

Conflict in the Church – An Opportunity for Growth Short Courses Offered by the PCI Conciliation Panel

The PCI Conciliation panel has developed four short (approximately 2 hour long) courses to help leaders deal constructively with difference, disagreement and conflict that are all natural parts of church life, which, when handled well, can actually lead to understanding and growth, but which, when handled poorly, all too often become destructive. Each course is based on key passages of Scripture that offer understanding about essential values and actions to embrace when dealing with conflict. These courses can be delivered to Elders, organization leaders, Committee Members, or to groups of Teaching Elders. They can be arranged for an individual congregation or offered as a Presbytery event for a cluster of congregations. Optimum group size is 10-20 participants. However, courses can be delivered to larger groups. A number of PCI conciliators have been trained to deliver these courses, usually on one evening or a Saturday morning.

Courses offered and a brief description of each:

Understanding Conflict and its Causes

The aim: to enhance participants' understanding of conflict and constructive ways of handling it.

Topics include:

- the nature and dynamics of conflict; common causes of conflict in the church;
- choices that help to determine whether conflict becomes constructive or destructive;
- Biblical insights for handling conflict;
- enhancing our skills for handling conflict with other individuals and in groups.

Healthy Decision-making

The aim: to enhance participants' understanding of healthy decision-making and of ways to promote and implement it in their church context.

Topics include:

- positive and negative patterns of decision-making;
- values to seek in meetings and decision-making; understanding decision-making as a process;
- drawing people in and encouraging participation;
- generating and evaluating options: moving from taking 'positions' to exploring 'interests and needs';
- reaching decisions and following through.

Managing Change Effectively

The aim: to enhance participants' understanding of managing change effectively in their church context. This course does not focus on understanding external changes and how our mission might need to respond to these. Rather it is about internal change.

Topics include:

- understanding diverse views surrounding change;
- learning from the early church's example;
- processes for exploring concerns and options; building consensus;
- the importance of reviewing changes made.

Living With Difference

The aim: to enhance participants understanding of factors which making living with difference difficult and Biblical virtues that enhance living together, even while in disagreement.

Topics include:

- living with diversity and difference;
- living together while in disagreement;
- moving from debate to dialogue.

There is also a fifth course: **Skills for Handling Conflict**, which is intended for those either interested in becoming conciliators for PCI or simply developing more skills to use in their own context.

Topics include:

- communication skills;
- using effective listening and questions;
- using a mediation process in a church context.

This will be offered on a PCI wide basis every 2-3 years and involves a commitment to 2-3 evening and two Saturdays.

For more information on courses or to make arrangements for having one delivered, contact the PCI Conciliation Service coordinator, on +44 (0)28 9041 7205