

*Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."*

*- Matthew 18: 21-22*

## BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with stories about conflict between individuals, within groups, between cultures and, yes, even between God and humanity.

Conflict can be a catalyst for renewal, health and change and serve as a mechanism for growth. At other times, however, conflict can be destructive and cause serious dissension. A clear and healthy process for working through conflict empowers a congregation to move forward in the midst of the challenges and increase faithfulness and fruitfulness.

Healthy relationships include:

- communicating honestly
- reconciling willingly, and
- sharing and receiving forgiveness.

We honor God when we work to resolve differences, offer forgiveness and reconcile differences within the congregation.

Growing our congregations beyond conflict requires intentionality, hearts for forgiveness and well-trained Staff-Parish Relations Committees (SPRC) and church leaders. We are committed to equipping leaders to lead through conflict.



**UNITED METHODISTS**  
OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA  
& GREATER NEW JERSEY

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We recruit and develop transformational leaders to make disciples of Jesus Christ and grow vital congregations to transform the world.



## RESOLVING CONFLICT

Every congregation experiences conflict as a part of normal, healthy growth and change. These periods of conflict can be difficult for individuals and congregations.

The United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania & Greater New Jersey recommend a process to move congregations to resolution and growth.

# THREE STEPS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

*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.*

*- Matthew 18:15*

## 1. COMMUNICATE

Begin with prayer for yourself and the people in conflict. Invite God to share wisdom, enable understanding and open communication that resolves differences.

If you have a concern about an action of a pastor, staff member, or parishioner, attempt to work it out directly with the person. Speak to each other face-to-face. Explain how you are affected and provide an opportunity for reconciliation. You are encouraged to start the conversation by saying – “I experienced (describe what you felt or experienced) when you (describe the action of the individual) and I would like to resolve our differences.”



## 2. COMPANIONS

If your concern is not reasonably resolved by direct communication, speak to a member of the SPRC and ask for help to resolve your concern. The SPRC may take one of several actions:

- Ask a member of the committee to mediate a conversation between the people in conflict.
- Have those with concerns meet with the full SPRC and pastor so that they may hear the concerns identified.
- Connect with an outside resource person if there does not appear to be a path forward to address the concerns. If the conflict involves the pastor, contact the superintendent first.

SPRCs are encouraged to participate in conference training on conflict resolution and to seek consultation about mediating conversations.

*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.*  
*- Matthew 18:16*



*If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.* - Matthew 18:17

## 3. COUNCIL

If you do not believe that the SPRC has adequately addressed the concern or believe that the SPRC has not acted objectively, you may ask the SPRC chairperson to contact Nicola Mulligan at the Bishop's office at **732.359.1010**, [nmulligan@gnjumc.org](mailto:nmulligan@gnjumc.org), or [nmulligan@epaumc.church](mailto:nmulligan@epaumc.church).

When the conflict arises because of an allegation of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or sexual abuse, the SPRC chairperson or the pastor should contact the district superintendent immediately (within eight hours) so that the Sexual Misconduct Policy is implemented.