

Conflict in the Congregation Can be an Uniting Factor

Unites when:

- Viewed as helpful and evidence of people caring.
- Willingness to disagree and respect those they disagree with.
- Talking is “direct” to those they disagree with (not behind their backs).
- Hurting remarks are talked through and not allowed to fester.
- Valuing change without implying others as weak.
- Creating a receptive climate by acknowledging others through listening, being aware of their emotions and sharing “I” statements rather than “You” statements.
- Leaders invite disagreement, seek diverse views, and take time for understanding.
- Problem solving encourages group discussion and exploration of possible solutions.
- Anxiety is calmed with confidence and ongoing deepening of relationships.

Divides when:

- Viewed as dangerous or wrong and evidence of people not caring.
- Disagreements are feared and threaten relationships and respect.
- Talking is about others not with those they disagree with.
- Hurting remarks are tallied, remembered and remain unresolved.
- Using conflict to correct others or to seek sympathy as a victim.
- Creating a reactive climate where new ideas are quickly criticized or dismissed.
- Leaders discourage disagreements and ignore concerns to maintain harmony.
- Problem solving is “solution” focused where “right” answers are debated.
- Low tolerance for uncertainty exists, thus need for quick decisions.

*Adapted from Mennonite Conciliation Service (717-859-1151)