

## RESOURCES FOR HELPING CONGREGATIONS WORK WITH CONFLICT

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod provides a variety of resources to assist congregations in utilizing conflict constructively. This is based on the realization that—

- Conflict is an inevitable part of all human interaction.
- Conflict can be a source of energy and creativity when managed constructively.
- Knowledge and skills for working constructively with conflict can be learned.

**Congregation Council Leaders Training:** Workshops are held early each year to provide council presidents and vice-presidents with an understanding of their calls and basic leadership skills. Healthy leadership is essential to congregational health and the constructive use of conflict.

**Colleagues in Call:** Parish pastors meet in small groups to provide support and accountability. The focus is on the professional practice of the ordained minister.

**Conflict Resource Team:** Trained lay leaders and pastors are available for training, consultation, and facilitation to congregations experiencing low-level conflict. Pastors and lay leaders may contact the team for help in thinking through ways to deal with a congregational conflict. Members of the team are also available to facilitate a meeting when a neutral third party would be helpful. This is a joint project with the Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ.

**Family Life Services:** Congregations may contact this consultation and counseling arm of Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries for training in working with conflict. Family Life Services also provides free phone consultation to rostered leaders and will provide third party consultation and facilitation to congregations. Cost for these services is negotiable. The phone number is 610-682-1337

**Aggressive Community Building Group:** A clinical psychologist meets quarterly with pastors serving congregations that are recovering from prolonged conflict or situations of pastoral misconduct.

**Associates of the Bishop:** An associate of the bishop relates to each mission district of the synod. The associate for the mission district in which the congregation resides should be contacted anytime conflict is a serious concern in the life of the parish. When the conflict cannot be resolved through the use of the above resources, the associate will provide guidance as to next steps.

**Bishop's Advisory Committee:** When more informal methods of conflict management do not provide a satisfactory outcome in a conflict between the pastor and the congregation, the bishop can appoint an advisory committee to make recommendations to the pastor and the congregation. Alternatively, the bishop may appoint a consultant to assess the situation and make recommendations.