CONFLICT RESOLUTION PATHWAY FOR LOCAL CHURCH TEAMS

It's normal when working on a team for there to be situations that may cause conflict from time to time. How we respond to these conflicts can have a positive or negative result.

Biblical Principle for Conflict

"If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. 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." Matthew 18: 15-17 (NLT)

If you find yourself in conflict, ask yourself, "Is the conflict reasonable?"
If you feel it is, ask yourself, "Can I forgive the person who my conflict is with and move on?"
If not, it's time to begin the 3 Step process (see below)

Helpful information

It is important that you talk *with* the person who your conflict is with, not *about* them.
If someone comes to you to share their conflict with somebody else and they haven't followed the process, please don't continue to talk with them about their conflict. Encourage them to start the resolution process in a Godly manner.

When meeting together, it is helpful to send an email which summarises what was discussed at the meeting. It is important to ensure that all people present have input into this summary, so all can agree to what was discussed and what are the agreed outcomes.

It's important to note that if your conflict is with Senior Leadership that you follow the same process.

3 STEP PROCESS TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

Step 1 - Go to the person
Take this step as soon as possible whilst the conflict is "little and light" rather than waiting until it is "large and heavy". This may be the hardest step, but it is the most important step.

Try to approach the conversation with an attitude of understanding placing greater importance on gaining information and insight rather than accusation. It's important that if someone brings up a conflict with you that you receive their approach in the same way.

As the scripture says, you'll most probably win a friend and you can both move on from your concern. Either party may feel the need to have additional "one on one" meetings.

Step 2 - Go with someone

If after your previous meetings you still have conflict, this where you ask someone to go with you to see the person again. The person you have the conflict with are welcome to have someone join them as well. It's important that this step not necessarily be seen as an escalation of the conflict as there are many reasons that this second step is taken. It could be because you didn't feel you shared all of your thoughts or you may have misunderstood certain aspects of previous meetings.

When asking someone to join you, please seek out a person who is spiritually mature and trustworthy.

Step 3 - Go to Church Leadership

If after previous meetings you still feel your conflict is not resolved, this is where you take your conflict to your Team or Location Pastor, or Senior Leadership.

At this stage a meeting will be convened with all the relevant parties and a pathway to resolution will be implemented.

Team unity is important. Following this process of conflict resolution will ensure that the Local Church remains a harmonious and faith filled joyful place to serve.

Additional Information
Workplace Resolution Skills

1. Best practices:

We desire to establish a workplace where we can flourish in our God-given calling. We encourage individuals to maximise their potential by adopting a personal best practice work ethic. This includes skills such as time-management, accountability, working to agreed deadlines, and fostering a supportive team spirit.

A healthy culture also has zero tolerance towards unhealthy work practices such as: bullying, micromanagement, disempowerment, wrong use of power and authority, white anting, preferential treatment, control issues, manipulation, and the like.

We also have a clear conflict resolution process to follow if best practices are not being adopted. In the case of any unhealthy work practices we acknowledge that it may not always be reasonable as a first step to confront the person thought to be responsible for such.

2. Listening:

People don't always feel heard. We encourage active listening in the workplace. Active listening involves more than just hearing someone speak. When you practice active listening, you are fully concentrating on what is being said. You give your full attention to the person speaking.

Some features of active listening include:
• being neutral and non-judgmental
• being patient (periods of silence are not "filled")
• verbal and nonverbal feedback to show signs of listening (e.g., smiling, eye contact, leaning in, mirroring)
• asking questions
• reflecting back what is said
• asking for clarification
• summarizing

In this way, active listening is the opposite of passive hearing or being dismissive. Active listening adds value to the individual as they feel heard and listening well fosters trust. Listening well forms the foundation for effective communication.

3. Apologising:

Some situations may require honest confession and apology. Confession is the foundation for change. Confession is being willing to acknowledge that we have acted in a certain way and that those actions have had a negative impact upon another person. Confession doesn't 'get us off the hook'; it is the beginning point of personal awareness that we need to change with the help of God's grace and others. Confession must be full, we need to own our points of failure. The language of apology is very important and can't be glossed over as we seek to establish best practices in the workplace.

4. Becoming pro-active:

There is a case for acting first when we are aware of relational issues with others. We discourage the mindset that 'it's their problem' and encourage the taking of first steps towards solving issues with humility and openness.

5. Conflict behaviours:

Three commonly recognised behaviours are we either adopt a fight, flight, or flow approach to conflict. When we take a 'fight' approach we will express our feelings, needs, and ideas at the expense of others. Our behaviour will be aggressive, and the most likely outcome is an I win / You lose, scenario. The basic belief behind this approach is – 'you don't matter'. The problem with this approach is it will create alienation from others and feelings of frustration and bitterness.

When we take a 'flight' approach we fail to give expression to our feelings, needs, and ideas at our own expense. Our behaviour will be passive, and the most likely outcome is an I lose / You win scenario. The basic belief behind this approach is – 'I don't matter'. The problem with this approach is that needs are not met, anger builds up and feelings of low self-worth ensue.

When we take a 'flow' approach we will express our feelings, needs, and ideas in ways that don't violate the legitimate needs of others. Our behaviour will be assertive, and the most likely outcome is an I Win / You Win scenario. The basic belief behind this approach is – '*we both matter*'.

The benefits to this approach is that it will generally result in outcomes that both parties can agree to even if both parties 'give a little' to achieve that. It will also improve self-confidence and encourage open and honest relationships.

The 'Win – Win' approach is best achieved when we:
• Treat the other person with respect (you matter).
• Listen until you experience the other side (you matter).
• State your views, needs, and feelings (I matter).

Commitment

I am committed to team unity and agree to follow the steps outlined above:

Signature: ……………………………………………………………. Date: ………………………………….