



Metropolitan Community Church of Knoxville

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation Policy *(Based on Matthew 18)*

Last modified: 3/2008

Matthew 18 according to “The Message”

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Whoever Becomes Simple Again

1 At about the same time, the disciples came to Jesus asking, "Who gets the highest rank in God's kingdom?"

2-5 For an answer Jesus called over a child, whom he stood in the middle of the room, and said, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom. What's more, when you receive the childlike on my account, it's the same as receiving me. **6-7** "But if you give them a hard time, bullying or taking advantage of their simple trust, you'll soon wish you hadn't. You'd be better off dropped in the middle of the lake with a millstone around your neck. Doom to the world for giving these God-believing children a hard time! Hard times are inevitable, but you don't have to make it worse—and it's doomsday to you if you do.

8-9 "If your hand or your foot gets in the way of God, chop it off and throw it away. You're better off maimed or lame and alive than the proud owners of two hands and two feet, godless in a furnace of eternal fire. And if your eye distracts you from God, pull it out and throw it away. You're better off one-eyed and alive than exercising your twenty-twenty vision from inside the fire of hell.

10 "Watch that you don't treat a single one of these childlike believers arrogantly. You realize, don't you, that their personal angels are constantly in touch with my Father in heaven?"

Work It Out Between You

12-14 "Look at it this way. If someone has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders off, doesn't he leave the ninety-nine and go after the one? And if he finds it, doesn't he make far more over it than over the ninety-nine who stay put? Your Father in heaven feels the same way. He doesn't want to lose even one of these simple believers.

15-17 "If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love.

18-20 "Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this. When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there."

A Story About Forgiveness

21 At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?"

22 Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times seven."

23-25 "The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn't pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market."

26-27 "The poor wretch threw himself at the king's feet and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt."

28 "The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, 'Pay up. Now!'"

29-31 "The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, 'Give me a chance and I'll pay it all back.' But he wouldn't do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, they were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king."

32-35 "The king summoned the man and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn't you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?' The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt. And that's exactly what my Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn't forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy."

Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation
Policy of Metropolitan Community Church of Knoxville
(Based on Matthew 18)

PREAMBLE

At MCC Knoxville, the quality and strength of our interpersonal relationships are vitally important to our ministry being effective. As in all human relationships, however, conflict will occur from time to time. Conflict itself is not negative. It is natural. Conflict can be either beneficial or harmful, depending on how it is addressed and handled.

Conflict can be beneficial when it is used to make necessary changes, to produce gains, and to foster unity and understanding.

Conflict can be harmful when it is not dealt with directly, fairly and prayerfully; or when it escalates to threats, name-calling, expansion from one issue to multiple issues, and movement away from specific complaints to general complaints.

The Pastor, Assistant Pastor, Administrative Council, Deacons and all church staff and members are to be committed to handling conflict in a mature, loving, and constructive manner and should mutually agree that the good of the congregation is paramount.

POLICY

MCC Knoxville believes that conflict can best be resolved by the parties involved meeting promptly to identify and discuss the conflict with each other, without outside intervention or assistance. MCCCK also believes, however, that unresolved conflict between individuals becomes conflict within the church as a whole, causing disruption and divisiveness, and thereby interfering with the Church's ability to fulfill its mission effectively. Therefore the following process will be followed by the Church:

1. It is understood that the parties involved in conflict within the Church are responsible for meeting with one another first to discuss the conflict. This discussion should be respectful and should be a move toward understanding...not necessarily agreement. The parties involved should meet together without outside interference or assistance. The conflict should not be a topic of discussion for any parties other than those involved.
2. If the parties involved are not able to reach resolution, after meeting independently without outside interference or assistance, they may contact either a member of the Pastoral Staff and/or a member of the Administrative Council. After being informed of the conflict from one or more of the parties involved, or

when a member of the Pastoral staff or Administrative Council deems it necessary, the member of the Pastoral staff or Administrative Council member will:

- a. Contact the parties involved to encourage them to meet again with each other in a reasonable amount of time and diligently pursue resolution without outside intervention. Contact must be by telephone or face-to-face. Email communication is not acceptable. *(Note: A “reasonable amount of time” shall be defined as approximately thirty days or less, barring any unforeseen circumstances which would make this timeframe impossible.)*
 - b. Notify one other member of the Pastoral Staff or Administrative Council member.
3. If the conflict has not been resolved by the parties involved after their second meeting in a reasonable amount of time, the member of the Pastoral Staff and the Administrative Council member(s) aware of the conflict will schedule a meeting with all parties involved. *(Note: A “reasonable amount of time” shall be defined as approximately thirty days or less, barring any unforeseen circumstances which would make this timeframe impossible.)*
 4. If after the member of the Pastoral Staff and the Administrative Council member(s) involved meet with the parties involved and there is still no resolution, the parties will be asked to meet with an agreeable mediator. This mediator may be a Church member, an outside consultant, or a person appointed by the Regional Elder.
 5. In support of each of the parties to the conflict, the Pastoral Staff, Administrative Council and each of the parties involved must adhere to the following guiding principles:
 - a. Affirm their relationship with God and commit to finding acceptable solutions that exemplify God’s grace and God’s will.
 - b. Demonstrate concern for the mutual benefit and support of all parties, as well as MCKK as a whole.
 - c. Be firm in each party’s interest while also being flexible on possible solutions to the conflict.
 - d. At all times, speak to each person’s self-esteem and worth as a human being.
 - e. Identify and eliminate false conflicts. Misunderstandings are not true conflicts. Analyze the interests of all the parties involved. Talk about the problem first, then the solutions.
 - f. Strive to reveal the interests of all parties involved. Remember that an individual’s interests are the focal point of the conflict.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES

Each of the parties to the conflict will:

1. Be given equal time to present the problem and interests. Each must use the word “I”, not “You”. (i.e. “This is how I feel...” not “Here is how you make me feel.”)
2. Be given a reasonable amount of time to make complete statements to illustrate their thoughts without interruption.

3. Be acknowledged that they are being heard through the use of solid and sincere eye contact. Parties should not interrupt each other when speaking.
4. Ask clarifying questions. Trying to find solutions to which all parties can agree. Ask a lot of questions, brainstorm possible answers first, pick from the best solutions afterwards.
5. Stick to the topic at hand. Do not “fog” or “cloud the issue” with unrelated issues or complaints.
6. Look for areas of agreement.
7. Refrain from escalating the discussion. If the discussion becomes escalated, the discussion will be temporarily stopped until calm can be restored.
8. Utilize mutual restating. If anyone says, “You don’t understand”, the discussion will be stopped and the person making the statement will be asked to rephrase the statement in a more positive way.
9. State all requests for change in behavioral terms. It will not be allowable to ask for an attitude change.
10. Be aware of body language. Be consistent with verbal and non-verbal messages. A person’s body language will be believed and remembered over their words.
11. Sit either on the same side of the table or in chairs at a 45 degree angle. Nothing should physically separate the parties involved.
12. Agree that everything that is said and all actions that are taken within the Council will remain strictly confidential.
13. Agree the only solutions that will work are the solutions that all parties come up with together and accept individually.

SUMMARY

Jesus tells us that in a conflict we are first to go to the brother/sister that hurt us. If we cannot reconcile, we should take the conflict to a member of the Pastoral Staff or the Administrative Council. All of this is to be done with great humility and concern for self, for the other, and for the Church. It is through our love for one another that the world comes to know the love of God.