

Church Leader Retreat on Disagreeing with Integrity

Schedule

Friday	7:00 p.m.	Introduction
	7:30	Session 1 - Confrontation
	9:00 p.m.	Worship
Saturday	8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
	8:30	Session 2 - Listening Skills
	10:00	Break
	10:30	Session 3 - Authentic Reconciliation
	12:00	Lunch
	1:00	Group Building Activity - Physical &/or Mental Challenge
	2:30	Break
	3:00	Session 4 - Fair Fighting Covenant
	4:00	Closing Worship
	5:00 p.m.	Dinner
	6:00 p.m.	Depart

Session One: Conflict and Confrontation

CONFLICT & CONFRONTATION

- I. Introduction
 - A. We live in a world of conflict
 - B. Conflict is something that happens somewhere else (not here!)
 - C. But it does happen here.

It may not show express itself in the same forms of violence that we see on the news, but we do deal with it on a daily basis – even in the church. As leaders, you have placed yourselves in prime positions to come to know just how conflict works (or doesn't work) in the church. The purpose of this retreat is to look at some of the various ways we as people in leadership at the church will be involved in conflict, how we can talk about the issues surrounding conflict, and how we want to be as a community in dealing with conflict.
- II. Our church and community
 - A. An Exercise. Brainstorm on the following questions: What do we think of when we think of "church"? How would you describe our church and/or community?(Purpose: To initiate thinking around what our spoken and

unspoken expectations are about what a church is to be, how it is to behave, and what should occur there.) Divide into groups of 4-5.

- B. Continue the exercise. Answer the question, How do we deal with conflict in our church?
- C. Read Philippians 1:27-2:11. How does this fit with what we have just described in terms of community and behavior? How does it not? What does it mean to have one spirit and one mind?
- D. Reality: Our community is made up of lots of different people with lots of different opinions. It is possible to be a Christian community of one spirit and one mind and to live in the midst of varying opinions and even disagreements. As leaders, it is our job to model a spirit of unity while also being able to speak openly and honestly.

III. Option: Enneagram or Myers-Briggs

Purpose: To better understand one's self and how one functions, as well as to underscore how each of us will bring a different viewpoint to the leadership table.

IV. Benefits of Confrontation

"Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict."
William Ellery Channing

"Life without confrontation is directionless, aimless, passive. When unchallenged, human beings tend to drift, to wander or to stagnate. Confrontation is a gift."

David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront*

- A. Fear of confrontation. What are our fears behind conflict and confrontation? Have the group name some of them. (fear of rejection, how one will be perceived, not being heard, taking a stand, etc.)

- B. Dealing with anger. Anger is often what elicits a confrontation and is often what we feel when confronted.

(see Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront*, chapter 3)

- 1. Anger stems from concealed expectations and hidden demands.
- 2. Owning anger with "I" statements:

I messages

I am angry.
I feel rejected.
I don't like the wall between us.
I don't like being blamed.
I want the freedom to say
yes or no.

You messages

You make me angry.
You're judging & rejecting me.
You're building a wall between us.
You're blaming everything on me.
You're trying to run my life.

- 3. I am responsible for my actions and reactions.

- C. Inviting change: caring first, then confronting.

A context of caring must come before confrontation.

A sense of support must be present before criticism.

An experience of empathy must precede evaluation.

*A basis of trust must be laid before one risks advising.
A floor of affirmation must undergird any assertiveness.
A gift of understanding opens the way to disagreeing.
An awareness of love sets us free to level with each other.*
(Augsburger, page 52)

1. Caring confrontation focuses on:
 - n actions, not the actor
 - n observations, not personal conclusions
 - n descriptions, not judgments
 - n quantity, not quality
 - n ideas, information, alternatives, not advice and answers
 - n “what” and “how”, not “why”

D. Results: Honesty, Challenge, Growth, Change

V. Are you a turtle, an ostrich, a shark, and owl or a fox? Conflict Management Style Inventory

Session Two: Listening Skills

"Man's inability to communicate is a result of his failure to listen effectively, skillfully, and with understanding to another person."

Carl Rogers, psychologist.

"The greatest compliment that was ever paid me was when one asked me what I thought, and attended to my answer."

Henry David Thoreau

Prayer

Bible Study: Philippians 1:27 – 2:18

Discussion of Philippians text

- What were the words or verses that stop you?
- Were there any new ideas or understandings raised in the Bible study?
- What were the parts within the text that talked about listening or hearing?
- How might your new understanding guide you in listening?

Diffusing a Personal Attack: Beyond Fight or Flight

- What happens to you when someone confronts you?
 - Physically – Emotionally – Spiritually
- The Five Secrets of Effective Communication (by David Burns)
- How might using these five secrets help during a personal attack?

Good Listening Habits

- Brainstorm – skills or habits that allow for good listening

Share a case study with the group on a minor issue familiar to them
Break in to smaller groups to practice a floated conversation
Encourage them to listen each other into talking

Session review

What did they experience in their floated conversation?
What ideas from the Bible study came to mind during your conversation?
What new ways of listening will you take away from this time together?

Prayer

An essential part of true listening is the discipline of bracketing, the temporary giving up or setting aside of one's own prejudices, frames of reference and desires so as to experience as far as possible the speaker's world from the inside, step in inside his or her shoes. This unification of speaker and listener is actually an extension and enlargement of ourselves, and new knowledge is always gained from this. Moreover, since true listening involves bracketing, a setting aside of the self, it also temporarily involves a total acceptance of the other. Sensing this acceptance, the speaker will feel less and less vulnerable and more and more inclined to open up the inner recesses of his or her mind to the listener. As this happens, speaker and listener begin to appreciate each other more and more, and the duet dance of love is begun again.

M. Scott Peck, MD, *The Road Less Traveled*

Session Three: Authentic Reconciliation

"By its very nature, hate destroys and tears down; by its very nature love creates and builds up. Love transforms with redemptive power."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the need for reconciliation.

"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation."

II Corinthians 6:17-18

Opening Prayer

Bible Study: Luke 6:27-38

This Bible study will focus on Jesus' call to love our enemies.

Prime Questions for discussion: Who are our enemies? What does Jesus' call to love our enemies have to do with conflict in the congregation?

The Necessity of Reconciliation

Why is reconciliation needed? This is the basic question of Martin Luther King Jr.'s chapter concerning loving our enemies. King gives three reasons why reconciliation is necessary. They are:

1. Returning hate only multiplies hate. Retribution is not the answer.
2. Hate scars the soul and distorts the personality.
3. Hate is primarily injurious to the person who hates. Hate corrodes the personality and eats away at unity.

King argues that for us to work reconciliation we must:

1. Develop and cultivate a capacity to forgive. Start small.
2. Recognition that the evil deeds of other people never fully express all that the other person is.

3. We must not look to humiliate or defeat our enemies. This only leads to further division.

Offender-Offended Actions

Who acts in reconciliation? David Augsburger's book *Helping People Forgive* will help provide a framework to talk about the differences between unilateral forgiveness, where the offended person is the main actor and true reconciliation, where both the offended person and the offender work together toward restoration of the relationship. Augsburger's x/y axis continuum on page 93 will be used in the discussion.

Case Studies in Small Groups

The group will break off into several small groups (about two or three people each) and discuss ministry-related conflict cases. Each group will then offer suggestions on how the people in the situation could work towards reconciliation. Members of the group will be encouraged to share stories about cases of reconciliation from their own experience.

Review and Closing Prayer

Session Four: Group Covenanting

Open with prayer.

GALATIANS 6:1-10, "bearing one another's burdens."

We need to lift each other up, and keep each other accountable. The way we are going to do that is to make a covenant.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11, specifically noting, "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave," "he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death..." "...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..." This is a time to note these things so that, in their groups, these people will have these Christ-like characteristics in mind.

(Break into 6 groups.)

Each group gets one of the following verse(s) on which to work:

- Phil. 1:27—one mind for the faith of the gospel
- 28-30—not intimidated by opponents
- Phil. 2:1-2—encouragement
- 3-4—humility
- 14-16—hold fast to the word, not labor in vain
- 17-18—be glad and rejoice

TESTIMONY

Each person will share his or her personal story (members have been forewarned that they will be giving a testimony), noting and observing how he or she handles conflict.

BRAINSTORMING

Group members will answer the question, "**How has each of the following influenced the church's success in having one mind imitating Christ?**" (Philippians 2:5-11): Personal Experiences (following testimonies), Society/Cultural Experiences, and Experiences of the Tradition.

WRITING THE COVENANT

Using the brainstorming experiences, group members will write, concisely, what Philippians (the specific verse or verses a group was given) is calling us to do/be and how to do/be that.

Next, they will think how and plan the way this small group will keep people in the large group accountable, or “bear one another’s burdens,” in their specific area.

(Back into Large Group)

COME TOGETHER

Read the covenant and discuss it. Each group will share their part of the covenant and how they decided to keep their co-leaders accountable. Close with prayer.

Mindy Zorn