Education:* Fulton County School System Residential serve areas within College Park. There are two elementary schools within College Park, and three elementary schools serve other residential sections of College Park. There are two middle schools serving College Park, two high schools, and one alternative high school. Woodward Academy, one of the largest independent schools in the continental United States, is located in College Park.

**Local Area Surrounding the Church**

There are a number of churches in the community with diverse denominations. Tourism offers cultural, historical, and natural resources. There are plans to develop under-utilized historic resources. The city formed partnerships and restored the community. The urban historic district generates jobs, which increases sales and tax revenues. The city’s golf course, park facility, police force, and school system are valuable assets of the local community. Unfortunately, most of the members of this church live outside the local area and are unable to take advantage of the amenities offered by the city.

An analysis of the ministry’s systemic structure uncovers a strong focus on ministries for members of Holy Baptist and less emphasis on outreach ministries. Holy Baptist has great potential to partner with organizations in the community and provide a full range of charitable, educational, religious, and community development activities to organizations in the local community. Presently, the church partners with and provides financial support to The Tapestry House and the Second Chance Homes Program, which
provides safe, family-like living situations for young mothers from ages 13–21, and their children, as well as some pregnant teens. Holy Baptist adopted the College Park Health Care Center, an assisted living care facility for seniors, and presently provides a monthly worship service to the residence. Both the Tapestry House and the College Park Health Care Center are located across the street from the church, and members of the church take their ministries to these organizations. This commitment signifies the ongoing efforts of the church to move “beyond the walls” by bringing the gospel of Jesus Christ to the local and larger surrounding areas.

Unfortunately, only a few of the able elderly residents and none of the ladies from the Tapestry House come to the church facility to worship on Sunday, attend Bible study, or fellowships with the church during church sponsored activities. Developing a ministry to address some of their needs could possibly add a new dimension to the church’s commitment to reach outside of the walls and bring them inside the church. Blending the residents from the health care facility and the church’s young single mothers might present a potential for conflict and a need for church leaders to be efficient in conflict transformation with a focus on developing sustained relationships with one another and God. In this chapter, the researcher sought to provide a brief description of the socio-economic factors that describe the larger and local areas surrounding the church.

Clarifying the Ministry Issue

Conflict between congregants, specifically between leaders, clergy and lay, has become an especially relevant issue in this church. The researcher endeavored to educate and train leaders to transform conflict into forgiveness, reconciliation, and sustainable peace. She is the facilitator of the Christian Education Ministry, she developed the
conflict transformation training module, and she seeks to require all current leaders to successfully complete the training and new leaders to complete the training either before or immediately after their appointment. In this regard, the researcher evaluated several conflict transformation training plans, programs, and modules to tailor conflict transformation training to address the specific needs of this church and its leaders.

The project sought to address central questions regarding the existing training in the church, such as: To what extent is conflict transformation a viable method to educate leaders on how to transform conflict. What are the best resources to develop a training module to educate the leaders in conflict transformation? The project examined leadership training strategies, conflict transformation training modules, and other information on the topic developed by leaders in the field to determine if conflict transformation would improve the church’s leadership training. The dissertation provides specific details on the leaders and organizations in the field, such as Tom Porter, Just Peace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation, and Marlin Thomas, Editor of Transforming Conflict in the Church (Chapter III). The research and conclusions suggested applications from other resources, coupled with current biblical leadership training that may be combined into one training plan for all leaders.

The focus of this project was to direct church leaders toward a paradigm shift from viewing conflict as inherently negative and avoiding it, to viewing conflict as a positive force that results in growth, understanding, forgiveness, and a willingness to embrace and confront conflict. The researcher sought to incorporate an effective, biblical, leadership training module into the existing leadership plan. The researcher’s goal was that leaders who demonstrate a heart for forgiveness and reconciliation would also
demonstrate their love for intentional spiritual pursuit of God's purpose in their own lives and the lives of others. Additionally, leaders would exhibit strong commitment to serving and ministering to people. The researcher was intentional in developing these areas and she did not make any assumptions regarding whether leaders were already mature in the critical areas. She developed a training module on the topic of conflict transformation in the church in order to educate the leaders regarding how to transform conflict.

In the subsequent paragraphs, the researcher provided background information that gives an overview of the project. The project background further examined the process of identifying the ministry need, which included an analysis of the ministry setting. The researcher investigated how certain theoretical perspectives assisted in the thought process regarding the issue and what affirmations could be realized from this work. The project contrasted two methods of ending conflict with conflict transformation and justified why conflict transformation was the best method to address church conflict. Last, this project included details of the training module, “Conflict Transformation in the Church” (Appendix C).

**Project Background**

Conflict between leaders in Holy Baptist Church is an especially relevant issue today. Failure to properly address the conflict, however, potentially creates more conflict, diminishes the lives of those in conflict, and prevents the repair, development, and sustainment of the relationships of the conflicted parties. This is especially true in conflicts between leaders in the church, individual ministries, and other close relationships including one’s relationship with God. Conflict between leaders is an issue because leaders view conflict from a negative perspective and as something to avoid.
The researcher organized an advisory group from the Holy Baptist Church in 2009 to identify the most significant need in the church. The group met on several occasions and, after much deliberation, reached a consensus to arrest conflicts between leaders and that training was the best and most expedient vehicle to arrest the conflict. Chapter I provides the specific details of the advisory group and its accomplishments.

The advisory group arrived at the identification of the need using the decision-making process and theological reflection based on the model and method of James and Evelyn Whitehead in their book, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry.* The specific details of the theological reflection were addressed in Chapter I; a summary of the process follows:

The researcher sent an email (Appendix B) to each participant requesting their participation in this project to identify the most important needs of this church. The email described the purpose of their participation, the duties and responsibilities of each participant, and additional pertinent information required to make an intelligent decision regarding whether they would participate. All participants agreed to participate in this project and attended the first meeting held in September 2009. During the initial meeting, the researcher presented the agenda, and the group discussed the ground rules, and the process followed during the session. At the end of the session, the advisory group discussed the three most pressing needs in the ministry setting of the church.

**Three Most Important Needs**

The three most pressing needs as defined by the stakeholders of the church were:

1) training all church leaders, 2) building and sustaining strong and viable ministries, and

---

3) maintaining viable finances. The group identified the most pressing need as mandatory training for all church leaders because conflict between congregants, specifically between leaders, is an especially relevant issue in this church. The advisory group engaged in a brainstorming session from which they identified the specific areas of training needed. The advisory group desired leaders to demonstrate a heart for forgiveness and reconciliation, a love for intentional spiritual pursuit of God’s purpose in their own lives and the lives of others, and a commitment to ministering to and serving people. It was the consensus of the advisory group that training of leaders in the following areas could change the attitudes of the leaders in conflict:

1) Basic leadership styles, understand the different types of spiritual leadership styles.

2) Include exercises to assist the leaders in identifying their primary leadership style.

3) Relate what they learn about their style to their role in the church.

4) Learn to recognize the different learning styles.

5) Characteristics of a good leader.

6) Require the leaders to teach their ministry participants.

7) Understand that commitment is vital and should be included in the training.

The second most pressing need identified by the group was the need to sustain viable ministries. Viable ministries, stated the advisory group, would address the needs of the congregants and the community and stimulate church growth. The group also stated that leaders who systemically engaged in conflict could be a deterrent to sustained viable ministries.

Financial lack unrelated to the church’s financial stability was the third most pressing need and would negatively impact the ability of the church to provide the kinds
of ministries the members need; however, financial strength would not ensure excellence in ministries. If the people who work under the pastor, who are in charge of the ministries, were trained properly, they would help stimulate growth, ministry development, and financial stability.

During the second theological reflection held in September 2009, the researcher instructed the advisory group to delve into what was beneath the need for training. The researcher challenged them to describe personal experiences that supported the need for such training. The advisory group reflected on their belief in the need for training, and the following notes summarize their responses:

1) Several members of the group personally witnessed several leaders disrespecting other leaders and congregants by openly engaging in arguments in the church. They shared with the advisory group that conflict appeared to be caused by a lack of self-control and the inability to be in one accord and settle conflicts amicably. Several members of the advisory group perceived the visible conflict among leaders as unbecoming of leaders in the church and reiterated the need for the training to resolve conflicts. Educating leaders on humble engagement in resolving conflict might be helpful in this area. The group recommended the leadership participate in a training retreat that provided a safe environment for leaders to discuss issues that may be at the root cause of the displayed conflict, such as personal, financial, emotional, relational, and spiritual concerns.

2) Several members of the advisory group expressed that leaders did not fully understand their role as spiritual leaders and servants. A few characteristics of a spiritual leader are humility, unselfishness, and a giving and forgiving spirit. Based on the
descriptions of the behavior of some of the leaders, the advisory group perceived the leaders as lacking in these characteristics.

3) Some leaders were not leading the church in accomplishing its mission—to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and make disciples of all kinds of people. The group observed that the pastor teaches and proclaims the gospel in an exemplary manner. It appeared to the advisory group, however, that there was a disconnect between the pastor’s teaching and preaching and the behavior of the leaders. For example, some leaders were late for worship almost every Sunday. Some leaders worked in the church office during the preaching hour. Some staff worked during the Bible study, Discipleship hour, and the preaching hour. Associate ministers sparsely attended the early morning service. Leaders were not required to tithe. Leaders lacked training on how to make disciples so they in turn would train others to make disciples. The mission of the church is also to serve as a community of worship and fellowship, but the intersection of worship and fellowship exhibits worship as a strength and fellowship as a weakness.

4) Some leaders did not adequately care for the people in the church and community. They did not consistently contact and welcome new members, review new members’ applications to determine their needs, spiritual gifts, and places of service, which resulted in a revolving door for new members. The church went into the community to pass out brochures about an upcoming community event but most leaders were not present.

5) The ministries did not appear to improve over time.

6) There was a high turnover of volunteers.
As the researcher/facilitator listened and observed the tone and body language of those who expressed their views, it became clear that the advisory group was not accustomed to the kind of behavior they expressed. They yearned to go back to the tradition of walking in the church and noticing who were the leaders just by the way they carried themselves. They missed the tradition of great fellowship in the body and the afforded moments to testify and tell each other about the goodness of God. They yearned for effective leadership to help them stimulate church growth, close the revolving door for new members, and lead them into the community during evangelistic activities.

During the third theological session, the researcher asked, “What wisdom do we bring regarding the need to train all church leaders, what is meant by training leaders, and what experiences led us to identify the specific need?” The wisdom the advisory group presented regarding the need to train all church leaders follows: One person stated, “You can have all the volunteers for any ministry that a person thinks they want to participate in; however, if the person is not suited for that particular ministry, and if leaders are not trained for that specific ministry, the probability of a viable ministry is weakened considerably. For example, if you do not like being around kids, and the nagging, pulling, and drama that go with working with children, you do not need to be in youth ministry.” People who say they want to teach or participate in ministry should know in their hearts that this is what they are called to do, they should have a burning desire to do the particular ministry, and they should be passionate about service.

One of the members of the advisory group asked the following questions: “Why does the church have leaders who systemically engage in open conflict with one another? Do we have a selection process, and who appoints or selects the leaders in the church?”
The implications of this perspective on leadership were profound. The researcher concluded that God chooses leaders; therefore, the goal is to cooperate with and trust God’s choice to ensure that only divinely appointed leaders were recognized. Therefore:

1) The church should avoid appointing someone as a leader on any basis other than the belief that God has chosen him or her for that role. This rules out leadership based on seniority, level of scholarship, degrees earned, prestige in the community, personal friendship, and so on. 2) The church should be cautious when giving or providing ministry to a young, immature Christian. It may be more appropriate to give young Christians tasks that would develop them because they may only appear to be chosen by God and may negatively impact ministries.

A great teachable moment for the researcher was the revelation that appointing leaders in the church was a daunting task, because the process was subjective and there were many variables that could lead one to incorrectly appoint a leader. Subsequently, the researched led the advisory group in prayer, requesting God to clearly reveal His choice of leaders to the pastor prior to the decision making process.

Recapturing Acts of Conflict

Subsequent to the conclusion of the theological reflections, the researcher reflected upon personally involved conflicts that transpired with the leaders in this church. A recap follows:

1. The researcher had a conversation with one of the leaders in the church. It was revealed to her through that conversation that this person needed professional assistance in dealing with some life experiences that she could not provide. This person granted her permission for a referral for outside counseling. Out of respect,
she informed the pastor of the decision to refer this person, one of his sheep, for outside counseling. The person was vehemently offended that the researcher had informed the pastor. This conflict was left unaddressed, and it escalated to the point of dividing the ministry that the writer facilitated, in which this person was a viable participant. The researcher’s name was scandalized, and her character and integrity questioned, because this person was not truthful in the account of their conversations. Only God kept her from leaving this church. This and subsequent conflicts born out of this one event lasted for more than four years. This conflict finally was resolved at the Conflict Transformation Workshop held at this church in November 2011. The person confessed to the researcher that she was able to move forward from the conflict because God revealed that she should trust him with their relationship.

2. Another conflict was in the new members class (actually, a number of conflicts). Some new members refused to continue attending the class and others left the church because of the abrasive tongue of one of the teachers. The researcher recently received approval from the pastor to reassign the teacher. The removal of the teacher caused continued conflict between the teacher and the researcher, who held several one-on-one conversations with the teacher in an effort to transform the conflict. It was obvious to the researcher that this teacher needed more time to reflect on this conflict. The two agreed that they would be in prayer and the researcher would be available when the teacher aspired to continue the conversation in an attempt to transform the conflict.
3. There was conflict in one of the ministries that caused the leader of this ministry to resign. The conflict divided the remaining members of the ministry. They finally discussed the issue and came to an amicable conclusion, although the leader sustained the resignation.

Summary

The ministry context helps one to see the entire life of the church as including roles in the church, and relationships within the church family, ministries, and services available to the church and its local and larger surrounding community. Although there have been and still are conflicts in Holy Baptist, just as there are in any church, Holy Baptist church is called to love just as Christ loved and to love others in all the contexts in which God has placed them.
CHAPTER III
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The researcher conducted a study on conflict transformation in the church. The study identified conflict transformation as a viable method to educate leaders in the church on how to transform conflict, which study also underscored the need to develop a training module as the vehicle to educate leaders. The conceptual framework used in this research sought to present a theoretical perspective, with the plan to outline possible courses of action. The plan was to present conflict transformation as the preferred approach and viable method to arrest conflict in the church. The conceptual framework of conflict transformation used in this project was multi-actor/multi-dimensional, with the goal to expose and deal with the root causes of conflict interaction between conflicted parties. Additionally, conflict transformation as researched was shown to have the ability to change attitudes, aid in understanding the underlying causes of conflict, change relationships, transform negative views of conflict into positive views, and move the conflicted parties from conflict to forgiveness, reconciliation, and ultimately peace.

The researcher found the majority of literature with respect to conflict transformation situated in the context of violence between conflicted organizations, groups, and countries. The literature chosen for this dissertation was situated in the context of the church but was not as extensive as the literature in the former context. In
many churches, conflict is considered to be negative and should be ended quickly. Sarah Savage, author and professional in the field of conflict transformation, argues that some churches tend to view conflict as "abysmal failure—an embarrassment that should be hidden." This reflects the dominant societal beliefs that conflict in the church is a tragedy and the primary goal is prevention and cure. When people read about conflict transformation in the church through this framework, particularly when the authors are respected authorities in the conflict transformation field, the new interpretation could be instrumental in transforming the current perspective of conflict in the church. Instead of seeing conflict as negative, the church could see it as an opportunity to renew, develop, or sustain relationships with others and God.

The goal of this dissertation was to make a new contribution to the literature and, thus, what it means to engage in conflict in the church and how leaders in the church should see themselves in the conflict transformation process. Stories and perceptions of leaders in the church, who either witnessed conflict or had been involved in conflict in the church, informed this dissertation. It was the consensus of the leaders in this church that there was a need for training in conflict transformation, but the researcher was reminded that the issue of conflict among the leaders is only one facet of who they are as leaders. There are so many other facets that make up the identity of the church.

Additionally, this dissertation was also informed by an examination of literature by experts in the field, including empirical, theological, biblical, and other literatures. The empirical literature review consisted of literature that defined conflict transformation and studies related to conflict transformation that were consistent with the project. The

---

13 Savage, Psychology and Religion Research Group.
theological literature review supported the theology of conflict transformation and the biblical literature review introduced scripture to support conflict transformation.

**Theoretical Perspective**

**Process of Conflict Transformation**

Theory is a critical aspect of any intervention, as it places practice within a context of history, previous research, hypotheses, and systematic testing of expected outcomes. Theory can be inductive when it is derived from data and observations or deductive when it is tested to examine evidence of its accuracy. The proposition that conflict transformation can facilitate positive changes in attitudes or behaviors and improve relationships stem from a number of fields, among them psychological, relational, and social change.

The essential elements of Lederach’s conceptual framework are as follows: 1) conflict can be good as a stimulus to change depending upon how the conflict is handled, 2) conflict is inevitable because it is embedded in human nature, and 3) conflict is understandable when viewed through the proper lens and under many circumstances reconcilable over a period of time. Further, the focal point for Lederach is that conflict does not just happen, but it is created by people and their interpretation of actions and events. The researcher adds the importance of understanding the dynamics of conflicts in the church.

The dissertation showed that Lederach’s faith-based conflict transformation and peace building model, leaning toward reconciliation and relationship and a holistic

---

change—which calls not only for the leaders to participate but the entire church community—provides a suitable approach to deal with conflict in the church. This approach calls for the entire church community to commit to producing, seeking out, and engaging in the peace process instituted in scripture. This means the process of conflict transformation must eventually be applied across the broad spectrum of the population of the church community. This approach must seek to address both the immediate and the underlying factors involved in the conflict(s) and pursue holistic change over an extended time commitment. It was the conviction of this paper that such a sustainable peace process of conflict transformation over an extended time would produce a more peaceful church community.

**Need for Training Leaders**

As a result of the advisory groups shared stories and testimonies regarding experiences that led to the identification of the need to provide mandatory training for all church leaders, the theory undergirding this project suggested that only conflict transformation—rather than conflict management or conflict resolution—would achieve the desired results. This dissertation reflected more deeply on the context of ministry and the identified need, using theoretical perspectives in the readings and discussions, as summarized by the following questions: 1) What wisdom does one bring regarding the need to train all church leaders? 2) What is meant by training leaders? 3) What experiences led those involved to identify the specific need? The responses to the questions follow:

Question 1: What wisdom does one bring regarding the need to train all church leaders?
The wisdom regarding the need to train all church leaders comes out of the understanding that leaders must know they are called to serve in a particular ministry, be passionate about serving in that ministry, and have the proper gifts to operate in that ministry. Jackson Carroll describes the “calling to the ministry of laity” or “priesthood of all believers” as the call to be a Christian, to follow Jesus as a disciple.\footnote{Jackson W. Carroll, \textit{God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations} (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 22.} The tasks of disciples are to learn, study, and pass along the sayings of Jesus. Also within the spirit of learning, a disciple or a person called to ministry must possess the qualities, in Carroll’s words, “[of] not only learning, but also spiritual depth and character.”\footnote{Ibid.} One’s spiritual depth and character is evidenced by a sincere fear of God, or what Carroll describes as “an inward call from God that shapes one’s character and gives spiritual depth to one’s practice.”\footnote{Ibid.} Carroll associates these qualities with ministry as a calling. In the researcher’s opinion, the servants must be called and must exhibit the evidence, qualities, spiritual depth, and character of their calling. Leaders are called to bear witness to Christ, to be used as instruments to transform the community into the image of Christ, and to be led by the Holy Spirit. Leaders are equipped to do this by virtue of being in community with the Spirit of God.

The implications of this perspective on leadership are profound. The researcher concluded that God chooses leaders; thus, the goal would be to cooperate with and trust God’s choice to ensure that only divinely appointed leaders are recognized. Therefore: 1) Churches should avoid appointing someone as a leader on any basis other than the belief
that God has chosen him or her for that role. This rules out leadership based on seniority, level of scholarship and/or degrees earned, prestige in the community, personal friendship, and so on. 2) The church should be cautious when giving or providing ministry to young, immature Christians. It may be more appropriate to give a young Christian a task that develops that person because the person may only appear to be chosen by God and in reality may negatively impact the ministry. The researcher also learned through this reflection that naming leaders is not easy because the process is subjective and there are many variables that may lead one to incorrectly select a leader. The researcher recommended prayer, requesting God to clearly reveal his choice prior to the decision-making process. The following paragraph continues to address the questions the dissertation raised during its theological reflection on training leaders.

Question 2: What is meant by training leaders?

The meaning of training, as defined when the need was identified within the advisory group, is summarized as identifying and teaching leadership roles and styles to the leaders of the church. Although the student agrees that leaders would benefit from such training, after reading *Transforming Mission* by David Bosch, she now believes a greater focus for training should be teaching the leaders to submit to the will of God. Bosch redefines traditional concepts of mission, which the researcher interpreted as concepts that were also applicable to teaching. Intellectual teaching further inspired this perspective, which aligned with Matthew’s scriptural teaching to appeal to the listeners’ wills, which ideally would move the listener to make a decision to follow Jesus. This is

---

the essence of discipleship, which should be a prerequisite for consideration for a leadership position in the church. According to Bosch, another prerequisite comes from Matthew’s perspective to observe all that Jesus commanded them, which is an extension of both disciple making and mission. Bosch further states that the great commission is foundational to the church and its disciples—foundational to the church because of the transforming work that believers co-create with God, and foundational to the disciples because of the necessity to incorporate the love of God and neighbor into everything believers think, say, and do.\(^{19}\)

From the researcher’s perspective, Christian leaders must function well in five areas: 1) influence others by submitting to God’s will, which requires leaders to be spiritually mature, for they must already have been influenced to do God’s will; 2) be educated on the topics of how to pray, study, love others, admit and repent of sin, and forgive—and in turn demonstrate and explain how such discipleship is done; 3) have a desire from teachings to do the same things as Jesus; 4) exhibit submission to the will of God without prompting from others; and 5) be proven as a disciple.

Question 3: What experiences led those involved to identify the specific need?

Most experiences were issues requiring building character, self-control, negative conflict resolution, and outward expressions that lacked concern and care for people. The solution to this tragedy in the life of the church was to intersect the tragedy with hope, and strength with weakness. The tragedy lies in the behavior that requires character building, self-control, and positive conflict resolution. Hope for the church is in the love that is evidenced by the desire to rectify the problem. L. Gregory Jones and Kevin

\(^{19}\) Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393.
Armstrong describe this as “cultivating awe and wonder in the midst of sin and violence,” and that it is a sign of life when there is “a desire to continue to love, to continue to turn oneself toward God in the midst of affliction.” The hope in the midst of tragedy enables disciples to stand against evil, thereby bringing a celebration of grace and new life. By virtue of raising these issues, the researcher came to believe that the church can make a better transition from its present status, it can claim new life in hope that excellence can be resurrected, and it can make the “shape of the cross visible in the leaders,” in the words of Jones and Armstrong, who add:

There is an intersection of strength and weakness as the church judges the leaders, as it measures their skills and productivity, their human frailty, brokenness, and sin. The church sometimes fails to understand that, while all members have gifts, some operate within their gifts and some do not. All are at different levels of excellence in ministry, but all must make room for brokenness and the gifts [each] bring to the community.

The researcher learned that the church is at the intersection of strength and weakness, and it must take the risk of removing the mask covering the behavior of some of its leaders so that they and the church might be transformed.

In summary, the following were six theoretical perspectives regarding the issues addressed in the researcher’s church: 1) It appears that some of the leaders of Holy Baptist either had lost their authority to lead, or they never had the authority to lead. Carroll purports that in order for leadership to be effective in moving the congregation to respond to God’s call, they must have earned the trust of the congregation. Trust is derived from both personal and formal authority, and formal authority involves assurance

---


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., 42.
that leaders are called from God and that their gifts will be used in the performance of the call. Personal authority is granted when leaders exhibit “personal qualities, e.g. demonstrated competence, ability to relate to people, and integrity,” per Jones and Armstrong. The matter of spiritual authority appeared to be a problem within the church’s leadership. 2) Training in the areas mentioned would either shape or reshape the culture of the church’s leadership. Training could inform or confirm the church of the leaders’ commitment and whether they were suited for the leadership positions in which they operated. 3) Discipleship training was one of the most important ingredients of this church’s life. When Jesus called individuals, he first supped with them, meaning he developed relationships with them, after which he trained them during the remaining time he spent with them. Some left him, one betrayed him; he rebuked some, and he encouraged others, yet he continued to train the disciples. 4) Conflict transformation would identify the root causes of conflict in the church. 5) Conflict transformation used scripture to transform these conflicts. 6) Conflict transformation differed from conflict management or resolution.

Leaders must have an inward calling, but some leaders did not know the difference between an inward call from God and a call from another person or an emotional experience; thus, they had to be taught to discern the difference. Some leaders did not know what it meant to possess the gifts of their calling; again, they had to be taught. Leaders needed to obtain spiritual depth and character, continuously learn, study, and pass on Jesus’ teaching, submit to the will of God, and observe all of the commands of Jesus. The people of God are never automatically granted all the above traits and information upon salvation, but they must be taught in the way that they should go.

---

23 Jones and Armstrong, *Resurrecting Excellence*. 
Empirical Literature

Conflict Transformation

Review of empirical literature commences with articulating the definition of conflict transformation. Stephen Ryan, Senior Lecturer, Peace and Conflict Studies, defines conflict transformation as a spiritual process that involves overcoming fear and distrust. John Paul Lederach, author and practitioner in the fields of conflict transformation and peace building, further defines conflict transformation as a process that involves understanding the nature and dynamics of conflicts in order to resolve conflict to an endeavored or desired change. The researcher draws from both definitions to arrive at the definition suitable for this dissertation, which is that conflict transformation is a spiritual process that leads to understanding the nature and dynamics of conflict, transforms conflict through forgiveness, overcomes fear and distrust, and moves toward reconciliation and, ultimately, sustainable peace. The end product of this process is renewed, newly developed, and/or sustained relationships with one another and with God.

Conflict Resolution as Viable Method

Additional review of empirical literature supports conflict transformation as a viable method to educate church leaders on how to transform conflict. There are three proven methods to resolve conflict: conflict resolution, conflict management, and conflict transformation. Although numerous articles and books view conflict as bad, Lederach argues in his book *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* that conflicts are neither inherently good nor bad, but simply facts of life. This assumption, says Lederach, is

---

revealed in conflict transformation but not in conflict resolution or conflict management. Supporters of conflict management often choose this assumption as the appropriate vehicle to resolve conflict because it reflects a belief that conflict is an ongoing part of life, may not be ended, and can be managed constructively. Supporters of conflict resolution, however, suggest that conflict is bad and can be ended successfully. Supporters of conflict transformation, on the other hand, argue that both conflict management and conflict resolution perspectives focus on ending the conflict while conflict transformation focuses on the relationship in which the conflict occurs. Additionally, without changes in the parties' understanding of the conflict and its connection to the relationship and their appreciation of each other, the conflict continues.

The focus of this dissertation does not seek to end conflict, but rather to discover the root cause of the conflict with the focus of repairing, developing, or sustaining the relationship through the process of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Tenets of Conflict Transformation

The researcher gleaned some of the tenets of the conflict transformation process and training plans from the following: Tom Porter, Co-Executive Director of Just Peace Center for Mediation and Conflict Transformation and of the Religion and Conflict Transformation Program at Boston University School of Theology; Lloyd Elder, author of Life Beyond Church Conflict; and Marlin E. Thomas, Editor of “Transforming Conflict in Your Church,” each of whom included the same tenets of conflict transformation in their resources. The tenets of conflict transformation as described by these scholars are understanding the nature and role of conflict, changing one’s attitude, causes of conflict, conflict analysis, forgiveness and reconciliation, and developing conflict skills, all of
which are included in the researcher’s training module that she developed to educate the leaders of the church to transform conflict into sustainable peace. The nature and role of conflict indicates that conflict is inevitable and unavoidable, and that the role is to ignite the change process. Changing one’s attitude is addressed in the training from the standpoint of viewing conflict through a positive lens in lieu of a negative lens. Some of the causes of conflict are stipulated in the training; i.e., fear of confronting conflict and avoiding conflict. Conflict analysis is facilitated as the process by which the root causes of conflict are discovered. Forgiveness and reconciliation are essential to repair, develop, or sustain relationships with one another and with God, and the biblical and theological perspectives that follow support love, forgiveness, and reconciliation as essential to transforming conflict.

**Theological Literature**

**Educating the Leaders in the Church**

In Romans, the Apostle Paul uses the word “know” or “knowing” eleven times. What are disciples to know? They are to educate themselves in God’s written Word, for when they acquire spiritual knowledge, they then can apply that knowledge to their lives in practical ways, yielding themselves to Him and using godly knowledge to serve the Lord in spirit and truth (Rom. 6:11-13).

The apostle Paul admonished Timothy that disciples are to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God” (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV). The NIV renders this verse, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” The Greek word translated “study” means to give diligence, to exert oneself, or to make haste to apply oneself.
Therefore, in order to learn or educate themselves, disciples are told to apply themselves to study with diligence the Word of God. The reason is also found in Paul’s second letter to Timothy: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NASB). The idea here is that the Word of God perfects or matures disciples and equips them to be educated, faithful servants.

Biblical education equips born-again believers so that God is able to perform in them the work that he has ordained (Eph. 2:10). Biblical education transforms believers by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:2), which is the ongoing process of applying knowledge with the mind of Christ, “who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

The first step of education is to have one’s eyes opened and be turned from darkness to light (Acts 26:18). It is not good that the soul be without knowledge (Prov. 19:2). Only within God’s light can anyone see light (Ps. 36:9). Proverbs 4:7 exhorts, “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.” Proverbs 2:3-5 states, “Call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.”

The second step of education is to realize that learning starts with knowing God, as expressed in the following verses: “This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last, apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me?” (Isa. 44:6); “Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Ps. 34:11); “How great are your works, O LORD, how
profound your thoughts! The senseless man does not know, fools do not understand” (Ps. 92:5).

Scriptures Relating to the Ministry Issue/Problem

Conflict transformation begins with the teachings of Christ, not the least of which is found in Matt. 5:25, “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way,” and Matt. 18, which focuses on relationships within the church.

A reality of conflict seems perpetually to exist within the life of the church. It is a timeless tension between good and evil, between standing for the truth of the gospel and obeying the clear teaching of scripture, and resisting and rebelling against the same. “Transforming conflict” must tackle the age-old problem from many different approaches, e.g. proclamation, education, persuasion, and patient waiting. James 1:2-5 instructs that in all sorts of trials, believers should seek wisdom from God.

As specified in 1 Cor. chapters 3 and 4, the qualities of leadership must be addressed. Paul stresses that leaders must have a servant’s nature, and that it is God’s field in which they are working and his building they are constructing (3:5-9). Leaders will be tested at the judgment as to how well they have built on the only legitimate foundation, Jesus Christ (3:10-17). The stewardship nature of leadership is important (4:1-5), as is the danger of putting leaders on a pedestal (4:6, 7). It is not their eloquence but the evidence of God’s power at work through their ministry that counts (4:19, 20).

Another important and related point is the fact that local leadership in the New Testament is always plural or team leadership (e.g., Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:1; 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:5). Jesus first set the pattern by bringing a group of distinctly
different followers into a leadership team over a period of two and a half years. The student suspects that there are two reasons for this emphasis. Where there is true team leadership, there is less temptation for a leader to develop tendencies that will work against true community, such as Peter mentions (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Perhaps a more important reason is that a team has the opportunity to model the kind of relationships that should exist in the rest of the fellowship. Godly leadership does not just happen in the church but must be cultivated; it must be deliberately developed. Therefore, the church must have a plan to cultivate its leadership.

A third theological issue is that of discipleship. The leaders and those involved in this project must answer the question, "How do good Christian leaders and congregants relate to each other?" Currently, congregants see their leaders on Sundays, Wednesdays, and some Saturdays. At those times, they put on their best faces and smile and greet one another and then go home. If discipleship is an integral part of leadership, then the church must find a way for it to continue its community beyond formal worship and study.

The fourth theological issue is what the Bible says about conflict transformation. Matthew 18:15-35 is the biblical passage that supports conflict transformation as a viable process to address conflict in the church with the results being hope, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. This passage can be seen as an operating manual for first-century church leaders that is applicable for church leadership today as well as in centuries to come. It is also a clear, instructive passage on conflict transformation, which includes a process for confrontation, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

While Jesus spoke about addressing sin in the church, his words suggest broader principles. The Maxwell Leadership Bible eloquently states that, according to Jesus,
addressing conflict and healing offenses should be a priority for both body members and leadership.25 Jesus even instructs believers to postpone their worship if they remember an unresolved offense (Matt. 5:23-24). Conflicts will arise in any organization and humans will disagree because they are wired differently and have different agendas. The church is called, however, to teach leaders and congregants to make every effort to resolve issues or conflicts as expeditiously as possible.

The ministry issue is how to train church leaders to shift their thinking to view conflict as an opportunity to create, salvage, or restore relationships. This approach ultimately releases both leaders and conflicted parties to demonstrate intentional spiritual pursuit of God’s purpose in their lives, stimulates spiritual growth and maturity, and exhorts a strong commitment to ministering to others.

First, the project looks at conflict transformation as a response to the ministry need, with a pointed focus on hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Second, the project provides the context of the selected passage from an operating manual perspective for conflict transformation, and then moves to the exegesis of the passage and rationale related to the ministry issue. Third, the project expounds upon the relationship of conflict transformation with the context of ministry and provides guidance in the undertaking of training leaders in this approach.

**A Theological Response to the Ministry Need**

**Conflict Transformation**

The theology of conflict transformation in the church begins with humankinds relationship with God and then with one another. We were created to have a loving

---

relationship with God. He patiently and lovingly waits for us to respond to his invitation to salvation. Upon saying yes to God's invitation to salvation, we receive forgiveness for our sins and the assurance of eternal life through faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

"Now this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3).

Tom Porter, Just Peace Theology of Conflict Transformation—Love

According to Tom Porter's book, which coined the phrase JustPeace, "humankind is connected to God and there is no way to move toward God without drawing closer to other people, and no way to approach other people without coming near to God."26 Porter purports that people cannot experience God or their fellow human beings without moving closer to one another at the same time. Additionally, each person connected to God is different, and people need to respect the different relationships they have with each other and with God. In Porter's concept of JustPeace, the theology of conflict transformation is found in the Great Commandment, which is the summary of the law and the prophets:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with your entire mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). Life is about loving God, loving one's self, and loving others—ideally, all together, all at the

---

same time. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* explains these verses in the following paraphrased summaries:

(37) **What does it mean to “love” God?** In the original Greek language, the word *agapao* means to willingly give without self-interest. The Bible refines the concept of love as an act of a will (not just an emotional feeling) to commit and give oneself wholeheartedly for the sake of another. In the Old Testament, for example, loving God always implied complete obedience to God (see Deut. 11:1, 13, and 22), whether one gets anything back from Him or not.²⁷

(37) **Why does Jesus mention the “heart, soul, and mind”?** God desires to be loved in a way that involves every part of the believer. This is a paraphrased quotation from Deut. 6:5. It is not to say that human life could be divided into a heart, soul, mind, or strength. Rather, it is a way of saying that God desired the kind of love where one commits every part of one’s life in obedience to Him. In the words of the teaching of Charles E. Nesbitt, Jr., believers must obey God not only with their outward actions of the body (e.g., avoiding murder), but also their inner desires (e.g., avoiding hatred).²⁸

(39) **What does it mean to love one’s neighbor as one’s self?** Jesus wants believers to avoid the “me first” attitude. This verse does not mean to encourage people to love themselves first before loving others, i.e., it is not a license for self-love. Rather, it means that those who naturally love themselves ought to now direct that love to others. In Luke’s gospel (10:25-37), Jesus gives the parable of the Good Samaritan as an illustration.


²⁸ Ibid.
of the second greatest commandment. Leviticus 19:18 also is a great example of directing love to others.²⁹

(40) What does it mean that all the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments? These two commandments form a wellspring from which all other virtues flow. The Ten Commandments, for example (Exod. 20:1-17) can be divided in two: the first four commandments having to do with loving God, and the remaining six having to do with loving others (see also Rom. 13:10 and 1 Cor. 13).³⁰

Porter maintains that the theology of conflict transformation is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with your entire mind. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-39). One’s relationship with God draws others together, and drawing others together draws all closer to God.

Lederach’s Theology of Conflict Transformation—Reconciliation

Lederach maintains reconciliation as the overarching theological rationale for the practices of conflict transformation. Reconciliation is the ultimate goal of peace building, which occurs when disputants develop a new relationship based on apology, forgiveness, and newly established trust. Lederach describes reconciliation as “a meeting ground where trust and mercy have met, and where justice and peace have kissed.”³¹ Thus, reconciliation brings people together, enabling them to grow beyond the past to re-establish a normalized, peaceful, and trusting relationship in the present. He supports his


³⁰ Ibid.

rationale of a four-step process by examining Matt. 18:15-20, which includes four steps, the first of which is in verse 15.

Verse 15: “If your sister or brother sins against you, go and show her/his fault, just between the two of you.” According to Lederach, this verse may seem to concern only very personal offenses against a person. Yet similar texts show that Jesus intended this procedure for all significant conflicts (Matt. 5:23-24; 7:3-5; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20). Lederach points out:

Christians frequently avoid this step: when disturbed by someone’s actions they often first find others who will support their viewpoint out of fear of having to face personal resentments, assumptions, and anxieties. Further, Christians may have to listen to the other’s perspective, because what began as a criticism became an extended dialogue.32

The following, verse 16, is the second step.

Verse 16: “But if she/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.” Lederach writes:

Though it might seem at first that these persons are simply to confirm the other’s guilt, listening to “every word” means pondering everything all the parties say. These persons, if not chosen just to reinforce the original complaint, can help create space where the two individuals can become more transparent and gain new insights. This will likely expand discussion beyond the original issue. All parties will become involved with and accountable to the whole community.33

The third step follows, from verse 17:

Verse 17: “If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.”

According to Lederach, this verse does not mean the original offender is brought to trial, but that the whole congregation must now help work toward reconciliation. During this process, contends Lederach, church leaders must find ways of incorporating various


33 Ibid.
people to work out reconciliation through the transformation of people and their relationships.\textsuperscript{34}

The fourth and last step in Lederach’s process is also found in verse 17: “\textit{tell it to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.}” He interprets behavior toward Gentiles and tax collectors by Jesus’ practice: “Jesus ate with them.” Therefore, when disputing parties must go different ways, the church should maintain relational and emotion contact with those who leave, eating with them, which might still lead to reconciliation.\textsuperscript{35}

Lederach reiterates that reconciliation of all things is God’s major work. The church’s mission is to align with what God already is doing. This “happens through the incarnation, the way in which the Word becomes flesh.”\textsuperscript{36} All this is embodied in God’s Son, who enables believers to see, hear, and interact with God’s reconciling love made present (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

Ann Garrido and Sheila Heen Theology of Conflict Transformation—Reconciliation

Ann Garrido, associate professor of homiletics at the Aquinas Institute in St. Louis, MO, and Sheila Heen of the Harvard Negotiation Project, present their theology of conflict transformation as reconciliation. Their stance begins with the following:

Paul who often reminded the early Christians, at the heart of our Gospel is one central message: through Christ the world is being reconciled to God. There is a sense of dynamism in Paul’s summary. All of creation writhes in the labor of becoming what God has always planned it to be. Christ the head has emerged while his body is still in the process of being born. Jesus leads the way; the earth

\textsuperscript{34} Lederach, \textit{The Journey Towards Reconciliation}, 131-32.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 134-35.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 135.
remains in an ongoing process of reconciliation. The witness that Christians can most powerfully offer the world is not that of a perfect people, but of a people always fully engaged in the reconciliation experience.37

Garrido and Heen maintain that exercises in reconciliation should be considered essential Christian practices—ways of fully collaborating with God in the ongoing work of creation. Christians are expected not just to theorize about prayer, but to pray; they are expected not just to consent to the idea of works of mercy, but to show mercy. Reconciliation cannot be something that believers advocate from a distance, but they must learn how to engage in it. They promote the following seven biblical practices that have the potential to become spiritual disciplines in which the Christian vocation to reconciliation is made real:

1) Avoid triangulation. “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:23-24). When frustrated or hurt by others, it is often easier to talk about them than to them. As a general rule in Christian conflict, if two people are speaking negatively about a third, the third has a right to be present. Conflict should be handled by the persons directly involved before getting anyone else involved.

2) Distinguish between facts and interpretations. “Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother’s eye” (Luke 6:41-42). Conflicts, say Gerrido and Heen, are often talked about as if they were simple factual disputes with clear and obvious answers. But

most disputes are not about facts; rather, they are about a partial picture of any given situation. In other words, a partial picture renders a distorted view that is both incomplete and biased. An understanding of others’ interpretations is necessary to see the whole picture or to acquire a more complete understanding.

3) Practice passionate—and compassionate—curiosity. “Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, ‘[Lord,] Son of David, have pity on us!’ Jesus stopped and called them and said, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ They answered him, ‘Lord, let our eyes be opened.’ Moved with pity, Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him: (Matt. 20:30-34). Understanding another’s perspective requires humility and becoming curious about the experience of others. What information does the other have that one might not have? What leads them to think that this is important or unjust or plain wrong? What are they seeing that one is not seeing? The only way to find the answers to these questions is to ask the other person directly—not rhetorically, but genuinely wanting to understand their perspective and reasoning, e.g., “It matters to me that I understand you more fully.”

4) Let grace and compassion transform the emotions. “I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3). In order for difficult conversations to be fruitful conversations, believers have to be curious about the emotions involved and willing to hear how the other feels, even when it makes the
inquirers uncomfortable. They will need to have compassion for both themselves and the other, recognizing that are all human and struggling.

5) Engage the internal voice. “Know this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of a man/woman does not accomplish the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19-20). In many cases, the other people involved in conflicts are not entirely in synch with one’s journey toward compassion and grace. They are still feeling aggravated, impatient, or overlooked. To make things especially tricky, they are seldom likely to be direct about those feelings. Christians need to find a humble way to draw out the other persons’ internal voice, to give them permission to be candid about their thoughts and feelings. If peacemakers can hold in tension the others’ frustration and their compassion in the situation, they may transform the others’ internal dialogue and perhaps their own.

6) Good intentions, bad impact. “Stop judging, that you may not be judged. As you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you” (Matt. 7:1-2). Often leaders in the church complain to each other about someone else, assuming the others have bad intentions and bad character. Yet when they are accused of carelessness, they indignantly defend their good intentions, e.g., “We just want to do the right thing.”

7) Be accountable for one’s personal contribution to the problem. Adam and Eve pointed blaming fingers in their first conflict with God in the garden. The human tendency is to want to assign blame as part of the common sinful condition. If people are to transform the impulse of blaming others for the conflict into something healing and useful, it will be through seeing conflict as a result of joint contributions among them.
Almost every problematic situation is the result of multiple contributions—things each did or failed to do—and also factors that are beyond each individual. Being willing to be accountable for their part of the problem models contrition and leads the way to reconciliation. In conflict, each has the opportunity to enjoy increased insight and understanding and an opportunity to participate in the reconciling of the world to God.

John Howard Yoder Theology of Conflict Transformation—Reconciliation

Yoder’s theology, as presented by Mark Nation in his book, John Howard Yoder: Mennonite Patience, Evangelical Witness, Catholic Convictions, brings into being Christian ministry that involves truth telling, growth, change, and the demands of righteousness as products of conflict transformation. Yoder maintains that conflict should be resolved in light of forgiveness, that God paid the cost of reconciling humanity and, in turn, believers become reconcilers of others through the power of the Holy Spirit who leads by truth.

Second, Yoder maintains Jesus as central for a Christian approach to conflict transformation. The third component of Yoder’s theology for conflict transformation comes from his teaching concerning the centrality of Jesus:

It is important that we know and understand who Jesus is, the relationship between God and Jesus whom we seek to follow faithfully, the body of believers called the church and the life together as the body of Christ that helps to remind us that conflict is a way of life, but also peace building is the form of the church that seeks peace.  

---


39 Ibid., 169.
The Theology of Conflict
Transformation—Forgiveness

The Bible observes two types of God’s powers of forgiveness or pardon of sins:
1) For unbelievers, the experience of forgiveness is possible through Jesus Christ, and for believers the experience of forgiveness is possible through a continued relationship with God. 2) The second kind of power is the Christian’s obligation to pardon others. Both kinds of power are supported by the Word of God, specifically Mat. 6:14-15. In this scripture, with a view toward loving the unforgiving child, God refuses to forgive in an attempt to get the child to come face to face with the sin of an unforgiving heart. The person who is unwilling to forgive will soon meet his or her equal. The goal of this type of forgiveness is to re-establish the broken relationships between the people involved and their relationships with God.

The theology of forgiveness originates in God’s willingness to forgive sins. In the New Testament, the good news of the gospel indicates that reconciliation is fundamental to the theology of forgiveness. Jesus reconciled humankind to God through his death on the cross and his resurrection. The New Testament is the testimony of God’s ultimate sacrifice given for the forgiveness and restoration of humankind. Christ’s death on the cross is the enduring testimony of God’s desire to pay whatever price is necessary for humankind’s restoration.

In the Old Testament, God sought to restore his people unto himself. In the New Testament, God’s desire continues to reconcile his people into a right relationship with himself. In Genesis, Adam and Eve were the instruments by which sin entered the world. The concept of God’s forgiveness, however, is not reflected until late in the book of Exodus. As Swete says, “Adam dies on the day that he sins . . . his life is henceforth a
way to the grave.” Further, in the story of the flood, the Lord is represented as repenting that he made humankind when he swept them away. Noah was spared, not because he asked forgiveness of some sin, but because he was a righteous man in contrast with the rest of humankind. Similarly, in human relationships, forgiveness occurs when the person who was offended can reconcile with the one who offended.

Sebastian De Grazia writes, “The one true religion in the world and teaches that we were born to be together. Community is the natural order of humankind.” When the conflict cannot be resolved during the third intervention, one must tell it to the Christian fellowship, per Matt. 18:17, and if the offender refuses to submit to the church, he/she is to be treated like an unbeliever and suffers a living death. DeGrazia further points out that no one is ever beyond the power of forgiveness. When priest and minister find the common sins of man too grievous to forgive, it is time for the church to think of internal medicine. A church that does not have the gift of forgiveness does not have the gift of truth.

According to Augsburger, helping people forgive is a calling, a vocation, and a self-help process. Although he does not maintain in his book that forgiveness in a theological stance or conflict transformation, his position on forgiveness is consistent with the theology of forgiveness. He maintains that as believers seek to “help others we find help for ourselves, for the pain we have inflicted and for the pain we have

---


42 Ibid., 151.
suffered."43 In the center of the efforts of counseling, conflict, communication, and conciliation lies forgiveness. Additionally, Augsburger maintains that as believers journey toward forgiveness they must love one another enough to dig deep enough to find the nuggets that cause despair. Those nuggets will evolve into closer relationships with one another as they uncover the truth.

The theological basis for conflict transformation, according to Kenneth Newburger, author of *Hope in the Face of Conflict*, is the first half of Matt. 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers," which is well-known both in and outside of religious circles.44 On the other hand, the significance of the second half of the verse, "they shall be called the sons of God," is routinely overlooked. It is the second half, says Newburger, that is needed to fully understand what Jesus is saying.45 What does it mean to be a son of God? It means to have the characteristics of God, to do the work of God. Newburger maintains that the entire teaching of Matt. 5:9 provides the key that unlocks the door to peacemaking.46 The key comes in the form of a question. If believers want to be like God in the area of peacemaking, the question is, "How does God make peace with us?" God makes peace through the forgiveness of one’s sins and reconciling the offender back to him. This question is critical because the way that God makes peace with believers is the way they should make peace with each other if they want to be like Him. The theme is forgiveness and reconciliation.

43 Augsburger, *Helping People Forgive*, x.


46 Ibid.
Over the past three decades, there has been an increased interest in conflict transformation in the church, which is accompanied by a moderate influx of both scholarly and popular publications. Andrew Lester, in his book *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*, posits the following:

Significant responsibility of ministry is to nurture hope and confront conflict. It should be obvious that hope and despair are major theological dynamics, especially when people are wounded and in need of healing, confused and in need of guidance, overwhelmed and in need of sustainment, alienated and in need of relationship, or trapped and in need of liberation.47

Lester further states that hope or its absence in despair is the basic spiritual dynamic that leads to conflict.48 Hope is built on the promises of God that a new future is available to believers and that there is a new possibility in every present circumstance.

Conflict revolves around issues of relationship. It can be intense and usually is unpleasant. Often, people do not know how to help individuals involved in a conflict. In many instances, even if they know the principles of helping those involved in conflict, they may be so caught up in the conflict that they find themselves to be ineffective. Conflict does not have to ruin lives, however, as there are many ways to respond to and resolve conflict constructively.

**Biblical Contextual Analysis**

**Historical**

The Gospel of Matthew is a divinely inspired document that fulfills the Old Testament, which was still valid at that time. Sacrifices did not stop until the destruction

---


48 Ibid.
of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. In order for Jewish believers to preserve their heritage, they were under strong pressure to abandon their Christian faith in favor of the synagogue tradition of Judaism. The Gospel of Matthew both raised and answered the question of the Christian’s relationship to the Torah. The writer of Matthew attempted to describe Christianity as distinct from but superior to Rabbinic Judaism, and to establish the legitimacy of Christianity over the rabbinic movement. Matthew presented Jesus as currently present in the community of faith, having provided a basis for ethics, and having portrayed discipleship as a matter of progression. In order to be consistent with what God started in the Old Testament, and since Christ represented the culmination of the Old Testament revelation and promises for his covenant people, Matthew attempted to convince Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah.

Jesus was fully aware of the cruelty that would be unleashed on him by the authorities in Jerusalem. But in this larger historical setting of growing danger and hostility toward him, Jesus challenged Peter and the other disciples to accept a radical view of forgiving others that went further than they had been taught. This radical view was a continuation of the kingdom principles that Jesus began teaching in Matthew. Jesus pronounced that the Kingdom of God was near and immediately began to teach the understanding of the Kingdom of God, how it could be attained, and how people were to live in the Kingdom of God “on earth as it is in heaven” (6:10).

The context within chapter 18 is described as the fourth of Jesus’ five discourses, which was based on the Gospel of Mark and Q (a collection of Jesus’ sayings in Matthew.
and Luke drawn from Mark), and which emphasized community discipline within a context of childlike humility and unbounded forgiveness.49

Literary

The literary context of the passage is divided into three parts—the main portion, 18:1-14, and two smaller portions, 18:15-20 and 18:21-35. The passage is unique because 18:15-35 is found only in Matthew and not the other gospels, and its position in Matthew suggests a greater than usual role to be played.

The passage is a part of Jesus’ fourth discourse, of a total of five, and comprises all of chapter 18, as noted by the closing, “When Jesus had finished saying these things” (19:1). As in previous discourses (chapters 5, 6, 7, 10, and 13), chapter 18 is built around a common theme. Jesus’ subject is life in the Christian community (the Kingdom of God) and matters that are vital for the new community’s health and growth. Throughout the discourse, Jesus is fundamentally concerned with the character and the attitudes of all persons comprising the church, including members and leaders alike. Following Jesus’ teaching, Matthew skillfully weaves the parts of the chapter together, with the disciples’ opening question always in view. His intention is that each of the parts should be read in close conjunction with the others. When that is done, the effect is more powerful.

According to Richard B. Gardner, chapter 18 closes this section of Jesus’ story by Matthew, as well as sets the stage for the next section of the story, which is focused in Jerusalem. The chapter is composed of several periscopes, per the following list:50

---


• Greatness is childlikeness or childlike humility (18:1-5)
• Resisting the temptation to offend, or Jesus’ humility (18:6-9)
• Loving all of God’s sheep or little ones (18:10-14)
• Offending a sister/brother or settling disputes within the church (18:15-20)
• Showing mercy (18:21-35)

The segment on procedures for handling disputes within the community (18:15-20), however, stands out within the discourse and may suggest a three-fold division of the whole. Matthew may have seen the issue of expulsion as a necessary pastoral decision, yet one that was to be tempered by the more fundamental values of pastoral care and an unlimited capacity for reconciliation. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison also affirm that a three-fold division of the material is possible.51

Eugene Boring, on the other hand, argues for a two-fold division. Boring purports that the writer follows the order of Q, which is found in both injunctions and a source long familiar to his community (cf. Luke 17:1-4; Introduction).52 The discourse is divided into two sections in which each is concluded by a parable and a concluding statement beginning with “so” or “thus,” a reference to the heavenly Father, and the subject of the preceding section (v.14, “little ones”; v.35, “forgiving the brother or sister”). The key term “little ones” serves as the structuring factor, beginning and ending units at verses 6, 10, and 14. Each of the two major sections has Matthew’s characteristic three subsections, giving the outline of the discourse below.


Boring sees a two-fold division of Matt. 18, specifically that the most immediate context for verses 21-35 is 18:15-35, with the emphasis upon alienation and forgiveness in the community of faith. The periscope of 18:15-20 should be kept in mind when interpreting verses 21-35 (NRSV). Thus the literary setting plays a significant role in the interpretation of this passage.

Notes on Verses 15-20

In this portion of the passage, Jesus commands his disciples to follow his Father’s example; by doing so, they will fulfill his Father’s will. The supporting idea in this passage is that believers must take seriously their role as the agents of God in pursuing his children who stray and helping them seek restoration through repentance and forgiveness (or other cases where forgiveness is withheld due to non-repentance). Mature believers are commanded to seek and restore sinning believers; it is not optional. Failure to follow Jesus’ instructions, either by neglect, confronting with wrong motives, or in the wrong manner, is one of the greatest sins of Christians today.

Ministry Issue. Conflicts arise in any organization, and the church is no exception. Humans disagree because they are wired differently and have different agendas. Verses 15-20 note what Jesus taught about organizational conflict when someone clearly has done wrong.

Conflict Transformation. Jesus gave the authority of church leaders to bind and loose as it is in heaven. Therefore the mature must act wisely for three specific reasons (18:18-20)—1) They have God-given authority, 2) God will confirm and support the decisions made in harmony (18:19), and 3) God is present when believers gather in his name (18:18-20).
Exegesis: Settling Disputes in the Church

1. Go Privately

*If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one (18:15).*

Church discipline is biblically understood as covering every effort by an individual or group of individuals in the church to turn a straying believer back to righteous living. In this verse, Jesus first addressed the responsibility of every church member to go privately, “when the two of you are alone,” to the sinning sister or brother to show her/him their sin. This is the most discreet and least threatening intervention. It protects the offender against unnecessary embarrassment, permitting correction before the offense becomes general knowledge. The limitation of the two meeting alone to discuss the conflict is if one or both parties lack the ability to communicate clearly and concisely, which happens often, specifically when the wounds of the conflict are still fresh or the pain is devastating. Possessing the ability to clearly state the facts as well as assist the other person to achieve the aims can be just as big a challenge as the conflict itself.

2. Take One or Two Others

*But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses (18:16).*

The first step was to confront the Christian brother/sister individually. The second step is to take witnesses for a face-to-face confrontation. The hope is still to approach the sister or brother in love and in concert with the God’s will, in the pursuit to bring her/him back from the danger of destruction.
The requirement for two or three witnesses comes from Torah law (Deut. 19:15; see also 1 Tim. 5:19). This protects people against unfair accusations. The church is to be deliberate, careful, and fair in its discipline. If the conflict cannot be resolved during this second intervention, the “one or two others” will serve as witnesses before the church. Their testimony will help the church to understand the problem and establish a remedy.

3. Tell it to the Christian Fellowship

_If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (18:17)._

The object is to restore the sinner to the faith and practice of the church, this time through harsh discipline. The primary goal of the discipline is not public embarrassment but the recruitment of the entire fellowship to help in the Father’s pursuit of going after the lost sheep or one of the little ones (18:12-14). In the event that the believer continues to resist, he/she is to be removed from the fellowship. Since he/she refused submission to the church (Heb. 13:17), he/she is treated as an unbeliever as a last resort.

Distaste for Discipline

Discipline is not a popular concept these days. In the few Baptist churches of which the researcher has either been a member or spent time in the church, she has noticed that many of the members have a “live-and-let-live” attitude. They are uncomfortable with the idea that anyone has a right—much less a responsibility—to discipline anyone else. This thought process is mostly taken out of context from Scripture passages such as, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), and “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone” (John 8:7). Yet
another verse taken out of context is Matt. 7:1-6, “Judge not that you be not judged . . .
first take the log out of your own eye,” summarized as Jesus’ followers discerning their
own faults before examining the faults of other. When taken out of context, the above
passages may appear to some to contradict Matt. 18:19 but, in essence, the verses are
mutually supporting.

Matthew 7:1-6 speaks to not judging others until the judges are prepared to be
judged by the same standard and, when exercising judgment toward others, it is to be
done with humility. In v.5, Jesus commands believers to assist their sisters and brothers
with the speck in their eye, but only after they first have taken the log out of their own
eye. This presumes that believers have acknowledged that they have a great capacity for
offending their sisters and brothers and, therefore, they do not have any reason to think
they are better than their sister or brother. There is a difference between exercising
judgment and being judgmental. The actions of one member of the church body affect all
the members. Discipline, properly administered, is more loving than to ignore bad
behavior, but at the same time addresses bad behavior in love and humility.

Matthew 18:18-20

*Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and
whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if
two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my
Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there
among them* (18:18-20).

“Truly I tell you” adds emphasis and is a frequent introduction to Jesus’
authoritative teaching. In this context, Jesus recaptures the disciples’ attention on the
same topic. This is a new emphasis the disciples needed to grasp to fulfill his instructions.
Jesus teaches that the church has the authority to shut the door on a sinning brother or
sister who resists every effort believers make to restore him/her, but also to open the door again when he or she repents. Jesus’ wording is, “whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (v.18b). When the church makes decisions in accordance with Jesus’ guidelines, the decisions are in keeping with what God already has decided in heaven. As believers follow Jesus’ guidelines in the pursuit of their brothers or sisters with the same loving heart of the heavenly Father, the researcher believes the decisions that believers make on earth are in accordance with those of their Father who is in heaven.

The disciplinary actions believers take toward their sinning brother or sister are the part they play in the pursuit of the “lost sheep” who has gone astray (18:12-14). The Father’s will is that not one of his “little ones” be lost (18:12-14). God entrust his sheep or his little ones to his leaders, his shepherds, and they must follow his principles and handle them with care.

The “binding and loosing” mentioned in v.18 refers to the agreement in prayer of believers in line with the promises of God revealed in his Word.

The promise of v.19, “if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask,” guarantees guidance for the two or three who confront a sister or brother who resisted the one-on-one confrontation in v.15. God will endorse the disciplinary actions if undertaken in love and if guiding principles according to his will are followed for the sinning sister or brother; thus, “it will be done for you by my Father in heaven” (v.19b).

In the beginning chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, it says, “They shall call his name Immanuel, which is being interpreted, ‘God with us’” (1:23). The passage here, “where two or three are gathered together in my name I am there among them” (v.20), concludes with Jesus’ promise to be with those who confront a sinning sister or brother with love
and in accordance with the guidelines stipulated in the previous verses. To go a little deeper, God will be among believers whenever they pray unselfish prayers. Unselfish prayers are always answered according to the will of God, not always according to human desires.

A Final Caution

Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church 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. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart (18:21-35).

In this passage, Jesus has completed his discourse about the value and treatment of his sheep/children with one more cautions regarding relationships with believers who sin against other believers. As believers deal with those who stray (18:15-20), they may be tempted to withhold grace and mercy from those who sin against them, thereby making them no better than their offenders. Believers have a duty to forgive and pursue, and to restore those who sin against them, lest they stand accused of abusing God’s
children and set themselves up to incur God’s wrath. Forgiveness is a foundational characteristic of the family of God.

In verses 21-22, Peter’s question to Jesus asks how many times one should forgive sins against another. Peter may have felt he was being charitable when offering to forgive seven times. Jesus established in his response that Peter may be generous according to mankind’s standards but, according to the Father’s standards, seven times was not enough. The exact number of how many times one should forgive is not important. The point is one should keep forgiving endlessly in the areas of a disciple’s personal relationships. One’s forgiving attitude must reflect one’s own experience of forgiveness, specifically the forgiveness of sins for which Christ died.

Verses 23-34 explain why forgiveness must be unlimited. The size of the original debt is unimaginable in size, thus the scripture reads “all that debt of” (v.32). This represents the measure of the forgiveness the first servant received. The amount of debt the second servant owed was insignificant when compared to the debt of which the first servant had been forgiven. Instead of the first servant imitating the mercy of the king, he mistreated the second servant and demanded repayment of the debt.

Some believers have a tendency to forget the grace given to them by God, and they often refuse to forgive the most trivial offenses against them. When believers refuse to forgive each other, in essence they hold punishment over the heads of the offender. The one who is truly being punished, however, is the one who refuses to forgive.

In v.35, those who will not forgive cannot expect to be forgiven. Jesus made this clear in the Lord’s Prayer. If the church is the community of the forgiven, then all its relationships will be marked by forgiveness, which is not a mere word, but an essential
characteristic, from the heart. Every Christian has a duty to forgive others, just as the Father forgives them.

In managing conflicts, the motive is love and the goal is to make it as easy as possible for the straying person to receive the message, make the change, and avoid public or private humiliation. Ultimately, the goal is personal transformation through the intervention of other members of the body of Christ. This requires a prior relationship with the straying person, dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and believing in the power of God to prepare the heart of the straying person to receive the confrontation, as well as the confronter maintaining an attitude of love and humility.

**Summary**

The ministry issue presented in this study is to assist church leaders to transform conflict to sustainable peace. This initiative will release leaders to demonstrate intentional spiritual pursuit of God’s purpose in their own lives, stimulate spiritual growth and maturity, and inspire them to be strongly committed to ministering to God’s people. This problem is exacerbated when leaders avoid conflict because their perspective is that confronting conflict is negative.

The ministry goal is to train leaders to transform their perspective of believing that confronting conflict is negative, to the biblical perspective that, when done in accordance with the Word of God, confronting is positive. Moreover, the positive perspective embraces conflict as an opportunity for forgiveness, reconciliation, and growth. The leaders of the church must not ignore the sins against individuals that they see in fellow believers, but rather they must confront brothers and sisters as Jesus commands with the hope they will repent and be rescued from spiritual ruin.
Synthesis and Summary

In his article “Responding to Conflict,” Ken Sande writes:

A church is as susceptible to conflict as any other human organization. No matter how much a church member or others in the church want to serve God and advance God’s kingdom, everyone is still affected by the Fall, which means they inevitably will experience conflict. Sande also purports that conflict in the church can take many forms. Low-key gossip and slander can slowly poison an entire congregation. Unresolved tensions between pastors, elders, and deacons can destroy cooperation and rob a church of effective leadership. Prolonged family conflicts can lead to rebellious children or bitter divorce. Deadlocks on church committees can cripple needed ministries. Such conflicts are often more intense and destructive than those in secular organizations.

Additionally, whenever people take positions based on religious beliefs, they often succumb to self-righteousness and begin to judge others’ motives. Thinking that they alone are defending biblical truth, they label all opposing views as unbiblical, sinful, and even of the enemy. Sande says such conduct in the church clashes head-on with Jesus’ passionate prayer to the Father for his church: “May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). Instead of letting all people know that they are Jesus’ disciples by their love for one another (John 13:35), church members behaving in this way give the world more excuses to label all Christians as hypocrites and dismiss such a contradictory witness to a God of grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

---


54 Ibid.
The problem in the researcher’s congregation, as in many other congregations, is fear of confrontation. Leaders in this church are reluctant to call sin “sin.” There is little tolerance for sin in principle, yet there is much tolerance for it in practice. The leaders fall into the practice of “There but for the grace of God, go I,” or “Who am I to judge?” or “Take the boulder out my eye” and neglect the responsibility of discipleship, all of which are at the heart of discipline. Consequently, leaders avoid conflict because most do not enjoy inflicting pain caused by confronting conflict. As well, the prospect of arousing the offender’s anger also stymies confrontation.

One cannot prevent conflict in the church. In fact, God may bring conflict to the corporate life of the church in order to encourage change and spur spiritual growth. How Christians respond to this conflict, however, determines whether it has been prevented from developing further or allowed to progress into destructive sin. Conflicts will come. Will the church be prepared to respond? The church must develop a culture of peace in advance of the conflict. Romans 14:19 reads: “Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (NKJV). The church must pursue conflict preparation as it would any other ministry of the church. This involves teaching God’s Word, providing training in reconciliation skills and principles and, most importantly, making a commitment to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3, NIV).

The causes of conflict in this church stem more from the individual leaders of the congregation than from the organization of the church body as a whole. It is imperative that this church recognizes the need to determine the root causes of conflict. If only symptoms of conflict are treated, the deep-rooted causes will fester, just like an infection
in a body, until a greater schism occurs. This issue requires honest and sober assessment of the situation and the individuals involved. It demands the commitment of the members to one another as well as to God. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). Obedience to His commands for love, compassion, forgiveness, and even-handedness in dealings with one another, particularly within the body of Christ, can result in a church body that thrives and grows even in the midst of conflict.

**Practical Application Ministry Setting**

When the church engages and deals with conflict, it will witness a move of God that will release congregations to feel safe in confronting the conflicts and experiencing the end result of conflict to be spiritual growth and forgiveness. The church could be the instrument to transform conflicts in society, which could bridge the gap between the church and society. This new, profound relationship between church and society could revitalize the church. The problems that stand in the way of this new, profound relationship are as stated in 2 Tim. 3:2-5:

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Addressing these problems, which are some of the causes of conflict, is a timeless challenge for the church. The church must make a major paradigm shift from the above passage to the Great Commandments to love God, self, and neighbor, the sum of which encompasses facing conflict and moving toward hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

This project will move church leaders toward an effective, biblical, leadership-training program. It will teach leaders to transform conflict into sustainable peace and, as
a result, leaders will demonstrate intentional spiritual pursuit of God’s purpose in their own lives and will be more strongly committed to ministering to God’s people. Developing these areas should be intentional and it should not be assumed that because they are leaders that they already will be mature in these critical areas.

A review of scripture reveals a plethora of information regarding techniques and approaches that Jesus used to train the disciples on how to transform conflict, all of which can be applied to training church leaders. The research and conclusions derived from these and other resources, coupled with leadership training, will be incorporated into a master training plan for all leaders.

Currently, this church has an excellent leadership-training program, consisting of leadership classes held during the “Discipleship Hour” or Sunday school, using resources such as 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John Maxwell55 or When God Builds Church by Bob Russell.56 The church also conducts leadership-training workshops at the beginning of each year and throughout the year for congregants in leadership positions. As excellent as the training program is at this church, however, there is a diminutive focus on how best to manage conflict and, subsequently, the culture is to avoid the conflict—thus the need for conflict transformation training.

Ideally, all current leaders will be required to successfully complete training, while new leaders will complete the training either before or immediately after their appointment. In this regard, the researcher developed a training module on conflict transformation in the church, which after an extensive evaluation of a well thought out


theology and practicality, she then incorporated into the existing church training programs.

Summary

This project resulted in the development of leaders who do not avoid conflict but rather embrace conflict as a tool to move forward and acquire spiritual maturity. They were equipped to navigate a myriad of conflicts that were transformed into opportunities for forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope for the future.

The church’s primary focus is discipleship and evangelism. Although the church sponsors leadership training throughout the year, there was little time, money, or energy to research conflict transformation leadership training. This project informed leaders how to transform conflict into sustained peace, and it was added to the existing training plan while allowing the church to continue on its primary mission. This project taught leaders how to transform conflict into sustainable peace and ultimately released them to demonstrate intentional spiritual pursuit of God’s purpose in their own lives and to be strongly committed to ministering to people. Developing these areas was intentional and it was not assumed that because they were leaders that they already were mature in these critical areas.
CHAPTER IV
MINISTRY PROJECT

Introduction

The ministry project seeks to research conflict transformation to determine its viability to educate leaders in the church to transform conflict. Additionally, the project seeks to develop a training module that includes the primary tenets of contract transformation. The project involved the design, implementation, and evaluation of a conflict transformation training module (Appendix C). Conflict transformation is a relatively new concept that attempts to change conflict into forgiveness, reconciliation, and sustainable peace. The process changes the attitudes of those involved in conflict from a negative perspective of inflicting or receiving pain to a positive perspective of developing relationships with one another and with God.

The researcher followed the process of “Search for Common Ground, Institutional Learning Team,” for analysis of the project, which included designing, evaluating, and monitoring conflict transformation training. The design, evaluating, and monitoring included peace-building practices that required collaboration with stakeholders.

People With Whom the Researcher Worked

The project design called for a detailed discussion between the researcher and the stakeholders to determine the most important ministry need of the church. In conjunction with the pastor of the church, the researcher selected an advisory group, which identified
the primary need. The advisory group consisted of six members of the church: an ordained pastor, a leader in the youth department, the superintendent of Disciples Ministry (Sunday school), a discipleship teacher (Sunday school teacher), a trustee of the church, a member with a PHD in counseling, and a retired civil servant. Participants of the advisory group also held positions in their respective workplaces: CEO of a company, PHD recipient, organization director, supervisor in a major corporation, retired educator, and retired military worker in the office of Homeland Security. The researcher believed that persons with these qualifications were skilled in lateral thinking, deferring judgment, and assessing ideas.

**What Did the Researcher Do?**

The theological reflections, previously described in the Project Background of Chapter II, included identifying the ministry need, the realities that brought about the ministry issue, and the ideas on how to change the realities into positive outcomes. During an all-day theological reflection session, the advisory group identified the church’s primary need, which was mandatory conflict transformation training for all leaders in the church. The advisory group arrived at the identification of the need using the decision-making process and theological reflection based on the model and method of James and Evelyn Whitehead and their book, *Method in Ministry*. The researcher proceeded to take the necessary steps to commence the training that the advisory group identified as the greatest ministry need.

First, the researcher sent emails to all of the participants of the advisory group, explaining the project in terms of its goals and objectives, requesting their assistance and participation in the project, and seeking their commitment. In addition to the introduction
to the project, the initial correspondence explained the time commitment that would be expected of each person in this project, along with the specific details of the project (Appendix B).

The first session included presenting the agenda and discussing the ground rules and the process to be followed during the session. Subsequently, the group discussed in detail the city of College Park, GA, as the larger parish area of the church, the immediate neighborhood or local community surrounding the church, located on Hawthorne Ave., in College Park, GA, and the church community itself. The purpose of this discussion was to provide a complete description of the ministry context to include an in-depth advisory group perspective on the scene of proposed action. A concise assessment of the need in the practice of the church ministry’s context included a careful analysis and review of area demographics (local and larger area).

During the second session, the advisory group identified the three most pressing needs of the church from each of their perspectives. This breakdown of the most pressing need of the church as identified by the advisory group follows:

1) The conflicts between leaders in the church must cease. The group identified causes of the conflicts between church leaders as evidence of a lack of ability to forgive and reconcile relationships, lack of intentional spiritual pursuit of God’s purpose in their own lives and the lives of others, and lack of ministering and serving people according to standards of the Word of God. It was the consensus of the advisory group that these areas of concern be addressed and corrected if the church were expected to sustain current members and draw new members into a relationship with God. Subsequently, the group recommended mandatory training
for all church leaders in specific areas (details are incorporated into the
"Background" of this dissertation).

2) The second most pressing need was the development and sustainment of viable
ministries. It was consensus of the advisory group that excellence in ministry was
critical to sustain current members and draw new members into the family of God
at this church who could be instrumental in developing and sustaining viable
ministries.

3) The third most pressing need identified by the advisory group was financial
stability for the church. Lack of funds could negatively impact the church’s ability
to keep abreast of its financial responsibilities, provide the kinds of ministries for
the church and the community, and provide assistance to those in need both in the
church and the community.

At the conclusion of the theological reflection sessions, the consensus of the
advisory group was to focus on training leadership to address the above areas in lieu of
focusing on developing and sustaining viable ministries or focusing on stable finances.
The consensus of the group was that people are drawn to churches that exhibit excellence
in ministries and, under most circumstances, excellence in ministries usually draws
people which, in turn, draws financial stability. The group also observed that if the
behavior among the leaders in the church was not arrested, systemic conflict would not
only be a distraction for new members, but it would tear at the very core of the current
membership. In most churches, unresolved conflict is one of the primary reasons for
fights and ultimately why people leave. More importantly, the enemy uses systemic
conflict in an attempt to destroy relationships among the people of God which, in turn, attempts to destroy their relationships with God.

Second, the researcher reviewed best practices for resolving conflict and determined conflict transformation to be the best method to train leaders in the church. Conflict transformation is the method that seeks to analyze conflict to determine the root cause of the conflict. It does not seek to end conflict, but rather to transform conflict into sustainable peace. In terms of the content, the researcher scoured the market for trainers and training institutes to develop a sense of what types of agencies offered training and the basic components of a conflict transformation workshop. She analyzed and reviewed a myriad of topics to include in the training module. Conflict analysis played a predominant role in the training, since conflict transformation explicitly addresses root causes. Numerous training materials have been published (see Appendices for the list used in this training). In order to develop knowledge and skills to strengthen capacity in conflict transformation in the church, the researcher developed a training module, “Conflict Transformation in the Church.” The training module is designed to train leaders in the church to seek to transform conflict into sustainable peace.

The researcher analyzed training material from Marlin Thomas, Donald Palmer, Floyd Elders, and Tom Porter as resources to develop the tenets of conflict transformation and to incorporate the tenets into the training module. The tenets of conflict transformation are discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs and, also included, are descriptions of the nature and role of conflict, changing one’s attitude about conflict, discussing the causes of conflict, conducting conflict analysis, and forgiveness and reconciliation. The workshop design encompassed timing, choice of participants, and
location of the training workshop. The researcher developed the following modules and incorporated them into the training.

**Conflict Transformation Training Workshops (CTTW)**

**Modules 1 and 2: Introduction to the Training**

Modules 1 and 2 were introductory modules to the training that consisted of identifying the purpose of the training, objectives, and expectations. The participants attending the training discussed the specifics of the advisory group, particularly how and why the group was organized, along with its role in the conflict transformation process.

**Modules 3 and 4: The Nature and Role of Conflict: Changing One’s Attitude About Conflict**

Carl Dudley, Theresa Zingery, and David Breeden, co-authors of the booklet “Congregational Conflict” as part of the series “Insights Into:” from the Faith Communities Today website, speak of the nature of conflict as a common characteristic of congregations in every denomination. It is their view that rather than being hidden in the hushed tones of parking lot planning and telephone gossip, if conflict is recognized as inevitable—and potentially even healthy—it can become an opportunity for focus, affirmation, and renewal. Conflict expresses the human side of congregational life—that real people are different and see the world differently. Conflict also reflects the religious challenge of voluntary communities of faith that are trying to understand, articulate, and live by their highest beliefs and ideals.

In her argument that the church tends to view conflict as an abysmal failure, an embarrassment that should be hidden, Sarah Savage infers that one must change one’s

---

attitude about conflict. Lederach agrees that to transform conflict, one must change the attitude toward conflict from a negative to a positive perspective. The reality, says Savage, is that relationships with one another and God are developed or matured only through conflict. If someone accepted these two arguments, that conflict is inevitable and develops or matures both the relationship with one another and God, then changing the attitude about conflict in the church should not be a daunting undertaking. Humankind was created for the purpose of being in relationships with others but, more importantly, to be in relationship with God.

Module 5: Causes of Conflict

The article “Hope through Reconciliation” by Ted Kober espouses that conflict in the church can be caused by misunderstandings, differences in opinion or purpose, and competition over limited resources.\(^{58}\) James 4:1-3, however, identifies another cause:

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Sinful desires that lead to sinful words and actions cause conflict. Even when sin is not the initiating cause, it does not take long before two people react to their differences with sinful responses. The consequences can be severe: relationships are broken, careers suffer, and the witness of the church is weakened. Unresolved conflicts as pointed out in the theological reflections exacerbated the need for this project.

The article “Congregational Conflict” by David Cox purports some of the root causes of conflict among church members is the presumption that all members and

leaders in the church are saved, but they are not. Further, when some realize that certain leaders and members are not saved, they choose to avoid the issue. Other members and leaders may be immature, either not called for the service for which they are appointed or not ready to answer the call for which they are appointed, and leaders not held accountable for the actions that cause conflict.

Dudley, Zingery, and Breeden’s article, “Insights Into Congregational Conflict” cite statistics from 2000 that show disagreements appearing in significantly different aspects of congregational life. Money, its use and abuse (42%), was a close second to the most frequently reported area of conflict, which was agreeing upon and enforcing accepted norms of behavior among members (44%). The style of worship, designed to bring members together in the unity of faith, was an area of conflict for more than two of every five congregations (41%), while the organizational questions of leadership style (40%) and decision making (39%) appeared almost equally troubling.

In conclusion, the causes of conflict in the church stem as much from the individual leaders and members of the congregation as they do from the organization of the church body as a whole. It is important for a church to recognize the need to determine the root causes of conflict. If only symptoms of conflict are treated, the deep-rooted causes will worsen, just like an infection in a body, until a greater schism occurs. This requires honest and sober assessment or analysis of the conflicts to determine the root causes.

Module 6: Conflict Analysis

Conflict analysis is a comprehensive look at all aspects of a particular conflict. The purpose of conducting an analysis of conflict is to discover the parties involved in the conflict, where the conflict is centered, what parties have strong positive relationships with each other, and how they interact with each other. These findings determine how one should respond to the conflict, determine what motivates one to continue the conflict, and help identify the issues in the conflict. Additionally, conflict analysis is undertaken because without it forgiveness and reconciliation in not possible. The analysis supplies a detailed picture of what transpired which, in turn, helps to determine what may be done to create more peace. After the conflict analysis is complete, the focus turns to those activities that transform the conflict.

Module 7: Conflict Transformation

The conflict transformation process is a spiritual process and a prescriptive concept. It suggests that, left alone, conflict can have destructive consequences. Conflict can be modified, however, so that self-images, relationships, and ministries are improved by focusing on a constructive force that builds upon forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness and reconciliation produce social change, progressively removing or at least reducing the conditions from which the conflict has risen. This is accomplished by humble confrontation using biblical principles.

Module 8: Confrontation

It stands to reason that since conflict transformation is a spiritual process, believers should use spiritual principles to engage in the transformation process.
Matthew 18:15-17, NLT, states:

If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.

Confrontation is defined as a spiritual process by which a believer goes alone to another believer to point out an offense. Confrontation takes place when a believer has been sinned against. Every sin should not be confronted, because 1 Pet. 4:8 reads famously that “love covers over a multitude of sin,” which Prov. 10:12 supports. This means believers are not to be thinned skinned, and it would be wrong to bring up every matter every time someone has been treated unjustly or insensitively. Believers have but to remember how many times they offended a sister or brother; as well, mature Christians should be less sensitive and not easily hurt. Other Scriptures that support covering sins with love are keeping God’s unity and peace as much as possible (Eph. 4), overlooking offenses (Prov. 19:11), dropping the matter (Prov. 17:14), covering a sin with love (1 Pet. 4:8), bearing with one another (Eph. 4:2), and not taking another Christian to court (1 Cor. 6), just to name a few.

An offense is best confronted when the sin is serious enough to cool off or rupture the relationship, when the purpose is to rescue the relationship, when the correction is a way of “carrying each other’s burdens (Gal. 6:2), when the sin is part of a pattern of behavior, and if someone is caught in a sin (Gal. 6:1). Failure to confront is not love, but rather a desire to be loved; it is cowardly and selfish, putting one’s needs before others. When confronting others, the gospel calls believers to keep an equal concern to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15) and honor what is right, pursuing justice gently and humbly, in
order to redress wrongs and yet maintain or restore the relationship (Gal. 6:1-5); as well, to be endlessly forgiving (seventy times seven), and to never give up on the goal of reconciliation.

Module 9: Forgiveness

Forgiveness happens when God pardons humanity’s sins and when they, in turn, pardon one another. As believers, the shared relationship with God is restored. The Bible states that when someone is sinned against, they are under an obligation to God to forgive the offender. Jesus is clear on this point, as Matt. 6:14-15, NIV, reads, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” Additionally, forgiveness is refusing to employ innuendo, “spin,” hint, gossip, or direct slander. Forgiveness is also refusing to indulge in ill-will, demonizing the offender, rooting for them to fail, hoping for them to be hurt in some way. Some people forget that there are those who are incapable of unconditional love. Even when criticism is valid, believers are reminded they have failed in some way.

In summary, forgiveness is about God. It is not about individuals doing what they want to do. It is about obedience to God and pursuing the will of God.

Module 10: Reconciliation

The conflict transformation meaning of the term, however, goes even deeper than the above statement. It can be argued that reconciliation, at its core, is about restoring the right relationship between people who have been enemies. God created humans to be in right relationship with Him. They cannot be in right relationship with God unless they are
in right relationship with each other. It is noteworthy to reiterate that God, who reconciled humanity to himself through Christ, gave believers the ministry of reconciliation.

How to Reconcile

Matthew 5 and 18 offer two different approaches to reconciliation: Matt. 5 lays out what to do when one believes they have wronged someone else, while Matt. 18 is what to do when one believes someone has wronged them. It is also possible, however, to also look at these passages as providing two stages of the normal reconciliation process, because seldom does just one party bear all the blame for a frayed relationship. Almost always, reconciliation involves both repenting and forgiving—both admitting one’s own wrong and pointing out the wrong of the other. Putting these two approaches together, one can create a practical outline such as follows:

Recap of Reconciliation: Use all the spiritual resources available in one’s faith and during the journey through repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

- Look at God’s commands to forgive—it is the believer’s obligation.
- Remember God’s forgiveness. None have the right to be bitter.
- Remember that God’s omniscience is necessary to be a just judge. Humans have insufficient knowledge to know what others deserve.
- Remember that when evil is allowed to maintain bondage through bitterness, believers are being defeated, but Rom.12 advises them to overcome or defeat evil with forgiveness.
- Remember that believers undermine the glory of the gospel in the world’s eyes when they fail to forgive.

In summary, disciple-making ministers and leaders who are called to “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all patience and instruction” (2 Tim. 4:2) must not shy away from
their calling. As leaders may they teach future disciples to truly love one another by means of merciful forbearance always, gentle confrontation when necessary, additional confrontation with the help of others when needed, and forgiveness whenever it is requested. How much better this is than false forgiveness that brings no true healing to broken relationships.

The Conflict Transformation Workshop was held in November 2011 at the church of this ministry setting. The training period was from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The purpose of the workshop follows:

1) Help participants identify and understand conflict better.
2) Help participants view conflict as an opportunity to grow.
3) Help participants understand the importance of forgiveness/reconciliation in the conflict.

The objectives of the workshop were the same as mentioned earlier. The researcher followed the training module as previously discussed and as incorporated into Appendix A. The researcher combined prescriptive and elicit methods of instruction to facilitate the training. The prescriptive method assumed the researcher had the expert knowledge that was transferred to the participants via lecture, discussion, examples, and personal experiences. The elicit method facilitated a joint process of finding the most appropriate response to given situations that were raised by participants while sharing personal experiences.

Evaluation

The idea of the training titled “Conflict Transformation in the Church" originated in 2008 with the intent to develop a viable methodology of how to resolve conflict in the
The researcher developed a training manual to assist church leaders in learning to transform conflict into sustainable peace. The project was completed in November 2011.

This evaluation reviews the achievements of the overall objective of the training, the findings of the internal and external evaluations that took place during and after the training workshop, individual interviews of some of the participants, and the impact of the training. The overall training goal was to examine and change the attitudes of leaders viewing conflict from a negative perspective; i.e., avoid and end conflict quickly, to an attitude of viewing conflict from a positive perspective; i.e., conflict is a healthy, spiritual process that brings people closer to God and each other and sustains peace. The researcher achieved the goal of changing attitudes of participants. However, due to time constraints, the facilitator did not present all of the information prepared in the presentation. It was later determined that the slides that were not addressed during the workshop should either be scaled down to a feasible dimension, or be incorporated into either a follow-up one-day training or a future, two-day workshop.

The facilitator elected to invite an external evaluator, who had been recently exposed to the training, to be objective and unbiased, while the internal evaluators had insight into the project from its inception. The purpose of this summative evaluation is to assess the project’s success in reaching the stated goals. In addition, there will be several remarks on the impact of change on participants as well as on technical aspects of logistics and organization of the training. The evaluation of the training was judged on whether the training adequately responded to the research questions, met the goals of achievement, efficiency and impact, analyzing pre and post surveys, and personal post-training interviews.
The evidence that the conflict transformation training adequately addressed the research questions and sub-questions are based on the writers' personal random interviews with fifteen of forty-five attendees. Every interviewee expressed that they were: better equipped with conflict sensitive eyes and ears, sensitized for conflict causes and dynamics in the church and their ministries, and strengthened in their skills for dealing with conflict and the sensitivity for consequences of avoiding conflict. The research questions and sub-questions follow; however, the responses are incorporated in Chapter V.

1) To what extent is conflict transformation effective in training church leaders to engage in conflict with the outcome of forgiveness and peace? 2) How does one train leaders to transform conflict into reconciliation, forgiveness, and sustainable peace? The sub-questions are: Why do people fight? How do people fight? What are the tactics that keep those fights going? What are the main causes of church breakups? What are the main causes of relationship breakups? What can be done to solve and prevent these conflicts?

During the beginning of the training, the researcher recorded and itemized the workshop participants' list of their expectations of the training workshop. At the conclusion of the training workshop, the participants confirmed that all of their expectations had been met. The writer was amazed that the list of expectations was exactly the same as the objectives for the training. The training objectives follow:

1) Understand the nature and role of conflict

2) View conflict as an opportunity to grow

3) Understand the causes of conflict
4) Understand the importance of conflict analysis

5) Learn the role of forgiveness in the transformation process

6) Go through the process of reconciliation

Internal and external evaluators were assigned to evaluate the training. Both internal evaluators were members of the advisory group that identified the ministry needs. The external evaluator was the researcher’s D.Min. advisor. Each evaluator was given an instrument with questions to assist them in evaluating the training in terms of the setting of the training, training materials, skills and abilities of the training facilitator, and efficiency and impact of the training. According to the assessment of internal and external evaluators, the researcher exceeded the standards just described.

At the beginning and conclusion of the training workshop, all participants were asked to complete a pre and post conflict transformation questionnaire consisting of twenty-four questions. The questionnaire was designed to help identify one’s preferred style of conflict transformation. Each participant was asked to respond to the questions by circling what they thought best described their preferred style for handling differences of conflicts between themselves and others. The pre and post questions were the same, with the intent was to observe whether the style changed as a result of the training.

Final Results

The evaluation generally defined and judged the success of the training and activity in terms of goal achievement, efficiency, and impact (looking at both intended and unintended consequences), which issues have been of growing concern in the field of
conflict transformation. Both internal evaluation by the researcher/facilitator and external evaluation (i.e. an independent evaluator or evaluation team) were practiced. All forms of evaluation relied on interviews with, or written feedback by trainees who had participated in training events and implemented training concepts.

Feedback was used to obtain answers to the following:

1) Was the training successful?
2) To what extent did the training meet the overall goals?
3) Which components were most effective?
4) Which components are in need of improvement?
5) Can the training be sustained?
6) Is the training replicable and transferable?

The evaluation was based on face-to-face and telephone interviews as well as an analysis of written responses on participatory observations during the training workshop. It was possible to get valuable insights in the training that were used for pointed questions in the face-to-face and telephone interviews. The results of the evaluation will be used to improve future conflict transformation training processes and manuals. The feedback and questionnaires were held at the end of the training event.

Supervision and individual coaching consisted of individuals comprised of a network of peers and an advisor’s reflection guided by a questionnaire (Appendix G). They each were given a Training Observation Instrument to record notes. The instrument was divided into two parts: Part I referred to the exercise itself and the facilitator, and

---

Part II provided a summary analysis of the training rated on a scale from one to five, with one equating to strongly agree. These instruments provided qualified and helpful material to reflect on what occurred in the training context, the facilitator’s effect on the training, and how the training affected the facilitator.

Part I required evaluators to take notes throughout the exercise to document what they saw and heard from the participant and the facilitator. The questions and their responses follow:

1) The facilitator set-up the exercise adequately
2) There was lively interaction during the exercise
3) The participants engaged in the exercise
4) The facilitator monitored the exercise in an exemplary manner
5) Clear learning objectives were reached during the exercise
6) The facilitator did an excellent job in debriefing effectively
7) It appeared that participants learned or improved upon an important skill

Part II was a summary analysis based on the notes taken during the exercise. The evaluators rated the exercise on a scale from one to five, with one annotated as “strongly agree.” The evaluators rated the facilitator with ones and twos (strongly agree and agree) in each of the following areas:

1) The training learning objectives were met
2) The answers the facilitator gave to participants’ questions were clear
3) The facilitator provided illustrative examples
4) The training was well facilitated
5) The training allowed participants to practice practical skills related to important concepts
6) The training was an effective way for individuals to learn important information

7) Participants were actively engaged in the exercise

8) The training overall was effective

9) It was the consensus of the participants and the evaluators that the facilitator contributed greatly to participants' learning in this training

10) The evaluators documented some areas that could improve the process of training in the future:
   a. Add interactive activities that require participants to stand or move around
   b. Minimize or categorize expectations
   c. Assign a recorder specifically to annotate expectations
   d. Incorporate role playing or provide examples through which participants could actually work

11) The training contributed to helping participants practice skills related to course concepts in the following ways:
   a. Great expectations realized of the concepts with instructions on how to put into practice the information provided
   b. Various points of view generated excellent dialogue that was instrumental in identifying skills needed to help participants practice needed new skills
   c. The training offered a better perception of “self” awareness as a leader
   d. The training offered a different perception, i.e., more insight into total transformation of ministry leaders

Part III involved feedback from participants of the training:

1) Female Associate Pastor of this church:
   a. The facilitator and one of the female assistant pastors experienced a horrific breakdown in their relationship for a period more than four years. The facilitator was the newest preacher in the church and a turf war began. The resulting key factors such as being defensive and critical, withdrawn, and expressing anger and contempt were ascertained to be the prime issues in the relational breakdown, including a root of pride, personal agendas
being detrimental to the church, or biblical precepts being broken by an adherence to sin.

b. Conflict occurred around ego issues, thinly masked in the guise of purpose, which caused destructive conflict. This person appeared to thrive on it. It led to character assassination and the facilitator’s integrity questioned. The conflict was visible in the pulpit and in the church as a hold. This person applied emotional pressure for followers to support her position. Loyalty demanded that followers give in to the pressure and take sides. The facilitator requested a number of one-on-one conversations to find a course that served the church and the organization that the facilitator led and in which the associate pastor was a valuable contributor.

c. The training transformed this relationship almost immediately. During the first break, the associate pastor approached the researcher, embraced her, and expressed how happy she was that she had attended the training. The Holy Spirit revealed to her to trust God in the conflict and, since the training, she and the facilitator share an amicable relationship.

2) Male Associate Pastor of this church:

a. Left unaddressed, conflict will poison the atmosphere well beyond just the staff most directly involved. Differences between staff are a major source of friction between individuals. They can hamper performance and create needless stress.

b. Working toward transforming conflict should be a number one priority for the church. When conflict arises, the response is usually to ignore it and hope it will go away or to meet it head-on with an ultimatum. Neither of these approaches results in successful, long-term outcomes.

c. When differences cause conflict, they need to be acknowledged, addressed, and resolved in a way that works for both parties.

3) Leader of Usher Ministry:

a. This training was orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. The leader observed lively interaction between facilitator and participants and among participants themselves. The participants raised questions, discussed personal concerns, and displayed openness and willingness to discuss personal experiences and conflict. He acknowledged that this is what this church needs.

b. Training material and discussions provided excellent food for thought.
4) One of the deacons, one of the oldest members of the congregation and the oldest at the training, commented that they might make the training available to all church members. The fact that the training focused on Christian behavior was impressive because Christians have to stay prayed up and ready in the Word of God to face challenges of opposition or conflict.

5) A member of the Benevolence Ministry expressed sincere appreciation for the insight that she applied at the workplace where she supervises five employees. One of the employees exhibited a negative attitude but, instead of reprimanding her, she took the time to have a conversation with her, expressed her concern for the employee, and discovered this person was experiencing a difficult situation. After the conversation, the employee expressed her gratitude and appreciation that the supervisor showed compassion and cared enough about her as a person to inquire about her wellbeing.

6) An Elder in the church expressed his deepest gratitude for the training. He was enlightened is many areas. Most of all, he reported, the training responded greatly to the needs of this church. He was excited about learning to recognize conflict and the importance of confronting early, as opposed to waiting and allowing ill feelings and stress build up, which almost always results in negative expression of feelings. The training also taught hands-on skills to assist in confronting conflict.

Feedback, monitoring, and evaluation enhanced creative learning as well as furthering the development and evolution of the conflict transformation training format. Supervision and coaching further improved individual support of the facilitator and the need to reflect upon the entire process.

Follow-up and long-term support will be absolutely necessary to improve the sustainability and impact of the training interventions. One-off events rarely have long-term impact, whereas a well-thought training process can hope to have such an effect. Hence, Beatrix Austin’s strategic embedding of training is absolutely necessary: training workshops that are not part of a broader vision at best remain inconsequential; at worst, they can discredit the whole enterprise of nonviolent conflict transformation.61

The issue of transferring concepts from seminar contexts to real-life situations, and the challenge of ensuring transfer from individual learning and change to social learning and change, are among the most pressing issues in training for conflict transformation, according to Sprenger.\textsuperscript{62} To date, the evaluation of conflict transformation trainings in the church formed the final activity for this project in which the training participants and the facilitator engaged.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, followed by a discussion of the study’s results as related to the statement of the problem, purpose of the research, and the research questions. Based on the analysis of data from Chapter IV, specific conclusions are presented. Limitations of the research are then discussed, followed by recommendations for future research.

What Was Accomplished

Previous studies of conflict tend to focus on conflict resolution or conflict management, and underutilize the concept of conflict transformation. Conflict resolution usually involves a third party who serves as a mediator and is an arrangement of the parties in conflict to agree to disagree on a specific issue. When another issue is raised between the same parties, however, normally a new conflict arises on the new issue. Peace is not sustained between the parties because the root causes of the issues embedded in the conflict are never addressed. Still, conflict management is a popular approach to conflict. Also, conflict management usually involves a third party. This method often assumes conflicts are long-term processes that cannot be quickly resolved. It suggests people can be directed or controlled as though they were physical objects. Again, sustainable peace is not attainable for lack of identifying the source of the conflict.

105
Secondary resources derived from various publications, including books and journals as presented in the literature, were integrated to support the findings.

This project contributes to the body of scholarly knowledge by providing findings that specifically outline the key tenets of conflict transformation from the viewpoint of a church context. In order to investigate the nature of these key tenants, the study proposed two research questions and one hypothesis. The research questions were: 1) To what extent is conflict transformation effective in training church leaders to engage in conflict with the outcome being forgiveness and peace? 2) How does anyone train leaders to transform conflict into reconciliation, forgiveness, and sustainable peace? The study’s hypothesis, the belief that educated interactions between individuals belonging to the church, coupled with religious peace traditions such as reconciliation and forgiveness, reduces interpersonal and intergroup conflict. The findings of the study validate both the research questions and the hypothesis.

This project was undertaken to design, develop, facilitate, and evaluate a conflict transformation training module for the purpose of training leaders in the church on how to respond to conflict from a positive perspective, when and if it arises, with a focus on sustainable peace. It is now possible to define conflict from a spiritual perspective and identify scholars in the field of study of conflict transformation. Further, the study contrasted the popular methods of ending conflict and developed a conflict transformation process, suitable for the church, to understand the theology of conflict transformation and to develop a training module tailored specifically for the church.
Lessons Learned

Conflict Transformation

It is important to emphasize that the study mainly derived its findings from the literature review and other scholarly, successful, conflict transformation training modules. Within this context, the primary data served the purpose of testing these tenets in the sense of exploring their validity from the viewpoint of conflict transformation in the church context. The researcher found that the tenets of conflict transformation training are valid and, through their application, the tenets required adaptation to the training context.

The research found that conflict transformation is a credible method for resolving conflict in the church. The research argues that conflict transformation endeavors to seek to change the conditions that give rise to the underlying root causes of the conflict. Addressing the root causes allows for understanding of the views of the parties and changes in perspectives and attitudes, and it leads to the development of a closer relationship with God and one another. Based on verbal feedback received from participants, most of them felt the training definitely brought about a significant change in their attitude and perspective regarding conflict. Most expressed gaining insight regarding viewing conflict from a negative to a positive perspective that can be instrumental in sustaining and repairing relationships with each other and with God. Participants recognized the need to change their behavior in conflict and sought advice on conflicts in which they were already involved. Most acknowledged that in most conflicts the barrier to reconciliation is a tremendous, overwhelming focus on self instead of focusing on the other person or, more importantly, focusing on God.
The feedback received from participants, both during and after the training process, revealed other changes that were apparent in the participants. Some of the participants changed their perceptions of conflicts in which they were already engaged and recognized the need to apply the principles although, admittedly, applying the principles would be difficult. For few individuals, however, there were profound changes, e.g., friendships developed during the training between people who had been in conflict with each other for years. A participant in the training did not initially desire to attend the training because of systemic conflict with the researcher, but she later expressed gratitude for coming because the Holy Spirit revealed the need to trust God in the conflict. This person was liberated and set free, reconciled the conflicted relationship, and peace remains in that relationship until this day. Another participant expressed, after the training, the application of the principles of conflict transformation on the job with a difficult person under his/her supervision. The supervisor specifically used the lessons learned from the training to seek to arrive at the root of the conflict. The supervised person expressed great gratitude to the supervisor for taking the time to uncover the root of the problem, which was not the supervisor. The conflict was resolved and the parties have maintained a good relationship until this day.

The research also aimed to develop a training module to facilitate church leaders in transforming conflict into sustainable peace. The researcher developed a training module for conflict transformation using the tenets of conflict transformation derived from leading scholarly sources in this field. The tenets incorporated into the training module were the nature and role of conflict, changing attitudes, causes of conflict, conflict analysis, conflict transformation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Other leading
scholars recommended incorporating blocks of instruction on topics such as effective communication, the negotiation process, system failures and how to correct them, and conflict type indicators. The study found that generally these topics are addressed in training in the workplace and it was assumed that most professional people as represented in this training had already successfully completed training in these areas. The researcher determined the subject matter previously discussed might be more suitable for an advanced conflict transformation workshop.

To monitor the training, the researcher opted to conduct external and internal evaluations by designated evaluators. Further, participants completed pre and post training questionnaires to identify the conflict style of each individual prior to the training. The intent of the pre and post questionnaires was to measure changes in conflict style after the training. The researcher used the external and internal evaluations and post interviews as the basis for analysis of the training. Based on the analysis of the training, every participant expressed a significant need for the training and that they were better equipped afterwards with conflict-sensitive eyes and ears. Additionally, they had been sensitized for conflict causes and dynamics in the church and their ministries, and the training strengthened their skills for dealing with conflict and the sensitivity for consequences of avoiding conflict.

Leaders and Conflict Transformation

A leader that provides a clear picture of the losses that may result from the conflict transformation process demonstrates leadership integrity. The Bible supports the principle of engaging people with the truth. Through honest dialogue, discussions will focus on the issues, not the personalities. This gives opponents an opportunity to change
their mind while still maintaining a positive relationship with their rivals, thus averting personality conflicts. Sound leaders operate on the principle of telling the truth in love.

Effective leadership learns how to push people beyond their comfort zones while minimizing the destructive potential of conflict and using the energy generated by the distress to move people forward through the change. For example, as the leader of the Christian Education Ministry, after prayer and supplication, the researcher reassigned three Sunday school teachers to different classes and subjects. The teachers taught their respective subjects for a period of years and wanted to remain in their respective classes. When the researcher recommended changing them, however, two teachers agreed, with reservations, but one teacher disagreed. The two teachers who agreed, albeit with reservations, have since expressed how, in retrospect, they can see how God used them in the new class and how they and the students benefited from the change. The third teacher reassigned, apparently, has not yet seen God in the move.

Honest discussion can produce conflict when individuals feel criticized. Leaders must learn to distinguish productive conflict from personal attack, politically motivated challenges, or destructive fighting. Leaders must be able to challenge the views, opinions, and even the values of others on the leadership team. They must anticipate potential issues as a congregation moves through the change process.

The researcher learned that the leaders in the church systemically avoided conflict and used conflict management as a model to control the conflict, keeping the conflicted parties apart. This method does not transform the conflict but rather prolongs it.
During times of conflict, individuals and groups become discouraged. A leader reminds them of what the future will look like once the transformation is complete. The process requires work. When the change process begins, leaders must remain calm, recognizing that tensions will rise and move the congregation forward, and they must maintain their integrity throughout the process. Pressure during this time can be intense and church leaders might doubt their capabilities and the direction they are taking the congregation. Under these circumstances, leaders should stand their ground and persevere through the challenge of conflict transformation. Leaders must learn to accept criticism and personal attacks, while remaining calm and in control. The researcher has learned to persevere. She has learned to take the heat and receive people’s anger in a way that does not undermine the initiative, which is one of the toughest tasks of anyone in leadership.

Conflict transformation requires a paradigm shift. It requires that church leaders learn how to recognize opportunities to use conflict in a positive manner. It demands that church leaders work together as a team, supporting and encouraging each other, and helping one another persevere through the trials of conflict transformation. Additionally, it involves challenging each other’s opinions and views in order to come to a clear vision of the future for the congregations. Leadership is about learning. Addressing conflict during complex situations of change requires leaders be prepared to learn and adapt to new situations.

It is the researcher’s desire that the concepts and principles presented in this dissertation will equip leaders to pursue opportunities to introduce needed changes in the church. Such a pursuit requires an honest assessment of the ministry and a clear recognition of where to challenge the congregation. She urges leaders to present a new
vision, knowing that resistance will ensue. Through applying the approach presented in
this dissertation, however, leaders can work in conjunction with the congregation,
navigating the rough waters of change—learning together, growing together, and
maturing together. This is the process of transforming conflict through conflict
transformation.

What The Researcher Learned

Individual and Community Theological Method

The process of conflict transformation is appropriate for both individuals and the
community, and Matthew 18 is the basis for the theological method for both. Conflict
transformation for the individual pursues changing attitudes, understanding conflict,
acknowledging the root causes, and a commitment to change. Treatment of the root cause
is paramount for effective transformation. Transformation for the individual leads to
conflict transformation in the community.

The conflict transformation process is also essential for the community. It not
only teaches leaders in the church how to transform conflict among each other, but also
these same principles can educate leaders on how to transform conflict within their
respective ministries and the church as a whole. The practice of conflict transformation in
the community addresses systemic oppression by power groups in the church and loss of
voice that might be caused by fear of upsetting the status quo. The principles and the
process are the same for both the individual and the community.

The principles and the process of conflict transformation, as previously discussed
in Chapter III, are established and supported in Matthew 18, which states in part, "if a
member in the church sins against you, confront the Christian brother/sister individually."
If the conflict is not resolved, take a witness for a face-to-face confrontation. If the member still refuses to listen, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one become as a Gentile and a tax collector (18:17). The object is to restore the sinner to the faith and practice of the church. The primary goal of the discipline is not public embarrassment but the recruitment of the entire fellowship to help in God’s pursuit of going after the lost sheep or one of the little ones (18:12-14). As discussed previously, the purpose is to restore the relationship and peace within the individual, ministry, and the church. Reconciled relationships bring the community closer to each other and to God.

Personal Lessons Learned

The researcher learned that some people might feel that the conflict transformation approach is too arrogant and/or self-righteous. First, arrogance and self-righteousness have no place in conflict transformation. Love for one’s neighbor and God are the foundations of conflict transformation. As described in Matthew 18, conflict transformation is preceded by prayer, while invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit, and speaking the truth in love—all of which are necessary actions to ensure that there is not a hint of arrogance or self-righteousness.

Effective communication, which encourages constructive responses to conflict, is important when dealing with conflict. It includes timing of the conversation, the environment in relation to communication, body language, facial expressions, and voice tone, which are important but were not included in this study.

In one of the previous chapters, the researcher discussed in detail her quest to trust God in every area of her life, especially in the areas of pain caused by unresolved
conflict. She can attest that this journey through conflict transformation was God’s way of teaching her to trust him. She learned to trust him to do his work in her through the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Lederach reiterates that reconciliation of all things is God’s major work, while the church’s mission is to align itself with what God is already doing. The researcher learned that she needed to realign herself with what God wanted her to do in relationships, which was seeking to repair, develop, and sustain them. All this is embodied in God’s Son, who enables believers to see, hear, and interact with His reconciling love made present (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

What Might Have Been Done Differently

There are four limitations of this research. There was not enough time to complete the entire training module. The participants were intricately involved in the discussions, confessed past and present conflict, expressed the need for more conflict transformation training, and owned the exercises. Still, the researcher felt the participants needed additional time to express themselves. While the limitation is addressed in recommendations for future research, the findings supported the conclusion that the training was not disadvantaged in any way. The researcher later reflected upon the beauty in the discussion and how the Holy Spirit was present and orchestrated every aspect.

The study focused on a two-day training workshop. The actual time allotted, however, was a seven-hour workshop. The researcher did not have ample time to tailor the training module to the specified time. Fortunately, the point where the training concluded was the perfect place to end. Again, while the limitation was addressed in the recommendations for future research, the findings supported the conclusion that the training was not disadvantaged in any way. The researcher later reflected that the training
presented during the workshop should be revisited as a one-day training workshop and the remainder of the training as the second day of a two-day training workshop.

The third limitation was that the pre and post questionnaires were extremely limited. The validity and accuracy of the results obtained from these surveys were questionable considering applicants could easily sway their scores by annotating what they believed were the best answers instead of selecting the answers that best described them.

Another limitation of the training was the difficulty in measuring the success of changing the culture with only one training session. In the future, the researcher plans to obtain approval from the pastor to pursue successive training in conflict transformation. It is hoped that all current leaders will be required to successfully complete the training and that new leaders will complete the training either before or immediately after their appointment. The successive training of the current leaders and all of the new leaders to change their view of conflict will provide the greatest opportunity to ensure that the church has a cadre of leaders equipped to transform conflict.

Implications of the Study

This study indicates that a major issue facing the church today is a lack of understanding of conflict, which causes the church in many instances to engage in conflict or avoid conflict but not transform conflict. Conflict is a part of human nature and unavoidable. The church’s challenges are to change their attitudes, confront conflict openly and honestly as a Christian community, and learn to view conflict as opportunity for spiritual growth. In so doing, they strengthen their bond as a people of God.
When conflict is present, a particularly important implication of conflict transformation is for parties to seek to understand the root cause of the conflict. This requires self-denial of the pain experienced by the one who was offended and focus on the relationship of the one who committed the offense—and on both relationships with God. When persons delve into the root causes of conflicts, they may discover the problem is not with the conflicted parties, but rather with an event or memory that triggered the offense. They should be compelled to inquire by the hope of helping a sister or brother come to terms with the root cause of the conflict. When someone realizes that someone else loves them enough to get to the root of the conflict, the response in most instances is overwhelming love in return.

Conflict transformation builds relationships of respect, cooperation, consent, and constructive means and norms for dealing with conflict. It also addresses power imbalances and injustice. Oppression might be considered a hidden or latent conflict, e.g., waiting to happen or to be brought into the open. Some groups in the church organize themselves in order to increase their power and confront their opponents, but this is an act within the framework of domination. The dominated group is in a position to act cooperatively with each other and with those who support them. Conflict transformation maintains that the dominated group need not seek domination over their opponents. Within the model of conflict transformation, they will seek to increase their power in relation to those who oppose them through the cooperative processes of conflict transformation.

---

Conflict transformation invites conflicted parties to be proactive and pursue peace. It is not enough to react to the threat of conflict; persons must be proactive in their efforts to change those conditions that contribute to conflict. The most effective conflict transformation will come when conflicted persons envision what will make for peace in the future and pursue it now.

It is important that leaders view conflict transformation as a divine calling and not simply a strategy, as Jesus calls believers to pursue what makes for peace. Leaders must also be conscience of the context of the umbrella phrase, “Jesus calls us,” because used out of context it can become a dangerous theme for a church. A large percentage of misguided zealots in the history of the church probably thought they were responding to the call of Jesus! The contemporary world seems filled with people like Osama bin Laden who allegedly heard a divine call to violence. This is a caution to use the words “Jesus calls us” carefully and to be clear about why efforts to pursue peace are consistent with the gospel.

It is also important to recognize that all believers have a responsibility, as the church, to be peacemakers. The theme is not, “Jesus calls them to pursue what makes for peace,” as if peacemaking were the responsibility only of special ministries or groups in the church. The theme also is not, “Jesus calls me to pursue what makes for peace.” No, Jesus calls one and all. Each one stands responsible before the Lord, but it is not a calling that any can undertake alone.

Theological reflection on conflict is vital for the church, lest she confuse her prejudices with Christ’s call. But such reflection means little without a commitment to act. Jesus calls the church to pursue what makes for peace; this is an invitation to action.
Conflict transformation is far too great a task for any one person, church, or even for the churches of any one nation. It demands ecumenical collaboration among global partners. If the image of the body of Christ means anything, then the struggle for forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing of racial issues, oppression of women, and abuse of children in the church and in other parts of the world is the common struggle. The call of Jesus to pursue peace includes the voices of colleagues from other parts of the global church.

In summary, some essential implications of conflict transformation that lead to sustained peace convictions in the church are: 1) Take the initiative to love and bless those who do wrong, 2) be ready to suffer rather than to retaliate against conflict, 3) trust God for one's life, protection, and security, and 4) pursue alternatives to violence.

Recommendations

There are five recommendations for future study. The first of these is that the current training module, consisting of either a one-day training workshop covering the topics completed during the current and the remaining training material, should be included in a two-day training workshop.

The second is that in future training workshops, the facilitator of the training should make a concerted effort to keep the discussion to a minimum without jeopardizing the integrity of expressed opinions and experiences that may benefit the group.

Third, facilitators make strong attempts to improve the process and implement changes to ensure valid information is extracted from pre and post questionnaires.

Fourth, the researcher would change the one-day workshop to focus on changing the attitudes of the leaders of the church. Changing one's attitude is one of the most
important tenets of conflict transformation and, for the participants, it was the most
dynamic lesson learned in the training workshop. Even today, participants approach the
researcher to discuss how merely changing their attitudes had a profound effect on their
current and past conflicts, both in the church and in the workplace.

Fifth, as previously discussed in Chapter II, Holy Baptist Church has great
potential to partner with organizations in the community to provide a full range of
charitable, educational, religious, and community development activities throughout the
area. The researcher recommends surveying the community to determine the needs and
then address the needs, using the gifts, talents, and skills of the church's resources. Use of
the conflict transformation model can be used to project as much as possible potential for
conflict. Additional training may be required to educate leaders to be prepared for
potential conflict.

The sixth and most important recommend is to hold training workshops at least
two or three times per year as a means to that ensure leaders keep abreast and improve
their conflict transformation skills, so that this process becomes a natural phenomenon at
this church.

It is hoped that the above six recommendations, which were significant lessons
learned during the project, will continue to improve upon the process of facilitating
conflict transformation training for this and other churches.

Conclusion

This church is experiencing a contemporary crisis. Leaders in the church openly
engage in negative conflict with one another. Negative conflict displays how one feels
rather than the fact of the issue. When people feel conflicted, they can begin to shut
down, argue, and stop working together. Addressing the issue in the early stages is imperative because, if ignored, conflict can have a significant negative impact on the church. Educating leaders in the church about the different forms of conflict and how to address conflict effectively to impact negative behavior is paramount.

This dissertation investigated methods of treatment of conflict and methods of training leaders in the church to address conflict. Chapter I described the characteristic of the church as an instrument of peace and presented issues that might contradict the characteristic. The researcher identified conflict transformation as the best method to address conflict in the church, as opposed to conflict resolution or conflict management. Conflict transformation investigates the root causes of conflict and, according to Lederach, presents opportunities to find ways to respond to and resolve conflict, which include forgiveness and reconciliation. There was also a detailed explanation of how this project came into being.

Chapter II assessed the ministry context and ministry issue. The ministry context helped one to see the entire life of the church, and the ministry issue described negative conflict and explained in detail how it had become a relevant issue in this church.

Chapter III undertook the conceptual framework of conflict transformation, which seeks to expose and deal with the root causes of conflict interaction between conflicted parties. The theories of conflict transformation, the need for training, and the rewards of the issues are prevalent. Empirical literature provides a definition of conflict transformation and supports the researchers’ decision to use conflict transformation as the best method to educate the leaders in the church regarding how to transform conflict.
Empirical literature also revealed the tenets of conflict transformation that were used as a conceptual framework for this dissertation.

Theological literature provided insight into the theology of conflict transformation, as purported by the theologies of practitioners in the field such as Tom Porter, love, John Lederach’s and others, reconciliation, David Augusburger, forgiveness, and Kenneth Newburger, hope. Over all is the biblical perspective, which encompasses all of the above theologies. The researchers expounded upon an exegesis of settling disputes in the church from Matthew 18, which lays out the specific steps to take in transforming conflict.

Chapter IV describes the “Design of the Study,” the research model that guided the project. The researcher spelled out the plan of action that led the leaders through the training module that changed their attitudes about conflict. Chapter IV further made clear the results of the evaluation of the training workshop.

Chapter V summarized the findings, including a discussion of study’s results as related to the statement of the problem. This chapter further included specific conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for the future.

Conflict transformation is an extraordinary instrument for facilitating sustained peace during conflict. It goes beyond solving problems and journeys into developing and/or sustaining relations with God and others. The leaders in attendance of the conflict transformation training continued to provide the researcher positive feedback for weeks after the training. Some expressed that they were viewing conflict through a new, positive lens, while others shared success stories of how they had applied the principles of contract transformation in the workplace. The strategy for the future is to take the training
to as many churches as possible to teach their leaders how to transform conflict into sustainable peace.
EPILOGUE

The Writer's Passion for Conflict Transformation

I arrived at this church in May 2007 to fill the position of facilitator of the Christian Education Ministry. Almost immediately after my arrival, I was faced with or involved in one conflict after another. The conflicts disturbed me because it appeared that church conflicts were becoming a way of life. I reflected over my past experiences in the church, previously discussed in Chapter I, and became almost depressed, withdrawn, and isolated because I felt something was terribly wrong with me. I commenced to pray and ask God to give me wisdom and understanding about conflicts. I continued to reflect on past conflict, conducting self-examinations, searching for an answer. The reflections, however, seemed to make me relive the pain of the conflict, and I sank deeper into isolation. Over time, God began to reveal to me the purpose of my personal conflicts.

I became very attentive to my Pastor’s teaching in Bible study and each worship service. For example, he taught on forgiveness, dropping little nuggets of reflection that caught my attention, such as “trials come to make you strong,” “we trust God with parts of our lives, but there are other parts of our lives that we don’t trust God to handle.” He also taught a series on prayer that enlightened me in many different areas of my life. I was compelled to pray and ask God to teach me to trust him with everything in my life. It appeared, however, that the more I prayed about learning to trust God, the more conflict I faced. After a while, I cannot even tell you when, I started confronting personal conflict.
I continued on this journey and entered the Doctor of Ministry program. One of the first assignments was to go to my ministry setting and have them describe the three most important needs of a ministry or the church—which became the focus of my D.Min. project. In conjunction with the pastor, I selected members of the church to participate in the decision-making process, previously discussed in Chapter II, and they presented the most important need of the church, which was to find a way to cease and desist open arguments in the church between leaders. I presented this need in class as a topic to discuss, as was the custom, and my fellow students chastised me severely for even thinking about airing the church’s “dirty laundry” in a dissertation. I struggled for an extended period to find the appropriate positive words to describe the negative ministry issue.

God led me through researching various topics, such as why people in the church fight, how and why churches break down, what is a Christian leader, and dealing with conflict in the church, just to name a few. I researched the processes of conflict resolution and conflict management, which I knew from personal experiences that these processes were inadequate. I came across conflict transformation and, not knowing anything about it, somehow I knew that this was the topic of my dissertation. Since that moment, the passion for this topic grew day by day.

My passion was further ignited when, in January 2011, I took advantage of an opportunity to visit the indigenous people of Chiapas, Mexico, in an effort to examine conflict transformation in the context of the indigenous people. According to the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America (BPFNA), conflict has shaped cultural differences and those differences have contributed to violence and tension. The cultural differences
caused a disparity in accessing adequate resources, impoverished conditions, racial
discrimination, displacement of the structure of the indigenous communities, and other
factors that have led to marginalization of the indigenous people and the farmers in
Chiapas, Mexico.

I attended The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), held during
the period of May 17-25, 2011, in Kingston, Jamaica, to celebrate the achievements of
the Decade to Overcome Violence that began in 2001. At the same time, the participants
of the convocation encouraged individuals and churches to renew their commitments to
nonviolence, peace, and justice. The convocation stressed that the attending Christians
and churches were entrusted with the ministry of peace and reconciliation. This ministry
calls for ecumenical engagement by the churches in light of interpersonal, economic,
environmental, military, and other forms of violence in society, in families and even in
the church. During the 2001-2010 Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), awareness
grew, churches got involved, creative actions were taken, and resources were shared.

Further, I was both troubled and inspired by the passion and conflict in Chiapas
Mexico and at the Just Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica. I became eager to try to
understand the dynamics of conflict and peace, which I later formulated into a theory that
conflict transformation is applicable to address personal and community conflicts in my
church.

I am passionate because I want to make a direct contribution in ways that make a
better church and ultimately a better world. My main methodology for helping people
work together on common goals is a participatory process—getting people to own the
content of their conflicts and commit to finding proactive solutions. One mistake people
often make in addressing differences is that they don’t diagnose carefully enough; they just jump into the conflict. As a result, they don’t really engage the conflict and give it the time that it deserves in order to gain insight from it. This is not necessarily a resolution, but it offers insight into how to develop, maintain, or sustain relationships with one another and with God. I hope to contribute to peace by means of forgiveness, reconciliation, and sustainable peace.
APPENDIX A

TRAINING PLAN IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The Nature and Role of Conflict

Objective: To study the essential areas of conflict, i.e., define conflict and violence, distinguish between conflict and violence, and identify what is positive about conflict.

Goal for this section is to understand the nature and role of conflict


2) To understand conflict is not only unavoidable, but it is actually normal and even helpful.

3) To realize what will determine when conflict will be helpful, and when it will destroy.

4) To understand the types of conflict.

5) Pride, ambition, and lack of humility are major players in conflict.

6) Analyze conflicts they have experienced.

7) Assess the process for areas of improvement.

8) Turn conflict away from the destructive and toward the constructive.

Conflict in the New Testament

Objective: Discover the attitudes and behaviors essential to life in the Church.

Goals for this section is to understand conflict in the New Testament

2) To understand the significance of developing the fruit of the Spirit.

3) To formulate some framework for understanding the nature of the Church, especially in times of conflict.

4) To develop a base for understanding how to deal with some of the tensions in the Church today.

5) To understand the obstacles that might prevent or hinder “Speaking the truth in love.”

**Understanding Congregational Conflict**

Objective: Church leaders to view conflict biblically as an opportunity for growth in the life of the church rather than as something to fear or avoid.

Goals for this section is to understand congregational conflict

1) Scripture: 1 Cor. 10:1-30.

2) View conflict as an opportunity for redemptive transformation of congregational attitudes toward church conflict, while developing vision and excitement toward future ministry possibilities.

3) Leaders will gain a more objective and comprehensive understanding of congregational needs and deficits, with a view toward renewed church health and growth.

4) Joy in seeing the open window of opportunity that conflict provides for churches that allow God to redeem their circumstances for good.

**Understanding the Causes of Conflict**

Objectives: To understand the causes of conflict and its relation to an effect on the Church and the world.

Goals for this section are to understand the causes of conflict:

1) Scripture memory: Gen. 26:12-31; Prov. 29:22; James 4:1-3.

2) To understand what causes conflict in the Church.
3) To understand that God is the peacemaker, and he desires to help people settle their differences, just as he did with Isaac and many others in the scriptures.

4) To understand that destructive anger must be addressed because it is one of the main causes for starting fights with one another.

5) To understand why believers have conflicts.

6) To understand what it means “for each part to do its work” (Eph. 4:16).

Understanding Biblical Confrontation

Objective: To understand biblical confrontation and its relation to transforming conflict.

Goal for this section: Understand the importance of confronting conflict.

1) Scripture memory: Matt. 18:15; Eph. 4:15; Gal. 6:1.

2) To understand the importance of speaking the truth in love.

3) To understand what is right or wrong according the standards of God.

4) To understand when to confront.

Understanding Forgiveness

Objective: To understand forgiveness and its relationship to transforming conflict.

Goal for this section: Understanding forgiveness a tool to transform conflict.

1) Scripture Memory: Matt. 6:14-15; Col. 3:13; Rom. 12:19.

2) To understand the meaning of forgiveness and recognize its metaphors.

3) To understand why one should forgive.

4) To understand God’s role in forgiveness.

5) To understand the worth of oneself and others.
Understanding the Ministry of Reconciliation

Objective: To understand the ministry of reconciliation and its relationship to transforming conflict.

Goal for this section: Understanding reconciliation is a tool to transform conflict.


2) To understand how to reconcile.

3) To understand the importance of prayer.

4) To understand the meaning of repentance.
Hello,

My name is Julie Grace. I live in Jonesboro, GA., attend Providence Baptist Church, College Park, and am the Minister of Christian Education for Providence. I am presently enrolled at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Ga. in pursuit of a Doctor of Ministry (D-Min). The Doctor of Ministry program is an attempt to achieve a new integrity in the relationships of theological thought, secular wisdom, and the practice of ministry. The church and other institutions of ministry in modern society need leaders who care deeply for the whole of contemporary human existence. Such leaders must possess a theologically-grounded personal identity, and valid grasp of the contemporary world, and a relevant array of professional skills.

This correspondence invites you to help me complete my first D-Min assignment. The purpose of my first D.Min assignment is to engage in theological reflection in ministry in order to illumine or shape pastoral response on a specific issue or need at Providence or the community. Theological (God – based on facts, clear rational thought) reflection (image, thought) is a discipline that puts our experience into conversation with the heritage (something that passes from one generation to another) of the Christian Tradition (custom or belief).

To engage in theological reflection, you are asked to identify a need or issue of the church or community using a specific model and method to engage in a well-rounded decision-making process. The model of theological reflection provides an image of the elements that are involved. The elements are three sources of information that are relevant to the decision making in contemporary ministry: Christian tradition (biblical and theological), experience (personal and communal), and cultural (knowledge, values, beliefs, and attitudes) resources. The method includes three basic steps to make a good decision:

1) Attend to or listen to those aspects of our tradition, experience, and culture

2) Assert what is important and less so in all three

3) Decide what action to take
“Faithful and effective pastoral activity depends on the ability of Christians to recognize and use the religious insights available in these resources.”

To begin this process, please reflect on the following questions that are specific to you either as a member of Providence or the community:

1) What are the assets of our community (spiritual, economic, political, social, traditional, historical, etc.)?

2) What are the assets of our ministry setting/Providence Baptist Church?

3) What are the community’s needs (spiritual, economic, political, social, traditional, future?)

4) What are the two or three most pressing needs or issues in our ministry setting/Providence Baptist Church?

Email the needs or issues specific the community or Providence Baptist Church to the presenter not later than Aug 3, 2009 to jag1greg2@yahoo.com.

Out of the two or three most pressing needs or issues in our ministry setting/church or community, the group made up of Providence members and community representatives will identify one specific community or ministry setting need or issue for theological reflection. The process follows:

**Step One:** Presenter – Describe all of the assets submitted via email (5 minutes).

**Step Two:** Presenter – Clarify questions (5 minutes).

**Step Three:** Presenter – Articulate the decision to be made (narrow down to one community or ministry setting need or issue by determining what is important and less in the areas of tradition, experience, and culture (5 minutes).

**Step Four:** Group - Reflect on that one particular need or ministry issue, while considering the following:

*Your own personal and communal experience (convictions, feelings, ideas, and biases)*: This involves sharing a personal statement or story about a particular experience. Share how the particular issue for theological reflection connects with their own ministries/community along with feelings or images/symbols that the reflection raises in them (20 minutes).

*Religious Tradition*: Beliefs and convictions imbedded in Scripture, denominational history, theological statements and pastoral guidelines. This involves dialogue with the original experience and reflection and allow for the mutual critique and illumination (20 minutes).
Culture: Attitudes, values, and biases that constitute social milieu setting/environment. This involves trying to clarify why we do what we do, and analyze critically our own experiences. Group interaction at this stage will be aimed at assisting one another in becoming more focused about the shared stories, particularly by helping to uncover the values, beliefs, assumptions, and themes that lie behind the stories (20 minutes).

Step Five: Group - Pool our professional perspectives and wisdom. Group members dialog with each other about ways in which the resources of tradition, culture, and personal experience might be brought to bear on the theological reflection. Determine what we must do (30 minutes).

Step Six: Presenter and Group Members share what they learned (10 minutes).

Step Seven: Conclude with evaluation of the theological reflection group process (5 minutes).

NOTE: This entire process will not take more than two hours. We emphasize not every participant has to share in every stage of the process in each of the reflections. The suggested time estimates are just that — estimates.
APPENDIX C

PRE and POST CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire was designed to help you identify your preferred style of conflict transformation.

Below are 25 simple questions. Respond to each question by "clicking" on the answer that you think best describes your preferred style for handling differences or conflicts between yourself and others. There are no right or better answers. Each style is good in its own way. When you have finished answering the questions, "click" on the SUBMIT button at the bottom of the page to receive an analysis of your approach to managing conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Definitely true</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Tends to be true</th>
<th>Tends not to be true</th>
<th>Not true</th>
<th>Definitely not true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need to attain excellent results and cannot be limited by others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am always willing to listen to other's opinions, but I also want to give them mine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I often make slight modifications in my goals to meet other people's needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If people don't respect my opinion, I keep it to myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When someone else thinks they have a good idea I cooperate and help them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When conflicts arise, I usually stand on my principles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am always willing to consider other people's opinions, but I make my own decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a conflict arises, I am usually willing to adjust my priorities to reach a resolution.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

133
9. When a conflict occurs, I tend to back out of the situation and do something else.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

10. I don’t like to rock the boat, so I cooperate with others and accept instructions easily.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

11. When pursuing my priorities, I am usually firm and not swayed by others.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

12. During conflict, I immediately work to get everyone’s concerns out in the open.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

13. During a conflict, I try to find some compromise.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

14. Differences of opinion are not always worth worrying about, so I usually avoid them.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

15. I like to ask others for their opinions and try to find ways to cooperate.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

16. Once I have taken a position, I don’t like to have others try to talk me out of it.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

17. When there is a conflict, I make a point of presenting my view, and I invite others to do the same.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

18. When viewpoints are opposed, I generally propose a middle ground.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

19. I try to avoid people who have strong opinions.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

20. I think it is more important to get along than to win an argument.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true

21. After I have made a decision, I defend it strongly.  
   Definitely true   True   Tends to be true   Tends not to be true   Not true   Definitely not true
22. I am a decision maker, but I make a point of listening to others to find the best solution possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely true</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Tends to be true</th>
<th>Tends not to be true</th>
<th>Not true</th>
<th>Definitely not true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. I like to meet other people halfway.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely true</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Tends to be true</th>
<th>Tends not to be true</th>
<th>Not true</th>
<th>Definitely not true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24. I often keep to myself, because most things are not worth arguing about.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely true</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Tends to be true</th>
<th>Tends not to be true</th>
<th>Not true</th>
<th>Definitely not true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. I try to adjust my priorities to accommodate other people's needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitely true</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Tends to be true</th>
<th>Tends not to be true</th>
<th>Not true</th>
<th>Definitely not true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


