

Grievance Reconciliation Procedure

Parking lot meetings, gossip, whining to others, personal attacks, quiet withdrawal—church members have developed many *ineffective* methods for dealing with grievances.

The *Grievance Reconciliation Procedure*, based on Matthew 18:15-20, is a by-law developed by one congregation as a way of formalizing the way they deal with problems. It was approved by the congregation and became the only way grievances were addressed by the leadership. When a member raises a concern, they are advised on the process for addressing it. This assures that the pastor and council members are *not* dealing with second hand complaints or other indirect ways of registering complaints. Consider adopting this procedure or using it as a model for developing your own.

Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵ "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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

²⁰ For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

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As in any organization, from time to time problems or disagreements arise and need solutions. When differences arise, it is incumbent upon the members of the congregation to remember that they are called by Christ to be God's church and to show God's love and forgiveness. Jesus' directive to us is to "love one another even as I have loved you."

If differences arise, we need to follow the directives that Jesus sets forth in Matthew 18:15ff:

- First, try to settle the differences between yourselves. This may call for much prayer and love on your part.
- Second, if this cannot be done, take one or two others with you as you try again to resolve the issue.
- If none of this works, then make an appointment with the pastor and seek guidance.

- If the problem still exists after seeking the counsel and help of the pastor, then present the concern and/or difference to the congregation council either in writing or in person.
- If the council cannot resolve the issue to its satisfaction, then the council may approach the bishop of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod or his/her representative for advice or resources. (The synod's Conflict Resource Team. might also be a possibility.)

In the case of a difference or problem with the pastor:

- First, meet with the pastor to see if the concern can be resolved.
- If this does not resolve the concern, then contact the chair of the mutual ministry committee with the issue. The mutual ministry committee will work with the pastor and the concerned person or persons to seek a solution.
- If the issue cannot be resolved by the mutual ministry committee, the next step is for the concerned person or persons to present the issue to the congregational council in writing at least ten days before the monthly meeting at which it is to be considered. Those raising the concern should be given a chance to speak if they so desire.
- If the congregational council is unable to resolve the problem to its satisfaction, the council may approach the bishop or his/her representative for advice and resources.

At all times as we deal with differences, we need to seek God's guidance in prayer, asking that God's Spirit would guide us and that our actions would further God's purposes.