

Ettalong Baptist Church

ETTALONG BAPTIST CHURCH

Appendix to the Constitution

WHEN WE HAVE DIFFERENCES

Values and Procedures For Handling Disagreements & Resolving Conflict

COVENANT OF VALUES IN CONFLICT

- ❖ I will seek to honour Jesus Christ in all I do and be Godly in my responses.
- ❖ I will show love, respect and self-control, towards others, seeking to do so in a Christ-like way.
- ❖ My attitude will be one of patience, forgiveness and humility.
- ❖ I will pray for myself as well as the people I have conflict with.
- ❖ I accept that people are different and will have differences with one another.
- ❖ I accept that conflict will be an experience of life and that conflict can be healthy and useful.
- ❖ I recognise that avoiding issues or relationships solely for the reason that there may be conflict is not healthy.
- ❖ I will seek to have conflict dealt with quickly, but not in haste.
- ❖ When dealing with conflict I recognise that I will need to change for progress to be made.
- ❖ When dealing with conflict I will focus the discussion on issues, relationships, or descriptions of feelings. I will not resort to inappropriate behaviour including, but not limited to:
 - ➡ name calling.
 - ➡ mind reading (attributing evil motives).
 - ➡ guilt making ("look how you've made me feel").
 - ➡ rejecting, disparaging, or discrediting another person (rather than the person's ideas or behaviour).
- ❖ I will listen well and not override or interrupt.
- ❖ I will work towards resolution and reconciliation, accepting differences where appropriate - recognising there are times when we may have to agree to disagree.
- ❖ I will not gossip to others and will seek to move on in God, rebuilding trust.
- ❖ I will not use threats to manipulate or influence a situation. I will follow through with appropriate actions as I state them. (e.g. If you continue ... I will ask the Elders to discuss it ..)
- ❖ I will not use information from confidential sources, nor indicate that such information exists (e.g. 'some people have said ... but I cannot tell you who they are'). Instead I will always allow a person charged with inappropriate behaviour:
 - ➡ to know who his / her accusers are.
 - ➡ to learn in detail what the accusers concerns are.
 - ➡ to respond to those accusers.
- ❖ I commit myself to honesty, openness, confession and seeking to understand as well as to be understood.
- ❖ I will seek to be positive, sensitive and to seek God's help.
- ❖ In seeking to be biblical, it may be appropriate to seek the involvement of a third party.

(Jesus prayed) May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. John 17:23 (NIV)

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BIBLE PASSAGES

Philippians 2:1-5 (NIV)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus

Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV)

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV)

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother/sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother/sister; then come and offer your gift.

Ephesians 4:3 (NIV)

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Romans 14:19 (NIV)

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

Colossians 3:13-15 (NIV)

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

1 Corinthians 1:10 (NIV)

I appeal to you, brothers/sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

Philippians 4:2 (NLT)

...because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement.

2 Timothy 2:23 (NIV)

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

Proverbs 17:14 (NIV)

Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:16-18 (NIV)

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

1 Corinthians 14:33 (NIV)

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,

James 4:1 (NIV)

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

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A PROCEDURE FOR DISCUSSING INTERPERSONAL DISAGREEMENT

Before a face-to-face meeting of persons:

- 1) Reduce my own internal conflict first. A proposed procedure is:
 - (a) Remember - who Jesus is and what he has done for me (historically, biblically)
 - (b) Reaffirm - who I am in Christ. Take time to consider that I am a child of the Lord
 - (c) Repent - of my attitudes towards the other person, of sin (things I have done - or things perhaps I am unaware I have done), the need to be right, of not allowing the Lord to live through me, etc.
 - (d) Remind - myself that I am going to meet with a fellow Christian. We have common ground in Christ.
- 2) Commit myself to Scriptural principles. See Matthew 18:15-17 and 5:23-24. Always approach the other person with humility, gentleness and respect.
- 3) Decide to be a good listener, and be willing to understand the other person's point of view and hear them out. Be honest and adhere to the *Covenant of Values in Conflict*.
- 4) Outline and prioritise the elements of the problem as I see and understand it, recognising I may have contributed to it.
- 5) Seek outside help from a mediator if for some reason I find it difficult to approach the other person.
- 6) Before anything else, prior to meeting with the other person remember confidentiality is essential.
- 7) Pray - for God's Spirit to lead, soften hearts, and to restore.

Procedure for meeting face-to-face:

- 1) Contact the other person and arrange a meeting time. Offer a brief outline of what you want to discuss so that he/she doesn't feel ambushed.
- 2) At the meeting build common ground - you are brothers / sisters in Christ, members of the same church, both desiring to live for God. You are there because you care enough about the relationship to resolve the conflict.
- 3) Be careful not to attack each other. Take turns to outline the issues. Summarise what has been said so that you are both aware of being heard. Allow each other the opportunity to clarify areas that are uncertain.
- 4) Identify the common and underlying concerns and possible solutions that are practical and workable. What does each person really desire to be achieved?

It may be helpful for each person to state:

- ➡ his / her ideal solution
 - ➡ what he / she can live with
 - ➡ what he / she can not live with
- 5) Agree on the way ahead and actions that both of you are comfortable with.
 - 6) If solutions or agreement cannot be found, ask a mutually agreed mediator to help resolve the conflict.

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What if I hear of two other persons in conflict, or someone speaks to me about someone else?

- 1) Be genuine in your concern for them and their situation, but ask them not to speak to you regarding the matter. Be supportive, friendly, and helpful, but direct. Encourage them that the only way to find resolution is to approach the other person to talk it out.
- 2) Offer to accompany one to see the other if they have difficulty in doing so. Advise them of the availability of mediators from within EBC and of external mediators.
- 3) Remind the person that they are not to talk or gossip about this. And that if they choose not to act upon any of the steps above they hurt not only themselves, but the fellowship.

What if I have a conflict with the Pastor, Elder, or other church leader?

- 1) Review and adhere to the Covenant of Values in Conflict and follow closely the Procedure for Discussing Interpersonal Disagreement.
- 2) Seek the assistance of one of the trained mediators.
- 3) Remember the actions of a church leader toward you are accountable before God and that leaders are people too, with feelings and faults just like you.
- 4) Check your heart and motives.
- 5) Pray for them.

Hebrews 13:17 (NIV)

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

1 Timothy 5:19 (NIV)

Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

(In this passage "elder" means church leader, eg pastor, elder, deacon, ministry leader).

Realise that in any conflict

- Other people will always be affected.
- Support will often be needed in the healing process.
- Conflict can be a positive thing to build stronger relationships if dealt with correctly
- Those trained in mediation are available to assist.