Conflict Management in the Christian Church

A Research Paper

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By:

Kay L. Peters

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

Being a Christian pastor today is more difficult than anytime in memory. This century witnessed the collapse of the Christian consensus that held American culture together for centuries. The moral relativism that accompanies a secular view of reality deeply affects the work of the church and its leadership (Fisher, 1996). Far too many good pastors are being driven out of ministry, leaving thousands of churches weak and vulnerable to spiritual attack. Without good leadership denominational factions multiply, evangelism declines, divorces proceed unrestrained, discipleship loses direction and missionaries are forgotten (Sande, 2004).

Congregational conflict, defined as a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone's goals or desires, may occur when those religious and spiritual beliefs are unaligned (Sande, 2004). This misalignment may take on a psychological dimension, since members look to the church for comfort and reassurance in a rapidly changing and threatening world (Hadden, 1970). Instead of a place of comfort and reassurance, church conflict can create a battle ground for power struggles of various factions, victimizing the congregation and sabotaging pastoral leadership and church growth. A pastor is most often forced out of ministry due to lack of success at resolving differences with other people within the church (Sande, 2004).

Conflict is not necessarily bad. The Bible, the collection of sacred writings of the Christian religion, teaches that some differences are natural and beneficial. Christians believe that God created people as unique individuals, with different opinions, convictions, desires, perspectives, and priorities. When handled properly, disagreements

in these areas can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, and promote

helpful change and growth.

       The researcher of this study believed that conflict should not be avoided or feared.

Can conflict, managed in a way that is not fear-based, result in positive growth for the

church? This research delved into understanding the factors associated with church

conflict and leadership conflict management strategies available to pastors.

Background of the Study

       A Christianity Today International exploratory study (Barfoot, Wickman, &

Winston, 1997) revealed that the most common causes for forced pastoral exits include:

- The church being in a current state of conflict when the pastor arrives;

- A lack of unity and the presence of factions in the church;

- Poor people-skills on the part of the pastor;

- Conflicting visions for the church;

- A church's resistance to change;

- Power and control struggles;

- Personality conflicts;

- Poor people skills on the part of the pastor;

- Conflict over leadership styles;

- Dissatisfaction with the pastor's performance; and

- Theological differences (Barfoot et al., p.6).

A pastor is most often forced out of ministry due to lack of success at resolving differences with other people within the church (Sande, 2004). The Christianity Today International study further revealed:

- Forty-five percent of pastors who were forced out of the church think they could have done more to avoid being forced out;

- Resolving conflict was the primary action pastors wished they had taken sooner; and

- Pastors reported conflict management as the area of training most lacking in their seminary or Bible college education (Barfoot et al., 1997, p. 11).

Conflict can be the result of a violation of shared expectations, or conflict can result from the clash of two fundamentally different sets of expectations for behavior (Becker, 1999). Previous research shows that intra-congregational conflicts arise over issues of congregational culture, leadership, and denomination (Becker, 1999; Chou, 2008); theology, purpose, and meaning (Hadden, 1970); liberalism versus conservatism (Becker, 1999; Haden, 1970); and beliefs and authority (Hoge, 1976). When any of one these factors are compromised by leadership, it plays a significant role as to why people feel their religious understandings are misaligned and conflict occurs

Each year thousands of pastors leave their churches, leading to an astronomical cost of $684 million a year (Sande, 2004). Most congregations have not been properly equipped to deal with conflict, so when a pastor who is equally unprepared in conflict management enters into such a church, the stage is set for agonizing conflict and disunity (Sande, 2004). The church cannot afford to let these losses continue. This study sought to

find a relationship between church leadership conflict management style and positive

energy growth for unity within the church.

Statement of the Problem

This research study conducted multiple assessments to determine if church leaders

understood the significance of their conflict management style on the congregation and

its members. Is it possible to seek unity without demanding uniformity and transform

conflicting situations into positive growth opportunities for the church?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine how strategies of conflict management

by leadership within the church may impact the overall health of the church. Correlations

among independent variables of conflict management, education and knowledge, the fear

associated with conflict, and the potential for positive growth outcomes were analyzed.

Research Question

Can church pastoral leaders use conflict management, not in a fear-based way, but

in a positive growth-producing way for their churches?

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study consisted of interviewing twenty Christian church leaders

from various denominations. This research approach presented three measurable

assessments. Seven open ended questions were given with the intent to compare conflict

management to the growth of their church. The Basis-A Inventory was used to provide

insight into how the church leader approached life's task. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict

Mode Instrument assessed each leader's behavior style in conflict situations. These

assessments were measured and compared to identify existing relationships. The

demographics of each church leader are described in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

The following terms listed on Table 1 are related to conflict management and to

the Christian church and are referred to throughout this paper.

Table 1. Definitions of Terms

Term	Definition
Bible	A book of the sacred scriptures for Christians comprised of the Old and New Testaments (Alexander, 1999, p. 18).
Christ: Jesus of Nazareth	Held by Christians to be the fulfillment of prophecies in the Old Testament regarding the eventual coming of a Messiah (Alexander, 1999, p. 28).
Christians	Pertaining to, believing in, or believing in the religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ (Alexander, 1999. p. 246).
Congregational conflict	A difference in opinion or purpose that may frustrate an individual's goals or desires when religious and spiritual beliefs are unaligned (Sande, 2004, p. 12).
Jesus: Jesus of Nazareth	The source of the Christian religion was born in Bethlehem shortly before the death of Herod the Great in 4 BC and spent this early life in Nazareth (Alexander, 1999. p. 542).
Sin	A wrong-doing disobedience, rebellion against God (Alexander, 1999. p 809).

Assumptions, Limitations and Bias

Assumptions. All pastoral leaders interviewed were assumed to have dealt with

conflict at some level within their church; to take biblical scripture literally and from an

objective viewpoint; to come from a variety of liberal and conservative theologies; and to

be involved with the conflict management process within their churches. Additionally,

conflict was assumed to be fear-based and each church was assumed to have some type

of conflict management model in place.

Limitations. This study included limitations. First, only twenty pastoral church

leaders were interviewed. The interviews were limited to Christian protestant

denominations whose apostolic flow is directly from the Bible. A final limitation is that the interviews came from churches with no less than 300 members and no more than 3,000 members.

Bias. The researcher of this study has a negative personal experience with the fear-based strategy of conflict management within the church; the use of this strategy resulted in both congregational members and church leaders exiting the church.

Organization of the remainder of the study

This research dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on the influential factors related to conflict within the church. This literature review identifies the individual factors, the organizational factors and conflict management factors. Each of these components are analyzed and considered when determining conflict as a positive growth-producing process within the church.

Chapter 3 reviews the methodology for this research study.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data. The results of the assessments are reviewed in detail.

Chapter 5 concludes this research paper. The summary of the results is presented, followed by the conclusion. Recommendations for further study are given.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an assumption within the church that behaviors associated with conflict (e.g., anger, hostility, selfishness, differences of opinion) are signs of failure (Leas & Kittlhaus, 1971). "The assumption of failure manifests itself in hiding, suppressing, avoiding or denying dissatisfaction; possibly disclosing the fact that the church is not the 'superchurch' it is trying to be" (Leas & Kittlhaus, 1971, p. 48). This suggests that people may keep their emotions bottled up, and, when the feelings finally emerge, may be distorted or expressed inappropriately.

Conflict can be differentiated and experienced in three major ways:

1. Intrapersonal conflict is a struggle a person has within oneself. It becomes an internal battle between what they want and yet not wanting to compromise what others want.

2. Interpersonal conflict is related to differences between people, but is not related primarily to uses; striking against the other over their incompatibility as a person.

3. Substantive conflict can be between two individuals or a group, conflicting over facts, means, ends and values (Leas & Kittlehaus, 1971).

Feelings do not constitute interpersonal or substantive conflict until they are manifested in some kind of behavior that strikes against another person or group. Until hostile feelings are acted upon, the conflict issue is one of an intrapersonal nature.

The intrapersonal natured person will call upon the peacemaking responses because they can be carried out personally and privately. These responses are directed

toward finding just and mutually agreeable solutions to conflict (Sande, 2004). The intrapersonal person may respond to conflict in one of the three ways:

1. Overlooking an offense. This is a form of forgiveness and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger. To overlook an offense means that disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved quietly and deliberately.

2. Reconciliation. This is used when an offense is too serious to overlook or has damaged the relationship. To reconcile is to resolve personal or relational issues through confession, loving correction and forgiveness.

3. Negotiation. This should be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which both persons seek to reach a settlement that satisfies the legitimate needs of each side (Sande, 2004, pp. 81-82).

People of an interpersonal nature tend to use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding a conflict than in resolving it. This attitude is common within the church because many Christians believe that all conflict is wrong or dangerous (Sande, 2004). Thinking that Christians should always agree, or fear that conflict will damage relationships, the interpersonal nature may respond in one of three ways:

1. Denial. This occurs when a person pretends that the conflict does not exist; or, if it isn't possible to deny that the problem exists, an individual may simply refuse to do what should be done to resolve the conflict properly, bringing only temporary relief and usually making matters worse.

2. Flight. Running away or escape is another way of not facing conflict. This often time means leaving the church. Running away only postpones a proper solution to a problem.

3. Suicide. The most drastic of all options, suicide may occur when people lose all hope of resolving conflict; they seek to escape the situation by attempting to take their own life (Sande, 2004, pp. 83-84).

The substantive natured person will use attack responses when the desired outcome to win is more important than it is in preserving a relationship. Attack responses are typically used by people who are strong and self-confident. But may also be used by those who feel weak, fearful, insecure or vulnerable (Sande, 2004). The substantive person may respond in one of three ways:

1. Assault. This is a way for people to try and overcome an opponent by using various forms of force or intimidation, such as verbal attacks, physical violence, or efforts to damage a person financially or professionally.

2. Litigation. This is a way to force people to bend to ones will by taking them to court. This process can be severely damaging to relationships, thus very important to make every effort to settle a dispute out of court if possible.

3. Murder. Should an individual be desperate enough to win a dispute, an attempt to kill an opponent may be made. While most Christians would not actually kill someone, their belief that harboring anger or contempt in their heart is seen biblically as murder in God's eyes (Sande, 2004, pp. 89-90).

There are areas in the life of church organizations where conflict can play a life-enhancing and helpful role to group maintenance and mission accomplishment:

1. Conflict can empower a group, giving it energy and life. A church that has a healthy amount of tension and conflict is one where programs and plans are challenged, those which have merit, value and meaning to the mission of the church can then be implemented.

2. Conflict can help establish identity and boundaries, forcing people to choose sides. Once those sides are chosen, questions can be answered and decisions can be made.

3. Conflict can unify groups of people by helping to play down their differences and consequently become more effective as task teams.

4. Conflict in itself can be a release, a means by which we are able to bring within the limits of toleration that which would otherwise be unbearable (Leas & Kittlhaus, 1971, pp. 35-41).

A comprehensive study on conflict should go beyond a list of possible causes of conflict. It should analyze individual and organizational process over potential conflicts reflected in the following statement by Becker (1999):

When analyzing a congregation's whole pattern of conflict, including what issues people fight over, how they frame those issues, typical processes by which conflict plays out and is resolved, how serious or divisive conflicts are and what effect they have on the congregation in the long run need to be considered. (p.6)

The focus of this study is to explore the individual and organizational factors that contribute to conflict and select types of conflict management strategies.

Theoretical Framework for Individual and Organizational Influential Factors

Sociologists study conflict situations in order to understand the nature and strength of contending parties (Hoge, 1976). There have been numerous studies on a variety of organized American religions and their internal conflicting battles. From these studies several theories have emerged about the cause of congregational conflict. The researcher of this paper has looked at several theories on organizational conflict factors and individual conflict factors. The integration of these theories in relationship to congregational conflict will then be analyzed to answer the following questions, which were posed to pastoral leadership:

1. Are there conflict management strategies in place within their church?

2. How does each pastor's depth of knowledge, experience and conflict management style impact the use of conflict management strategies within each church?

3. How has having or not having conflict management strategies in place impacted the health of their church?

Organizational Conflict Factors

Conflict within the church is a result of several organizational and individual factors. The loyalty of members to their organizations affects whether they will exit when their organizations do not meet their expectations (Hirschman, 1970). This next section reviews the impact and effect on organizational conflict factors; those factors include: culture, congregational, leadership, and denominational factors.

Culture. Every society, organization, group, and family creates a culture of conflict. A complex set of words, ideas, values, behaviors, attitudes, archetypes, customs, and rules that powerfully influence how its members think about and respond to conflict. Cultures of conflict are shaped in and by our experiences (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2005).

Congregations develop distinct cultures that comprise local understandings of identity and mission and that can be understood analytically as bundles of core tasks and legitimate ways of doing things (Becker, 1999). "Participating in church life is a very local matter to people. It is their church in their community; it is their worship service, their music program, their budget and their cemetery" (Lehman, 1985, p.17). For this reason it is important, when looking at church member behavior, as it relates to conflict, that these studies look at church cultural conditions.

Congregational. Congregational cultural conflict is one theoretical perspective that was examined. Becker (1999) took a look at intra-congregational conflicts by classifying congregation culture into different types: house of worship, family, community and leader models.

Each model displays a general pattern of local congregational culture, congregations with primary emphases on worship; religious education and rituals are regarded as the 'house of worship'; congregations focusing on close-knit and supportive relationships are classified as the 'family model'; congregations placing emphasis on interpreting and applying shared values on social issues belong to the 'community model'; and congregations aiming to express values

from the official tenets of their denomination or religious tradition are labeled as

the 'leader model.' (p. 13)

Becker (1999) found that the quantity and quality of intra-congregational conflicts

are associated with these congregational models. Community congregations have twice

the number of conflicts as family congregations. Family congregations are more likely to

fight over church buildings, while community and leader congregations tend to disagree

on contemporary social issues. Becker (1999) argues that local congregational cultures

explain intra-congregational conflicts better than other variables such as polity and

theological orientation (Chou, 2008).

Leadership. Research has shown that many congregational conflicts are related

to religious leadership (Becker, 1999). The stability of congregations is affected by their

clergy leaders. Whether members are willing to follow these leaders depends on the

leader's legitimacy. Leaders who are perceived as legitimate face fewer challenges in

their ministry; older experienced educated males tend to have more legitimacy than

younger less educated and experienced females (Collins, 1975). Charlton (1997)

indicated, "Women constitute 8% of all Lutheran ministers and 11% of Methodist

ministers" (p. 698). Women still constitute a minority of the profession and many

congregations have yet to have a woman in a clergy leadership position. According to

Charlton (1997) a Lutheran clergy woman shared the following with her:

Maybe other women have had better experiences, but on the whole I have

watched a lot of my sisters in ministry get beat to pieces and left hanging because

the organized Church says yes, yes we'll support you but they don't and in reality

the people in the congregation don't want you. So you're caught….many women

have left the ministry because they haven't felt the support. Men can walk into a room and they can automatically command respect by the fact they're a male pastor; a female pastor cannot do that. (Charlton, p. 698)

For the most part, Americans have channeled their religious activity through local congregations, and congregation leadership has historically fostered a certain amount of democratic, local, and lay control of decision-making. According to Becker,

Since postwar, social changes have fostered more 'de facto congregationalism' across the board and with it a redistribution of religious authority away from leaders and formal doctrines and toward individuals and congregations as interpretive communities that are eclectic in their faith expressions. (p. 224)

Denomination. Enormous doctrinal differences exist among the various denominations. Clergy and laity alike find it difficult to accept many of the traditional doctrines that no longer seem plausible (Hadden, 1970).

Individual-expressive religion has become the dominant mode of religious attachment. Economic and educational changes are fostering mobility and the questioning of traditional values and institutions (Becker, 1999). The effects of this going modernization have been reconfiguring the American religious landscape at all levels (Liebman, Sutton, & Wuthnow, 1988). These effects include the decline of denominational loyalty and authority and its effect on local congregational belief and practices as reflected in the following statement by Leas and Kittlaus (1971):

The gap gets wider and wider between those who want the church involved in the issues of the day and those who cherish the traditional forms and formulations. Conflict has now advanced until it is not grounded in ministry but in the defense

of positions. Its mood is not one of fidelity to our mission but one of distrust and

acrimony; leading to unhealthy polarization and division. (p. 15)

Schisms are a major source of new religious denominations in America, but have

received little attention in the sociological literature. Theories of possible origins of

schisms tend to point toward both conflicts over doctrine and problems of church

governance and organization (Liebman et al., 1988). One theory is theologically

conservative denominations are more prone to schisms than liberal ones. Conservatism

generates dogmatism, which decreases tolerance of internal diversity, increasing the

chances of factions breaking away. Another theory is that some denominational

traditions provide stronger precedents for breaking away, creating a need for a more rigid

organization (Liebman et al., 1988).

Individual Conflict Factors

This section reviews the impact that individual factors have on organizational

conflict. Those factors will include: theology, purpose and meaning, beliefs, and

authority.

Theology. Hadden's (1970), *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* main theory

for the eruption of conflict is based on differences between clergy and laity's theology:

Clergy have developed a new meaning of the nature of the church; but for a

variety of reasons, laity has not shared in the development of this new meaning.

Today, laity is beginning to realize that something is different, and for many, this

is a source of the gravest concern, for the new image is in sharp conflict with their

own concept of the meaning and purpose of the church. (p.6)

The older individualistic, literalistic orthodoxy has been challenged by new liberal theological themes and these new themes are having a profound impact. Because of clergy's exposure to seminary education their theological viewpoints are changing faster than laity. Young, new clergy with a strong commitment to social change are often critical of the social status quo. This new theology versus old theology results in conflict with the socially conservative laity who desires no change.

Conservative congregations, usually characterized by the belief that they hold exclusive religious truth, perceive their environment as threatening, and keep a greater distance from the rest of society. They more often have more committed members, stronger social solidarity, and fewer internal conflicts. Liberal congregations, which are more accepting of other religions, try to integrate with the rest of society, and appear to experience more intra-congregational conflicts (Hoge, 1976).

Researchers have argued that there are many reasons why liberal congregations are prone to intra-congregational conflict (Becker, 1999; Hoge, 1976). These may include:

- Liberal congregations may try to reconcile with or even embrace the secular worldview. This makes liberal congregations more vulnerable to criticism from both sides and undermines the current structure (Hoge, 1976).

- Liberal congregations are more likely to face difference of opinion between clergy and laity. Affluent congregations tend to prefer ministers from high-quality seminaries, but these ministers are more committed to social issues, which might transcend members' interests and make laity feel insecure and threatened (Hadden, 1970).

- The boundaries between liberal congregations and society are more permeable. Since changes in the social environment might result in different reactions within congregations and members of liberal congregations may have opposing opinions regarding social issues, more conflicts are expected in liberal congregations (Takayana & Cannon, 1979).

The rise of the charismatic, Pentecostal Christian faith, with its emphasis on individual subjective experience, rejects tradition and hierarchy but rely on direct spiritual revelation to supplement or replace biblical authority (Jenkins, 2002). Two reasons why congregations affected by the charismatic movement are more vulnerable to internal conflicts are:

1. The charismatic movement places more emphasis on individual, subjective experience. Since individual experiences and interpretations may vary, congregations are more likely to experience conflict when a consensus cannot be reached and each experience and interpretation is equally valued.

2. Second, the charismatic movement encourages lay participation and places less value on hierarchical authority. This type of structure is more prone to intra-congregational conflicts than a centralized and hierarchical structure (Takayama & Cannon, 1979; Chou, 2008).

Purpose and meaning. To many, the church is a source of comfort and help in a troubled world, an institution to challenge people to put an end to social injustice in this world. This commitment to challenge the church's role suggests there may be an inherent conflict between the roles of comforter and challenge. According to Hoge (1976), "Conflict within the church is an issue of mission priorities. One mission for social

action, the other for evangelism and efforts to maintain personal moral standards"

(p.119). Hoge's (1976) research concluded that for most persons the issue is not whether

or not there should be social action, and not whether the corporate church or individuals

should be involved, but whether social action supports laity's purpose and meaning or

threatens those interests.

Belief. For decades Americans have professed a belief in the existence of God or

a universal spirit and a large fraction continue to believe in heaven, hell, an afterlife and

the divinity of Jesus (Iannaccone, 1998). According to Hadden (1970),

> When symbol and myth are introduced as the basis for understanding the
>
> foundation of a faith, consensus is shattered. What is myth to one is literal to
>
> another…who is to say which interpretation is correct, or what is acceptable and
>
> unacceptable? In short, when a group can no longer proclaim 'Thus saith the
>
> Lord,' the basis of authority has been challenged. What is central doctrine to some
>
> is unimportant to others. The boundaries that divide Christians on matters of
>
> belief are only partially denominational; within denominations and single
>
> congregations are many beliefs. (p.24)

Independent of the content of belief, religion is an overarching, all-embracing

system of values which defines the nature of ultimate reality. According to Hadden, "If

one fully accepts the values and beliefs of a religious system, participation in the

activities of that system is a critical way in which acceptance and support will manifest

itself" (Hadden, 1970, p. 25).

Authority. The church is a voluntary association where laity has very significant

authority. In many denominations laity has the immediate authority to hire and fire a

minister, withhold financial contributions and threaten to withdraw membership from the

organization (Hadden, 1970). "By virtue of the fact that a church is a voluntary

association, it must operate within boundaries that are acceptable to its membership.

When it begins to move outside of these boundaries, conflict becomes inevitable"

(Hadden, p. 34).

Authority is a legitimate right to exercise power. Sociologist Max Weber (1964) has described three ways by which a leader may gain authority:

1. Over a period of time certain rights and powers come to be associated with an office (i.e., leadership position). Therefore, an incumbent of an office assumes authority because traditionally the holder of that office has assumed authority with respect to tasks.

2. Rational-legal leadership embraces certain laws or rules with specific authority.

3. Charismatic leaders possess traits which inspire confidence and a willingness on the part of the members of the group to follow his or her directives.

Laity has challenged the authority of clergy because they do not share their understanding of the meaning and purpose of the church. The shattering of traditional doctrine has weakened the authority of the clergy, for it is no longer certain that they hold the keys to the kingdom (Hadden, 1970).

Conflict Management Strategies

This section will review some of the conflict management strategies available for consideration as it relates to conflict management. These factors will include: systems

theory vs. psychology theory, conflict communication styles, conflict resolution and transformation strategies, negotiation, and exit, voice and loyalty strategies.

Systems theory vs. individual psychology theory. Church leaders must not only understand how individuals respond to conflict, but also how systems—composed of a dynamic interrelationship of individuals within a group—respond to conflict (Fischer, 2004). Some psychologists say the reasons for anxiety behaviors reside in the individual psyche, so they place the responsibility for conflict on the individual. Abraham Maslow's (1965) emphasis on individual "self-actualization" and Erik Erickson's (1959) "8 Stages of Development" are but some of the many psychological theories that focus on individual cognition and other psychological dimensions of behavior. Some systems practitioners believe individual behavior is largely determined by the systems in which they live.

According to Fisher (2004):

Some systems theorists downplay, or even deny, the role of individual conflict, claiming that anxious individual behaviors are solely due to the system's response to anxiety; according to systems theory, if one can change the system, individuals in the system will change their behavior. (p. 5)

In the balance between systems approach and individual psychological approach is the understanding of congregational anxiety. Fischer's (2004) theory is that churches are like families whose primary concern is to maintain equilibrium whether it is healthy or unhealthy.

Typical families assign a role to each of their members. The most commonly identified five roles are: 'scapegoat,' 'mascot,' 'hero,' 'spiritual leader,' and 'lost

child'….families that can perpetuate each of these roles will be considered 'successful' insofar as they are able to maintain their equilibrium….in churches with patterns of removing their pastors, these five roles are assigned in a way that guarantees the ultimate removal of each new pastor. (p.6)

"When individuals begin to understand the interaction of roles within family or congregational systems, they can begin to gain insights into the wide range of emotional responses to conflict that occur in organizations and individuals" (Fischer, p.6). All organizations have to be open systems to the extent that the resources they need are external to them; but all will try to be closed systems to the degree that they do not want people or influences outside of them controlling them (Jeavons, 1994).

Conflict communication styles. Conflict management styles vary when dealing with issues that arise with four most evident styles (Pegues, 2009):

1. The dictator engages in win-lose confrontations. His power or anger to win is at the expense of the other person. In many circumstances, this style reflects emotional and professional immaturity.

2. The accommodator wants to maintain the relationship at all costs, even at the cost of one's beliefs, values, peace of mind, personal time, or resources. Often accommodators have a low self-esteem and do not feel that they bring anything of real value to the relationship.

3. The abdicator avoids confrontation at any cost. They will withdraw from a situation rather than confront. They rob themselves of the opportunity to experience the growth that results from working through issues (Peck, 1979).

4. The collaborator deals with conflicts by cooperating, joining forces, uniting, pulling together and participating. Those who work together toward a common purpose demonstrate spiritual and emotional maturity (Pegues, 2009, p. 54).

There is only one test for the effectiveness of any communication and that is what the listener understands (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2005). Cloke & Goldsmith (2005) indicated three important hidden frameworks for conflict communications.

1. There are words, symbols, metaphors, tone of voice, and body language that we all use in our communications, which often convey their true meaning and significance both to the speaker and the listener.

2. There is the process of communicating, which includes how respectfully, responsively, actively, empathetically, appropriately, and reliably the message is communicated.

3. There is the relationship between the speaker and the listener, which includes each person's unspoken interest, needs, emotions, and expectations of the other and the degree to which each person has let go of past conflicts.

These hidden frameworks define our communication more reliably than the literal definitions of the words we are using.

Conflict resolution and transformation strategies. Because conflict can be destructive in nature, every organization, from corporations to nonprofits, from schools to churches, can be transformed by learning to embrace conflict and to develop innovative strategies for organizational transformation.

Transformation is not minor, linear or transitory. It means allowing what is stuck

in the past to die in order that the present and future might live (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2005). There are innumerable techniques, methods, approaches and processes that can lead to transformation. Cloke and Goldsmith (2005), authors of *Resolving Conflict At Work*, suggest eight strategies to transformation that are intentional in nature:

1. Change the culture and context of conflict;

2. Listen actively, empathetically, and responsively;

3. Acknowledge and integrate emotions to solve problems;

4. Search beneath the surface for hidden meaning;

5. Separate what matters from what gets in the way;

6. Stop rewarding and learn from difficult behaviors;

7. Solve problems creatively, plan strategically and negotiate collaboratively; and

8. Explore resistance, mediate and design systems for prevention and resolution (pp. 8-9).

Negotiation. In conflict negotiation it is important to openly negotiate for both quantities and qualities. If you care about the people on the other side of your conflict you cannot afford to negotiate only for quantities (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2005, p. 266). In negotiating quantities and qualities, there are two fundamentally differing negotiation styles. Aggressive negotiators will move against their opponents in a competitive struggle for power; and collaborative negotiators will adopt a learning orientation to problem solve and move towards their opponent in an effort at improvement and win-win outcomes (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2005).

Cloke & Goldsmith (2005) reference the following reasons for negotiating conflict:

1. Your goals are moderately important but can be satisfied by less than total agreement.

2. Your opponents have equal power, and you are strongly committed to mutually exclusive goals.

3. You need to achieve a temporary settlement of complex issues.

4. You need a quick solution, and the exact content does not matter as much as the speed with which it is reached.

5. Your efforts at either competition or collaboration have failed, and you need a backup.

Exit, voice and loyalty strategies. When the performance of a firm or an organization is assumed to be subject to deterioration for unspecified, random causes leadership finds out about the failings via two alternative routes (as cited in Hirschman, 1970):

1. Some customers stop buying the firm's products or some members leave the organization: this is the exit option. As a result, revenues drop, membership declines, and management is impelled to search for ways and means to correct whatever faults have led to exit.

2. The firm's customers or the organization's members express their dissatisfaction directly to management or to some other authority to which management is subordinate or through general protest addressed to anyone who cares to listen: this is the *voice option*. As a result, management once

again engages in a search for the causes and possible cures of customer's and

members' dissatisfaction (p. 4).

Loyalty is a third key concept in the battle between exit and voice; members may

be locked into their organizations a little longer and thus use the voice option with greater

determination and resourcefulness than would otherwise be the case. While loyalty

postpones exit, its very existence is predicated on the possibility of exit.

In the absence of feelings of loyalty, exit per se is essentially costless, except for

the cost of gathering information about alternative products and organizations.

Also, when loyalty is not present, the individual member is likely to have a low

estimate of his influence on the organization. Hence, the decision to exit will be

taken and carried out in silence. The threat of exit will typically be made by the

loyalist-that is, by the member who cares-who leaves no stone unturned before he

resigns himself to the painful decision to withdraw or switch. (Hirschman, p. 82)

Summary

Many societies, workplaces, and organizations have developed entire ecosystems

based on miscommunication and conflict avoidance in which people spend an

extraordinary amount of time hiding from honest communications, trapped in unresolved

disputes with others, confused over unclear messages, and unsuccessfully trying to make

their needs and feelings heard and understood.

If individuals and organizations were willing to embrace innovation and

collaboration within the church and reject the win-lose limitations supported by

adversarial cultures, they may flourish in the midst of conflict. By learning to experience

conflict as a journey instead of a war, as a challenge instead of a burden, churches may

begin to see conflict as exercises in communication, problem solving, creativity, collaboration, and relationship building.

Conflict is not bad in and of itself. Though it may be considered painful and frightening at times, it can also be the fire in which a healthy organization is tempered. However, this does not imply that all conflict is growth-producing. Those persons or groups which live *for* conflict are just as unhealthy as those which spend their energy avoiding it. There are many factors that contribute to the "why" of conflict as there are strategies in which to deal with it. Perhaps we can surmise that a mark of a healthy church organization is one that can deal effectively with conflict when it arises.

Methodology

Selection of Respondents

The respondents included in this study were randomly selected from a database of Christian pastoral leaders provided by KTIS Christian Radio, within the cities and surrounding suburbs of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. The twenty pastoral leaders that participated in this study were comprised of twelve males and eight females.

Assessment instruments

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI; Thomas & Kilmann, 1977) helps individuals understand how different conflict styles affect personal and group dynamics. The TKI measures five conflict-handling modes, or ways of dealing with conflict: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. These five modes can be described along two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. Assertiveness refers to the extent to which one tries to satisfy his or her own concerns; cooperativeness refers to the extent to

which one tries to satisfy the concerns of another person (Thomas & Kilmann, 1977).

Competing is assertive and not cooperative and accommodating is cooperative and not

assertive Avoiding is neither assertive nor cooperative, while collaborating is both

assertive and cooperative. Compromising falls in the middle on both dimensions.

Individuals were asked to respond to 30 items on the paper and pencil TKI tool.

The items were scored to determine which of the five conflict-handling modes

respondents tend to use relatively often and which modes they use less frequently. Their

percentile scores compare how frequently they use a mode with how frequently members

of the norm group use the mode. Scores were grouped into three categories: high (scores

that fit in the top 25% of the norm group's scores on a conflict-handling mode), medium

(scores that fit in the middle 50%), and low (scores that fit in the bottom 25%).

In-person questionnaire. The twenty pastors selected were interviewed in person

by the researcher of this paper. The research questions investigated in this study were as

follows:

1. What conflict management models were you introduced to in seminary?

2. What conflict management model do you use in your church?

3. What determines when you, as the pastoral leader, become involved in
   managing church conflict?

4. When dealing with conflict do you become anxious? On a scale of 1-7, with
   one being never anxious and seven extremely anxious.

5. How do church members view your current way of handling conflict? On a
   scale of 1-7, with one minimally addresses and seven always addresses.

6. With conflict management processes in place have you experienced less

    people leaving the church?

7. What would be helpful for you, as a church leader, as it relates to the conflict

    management process?

BASIS-A Instrument. The BASIS-A inventory instrument measures five

personal styles and five supportive scales identified as the HELPS scales which are

designed to expand and facilitate the interpretation of the five primary personal styles.

The BASIS-A asks individuals to recall childhood experiences rather than describe

present functioning. Recollection of childhood experiences provides insight into how one

approaches life's tasks.

Data Collection Analysis

Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode instrument results. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict

Mode Instrument measured respondent's high and low conflict management style

outcome. When dealing with conflict, the high score is the style of conflict management

the pastor will resort to first. The middle score is the style of conflict management the

pastor will resort to some of the time. The low score is the style of conflict management

the pastor will resort to the least often. Table 2 shows the results for male and female

respondents independently; and male and female respondents combined.

Table 2. TKI Results for Male and Female Respondents

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument				
	High/Accommodate	Middle/Compromise	Low/Compete	Total
Male Respondents	3	4	5	12
Female Respondents	4	2	2	8
Male/Female Respondents	7	6	7	20

Male respondents. Three out of twelve pastors (25%) scored high in accommodate. Four out of twelve pastors (33%) scored in the middle with compromise. Five out of twelve pastors (42%) scored low in compete.

Female respondents. Four out of eight pastors (50%) responded high in accommodate. Two out of eight pastors (25%) scored in the middle with compromise. Two out of eight pastors (25%) scored low in compete.

Male and female respondents. Seven out of twenty pastors (35%) responded high in accommodate. Six out of twenty pastors (33%) responded in the middle with compromise. Seven out of twenty pastors (35%) scored low in compete.

Analysis. Half (50%) of female pastors, compared to 35% of male pastors scored high in accommodating. When high in accommodating, one may believe one's ideas and concerns do not get the attention they deserve, often depriving one of influence, respect and recognition (Thomas & Kilmann, 1977). A quarter (25%) of female pastors, compared to 33% of male pastors, scored in the middle with compromise. One goes to a place of compromise when an expedient, mutually expectable solution needs to be had by both parties (Thomas & Kilman, 1977). A quarter (25%) of female pastors, compared to 42% of male pastors, scored low in compete. When low in compete one may often feel powerless in situations and have trouble taking a firm stand, even when the need arises (Thomas & Kilman, 1977). Thirty-two percent of female and male pastors will resort between accommodate and compromise when dealing with conflict.

In person questionnaire. An in person questionnaire looked at response themes: prevalent, non-prevalent and their modality. Table 3 shows male and female respondents' results independently; and combined male and female in-person questionnaire results.

Table 3. Male, Female, and Combined Results to In-person Questionnaire

Question	Male (12)	Female (8)	Male/Female Combined (20)
1.What conflict management models were you given in seminary?			
None	10	6	16
Biblical Scripture Mathew 18	2	1	3
PeaceMakers Conflict Management Model	0	1	1
2. What conflict management model do you use in your church			
Biblical Scripture Mathew 18	6	4	10
PeaceMakers Conflict Management Model	2	2	4
Mediation	2	0	2
No model in place	2	2	4
3. What determines when you, as the pastoral leader, become involved in managing church conflict?			
when conflict cannot be resolved on parties' own	6	2	8
when the conflict impacts the unity of the church	3	0	3
when conflict impacts leaders of the church	0	2	2
when conflict brought to their attention	2	4	6
when conflict involves the pastor	1	0	1
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE			

Table 3. Male, Female, and Combined Results to In-person Questionnaire (**CONTINUED**)

Question	Male (12)	Female (8)	Male/Female Combined (20)
4. When dealing with conflict, do you become anxious? On a scale of 1-7, with one being never anxious and seven extremely anxious.			
4, on a scale of 1-7	6 responded with 4	4 responded with 4	10
5, on a scale of 1-7	6 responded with 5	2 responded with 5	8
6, on a scale of 1-7	0	2 responded with 6	2
5. How do church members view your current way of handling conflict? On a scale of 1-7, with one minimally addresses and seven always address.			
7, on a scale of 1-7	0	4 responded with 7	4
6, on a scale of 1-7	5 responded with 6	0	5

5, on a scale of 1-7	3 responded with 5	4 responded with 5	7
4, on a scale of 1-7	4 responded with 4	0	4
6. With conflict management processes in place have you experienced less people leaving the church?			
believe people left anyway	8	4	12
believe people stayed.	3	4	7
unsure	1	0	1
7. What would be helpful for you, as a church leader, as it relates to the conflict management process?			
outside conflict management counsel	9	8	17
coached in the PeaceMakers Conflict Management Model	3	0	3

Male respondents.

1. What conflict management models were you given in seminary?

   - 10 out of 12 pastors responded none.

   - 2 out of 12 pastors responded biblical Scripture Mathew 18.

2. What conflict management model do you use in your church?

   - 6 out of 12 use Biblical Scripture Mathew 18.

   - 2 out of 12 use PeaceMakers Conflict Management Model.

   - 2 out of 12 use mediation.

   - 2 out of 12 no model in place.

3. What determines when you, as the pastoral leader, become involved in

   managing church conflict?

   - 6 out of 12 become involved when conflict cannot be resolved on

     parties' own.

   - 3 out of 12 get involved when the conflict impacts the unity of the

     church.

- 2 out of 12 get involved with conflict when brought to their attention.

- 1 out of 12 gets involved when conflict involves the pastor.

4. When dealing with conflict, do you becomes anxious? On a scale of 1-7, with

   one being never anxious and seven extremely anxious.

   - 6 out of 12 responded with 4.

   - 6 out of 12 responded with 5.

5. How do church members view your current way of handling conflict? On a

   scale of 1-7, with one minimally addresses and seven always address.

   - 5 out of 12 responded with 6.

   - 3 out of 12 responded with 5.

   - 4 out of 12 responded with 4.

6. With conflict management processes in place have you experienced less

   people leaving the church?

   - 8 out of 12 pastors believed people left anyway.

   - 3 out of 12 pastors believed people stayed.

   - 1out of 12 pastors was unsure.

7. What would be helpful for you, as a church leader, as it relates to the conflict

   management process?

   - 9 out of 12 pastors would like outside conflict management counsel.

   - 3 out of 12 pastors would like to be coached in the PeaceMaker model

     of conflict management.

Female respondents.

1. What conflict management models were you given in seminary?

- 6 out of 8 pastors responded none.

- 1 out of 8 pastors responded biblical Scripture Mathew 18.

- 1 out of 8 pastors responded PeaceMaker.

2. What conflict management model do you use in your church?

- 4 out of 8 pastors use biblical Scripture Mathew 18.

- 2 out of 8 pastors use PeaceMakers Conflict Management Model

- 2 out of 8 pastors responded no model in place.

3. What determines when you, as the pastoral leader, become involved in

managing church conflict?

- 4 out of 8 pastors become involved when brought to their attention.

- 2 out of 8 pastors become involved when conflict cannot be resolved

on parties' own.

- 2 out of 8 pastors become involved when conflict impacts leaders of

the church.

4. When dealing with conflict do you becomes anxious? On a scale of 1-7, with

one being never anxious and seven extremely anxious.

- 4 out of 8 pastors responded with 4.

- 2 out of 8 pastors responded with 5.

- 2 out of 8 pastors responded with 6.

5. How do church members view your current way of handling conflict? On a

scale of 1-7, with one minimally addresses and seven always address.

- 4 out of 8 pastors responded with 7.

- 4 out of 8 pastors responded with 5.

- 1 out of 8 pastors responded with 4.

6. With conflict management processes in place have you experienced less people leaving the church?

- 4 out of 8 pastors believed people left anyway.

- 4 out of 8 pastors believed people stayed.

7. What would be helpful for you, as a church leader, as it relates to the conflict management process?

- 8 out of 8 pastors would like outside conflict management council.

Combined male and female respondents.

1. What conflict management models were you given in seminary?

- 16 out of 20 pastors responded none.

- 3 out of 20 pastors responded biblical Scripture Mathew 18.

- 1 out of 20 pastors responded PeaceMaker model.

2. What conflict management model do you use in your church?

- 10 out of 20 pastors use Biblical scripture Mathew 18.

- 4 out of 20 pastors use PeaceMakers Conflict Management Model.

- 2 out of 20 pastors use mediation.

- 4 out of 20 pastors have no model in place.

3. What determines when you, as the pastoral leader, become involved in managing church conflict?

- 8 out 20 pastors become involved when conflict cannot be resolved on parties' own.

- 6 out of 20 pastors become involved when brought to their attention.

- 3 out of 20 pastors become involved when conflict impacts the unity of the church.

- 2 out of 20 pastors become involved when conflict impacts leaders of the church.

- 1 out of 20 pastors become involved when conflict impacts the pastor of the church.

4. When dealing with conflict do you becomes anxious? On a scale of 1-7, with one being never anxious and seven extremely anxious.

- 10 out of 20 pastors responded 4.

- 8 out of 20 pastors responded 5.

- 2 out of 20 pastors responded 6.

5. How do church members view your current way of handling conflict? On a scale of 1-7, with one minimally address and seven always address.

- 4 out of 20 pastors responded 7.

- 5 out of 20 pastors responded 6.

- 7 out of 20 pastors responded 5.

- 4 out of 20 pastors responded 4.

6. With conflict management processes in place have you experienced less people leaving the church?

- 12 out of 20 pastors believed people left anyway.

- 7 out of 20 pastors believed people stayed.

- 1 out of 20 pastors was unsure.

7. What would be helpful for you, as a church leader, as it relates to the conflict

management process?

- 17 out of 20 pastors would like outside conflict management counsel.

- 3 out of 20 pastors would like to be coached in the PeaceMakers

Conflict Management Model.

Prevalent themes.

1. The majority (95%) of pastors had no prior introduction to conflict

management in seminary.

2. Half (50%) of pastors currently use the biblical Scripture Mathew 18 model

when dealing with conflict.

3. Forty percent of pastors become involved in areas of church conflict when the

parties involved are unable to resolve conflict on their own.

4. Half (50%) of pastors responded that they are a 4 out of 1-7, 1 being never

anxious and 7 extremely anxious, when dealing with conflict.

5. Twenty percent of pastors responded between 6 and 7 out of 1-7, 1 minimally

address and 7 always address conflict, from church members' viewpoint.

6. 60% of pastors believed people left the church regardless of conflict

management process in place.

7. 85% of pastors would like outside conflict management counsel.

Non-Prevalent themes.

1. Five percent of pastors were introduced to the PeaceMakers Conflict

Management Model in seminary.

2. Ten percent of pastors currently do not use a conflict mediation model in their church.

3. Ten percent of pastors become involved with conflict in their church when it impacts their leaders. Ten percent of pastors become involved with conflict in their church when it impacts their pastor.

4. Six percent of pastors responded that they are a 6 out of 1-7, 1 being never anxious and 7 extremely anxious, when dealing with conflict.

5. Twenty percent of pastors responded that they are a 4, 6 or 7, 1 minimally addresses and 7 always address conflict, from church members' viewpoint.

6. Ten percent of pastors were unsure if less people left the church with a conflict model in place.

7. Fifteen percent of pastors would like outside conflict management counsel.

Modality theme.

1. No prior introduction to conflict management in seminary.

2. Use of biblical Scripture Mathew 18 mode.

3. People still leave the church even with conflict management model in place.

4. Pastors would like outside conflict management counsel.

BASIS-A Instrument. The BASIS-A measured the high, low, and middle scale outcomes in scales of Belonging-Social Interest (BSI), Going Along (GA), Taking Charge (TC), Wanting Recognition (WR), and Being Cautious (BC). The HELPS scale looks at outcomes in scales of Harshness (H), Entitlement (E), Liked by All (L), Striving for Perfection (P), and Softness (S). The HELPS Scale medium will be considered with the BASIS-A outcomes.

Male respondents. Table 3 shows BASIS-A Instrument results for male

respondents. A third (33%) of male respondents were high in going along (GA), which is

characteristic of a rule-direct behavior. They tend to be agreeable, structure-focused, and

conflict avoidant. A third (33%) of respondents were low in belonging-social interest

(BSI). They tend to be comfortable doing things on their own and enjoy interacting with

fewer people at one time than more. A third (33%) of respondents were in the middle

with taking charge (TC) which distinguishes the degree to which a person is directive and

controlling in nature. Table 4 shows male respondents' results for the HELPS Scale

medium.

Table 3. Male Respondents' BASIS-A Instrument Results

	BSI	GA	TC	WR	BC	Total
Male Respondent/High	2	4	2	2	2	12
Male Respondent/Low	4	1	3	2	2	12
Male Respondent/Middle	2	2	4	2	2	12

Male/Respondent/High   33%   Going Along

Male/Respondent/Low   33%   Belonging-Social Interest

Male/Respondent/Middle   33%   Taking Charge

Table 4 shows male respondents' HELPS scale medium results. The HELPS

Scale indicates that the male respondents were not harsh (H) in their perception of

childhood experiences. Respondents' low score in entitlement (E) indicates a low level of

need for attention from others. Respondents' middle score in liked by all (L) indicates

neither a high nor low need to have the approval of others. Respondent's middle score in

striving for perfection (P) indicates neither a high nor low confidence in doing things

well. Their standards are in the middle and may not be as sensitive to making mistakes.

Male respondents' middle score for softness (S) indicates they saw their childhood not in a positive or negative light, probably realistic.

Table 4. Male Respondents' HELPS Scale/Medium

Male Respondent Total	H	E	L	P	S
12	11	13	20	21	18

Female respondents. Table 5 shows female respondents' results for the BASIS-A Instrument. Half (50%) of female respondents were high in wanting recognition (WR). This is characteristic of their tendency to be success-oriented and achievement focused. Approval for their success is important. Thirty-five percent of respondents are low in taking charge (TC) which indicates a lower characteristic bent toward wanting to take charge or be in a leadership position. Fifteen (15%) of respondents in the middle were equal in responding to taking charge (TC), going along (GA), and wanting recognition (WR). Table

Table 5. Female Respondents' BASIS-A Instrument Results

	BSI	GA	TC	WR	BC	Total
Female Respondent/High	0	1	1	4	2	8
Female Respondent/Low	2	1	3	1	1	8
Female Respondent/Middle	1	2	2	2	1	8

Female/Respondent/High   50%   Wanting Recognition

Female/Respondent/Low   35%   Taking Charge

Female Respondent/Middle 15%   Taking Charge/Going Along/Wanting Recognition

Table 6 shows female respondents' results for HELPS scale medium. The HELPS Scale indicates that female respondents were not harsh (H) in their perception of childhood experiences. Female respondents' low score in entitlement (E) indicates a low

level of need for attention from others. Female respondents' higher score in liked by all

(L) indicates that respondents are in approximately the top or bottom 16%. This indicates

a need to have approval of others. Respondents' middle score in striving for perfection

(P) indicates neither a high nor low confidence in doing things well. Their standards are

in the middle and may not be as sensitive to making mistakes. Respondents' middle score

for softness (S) indicates they saw their childhood not in a positive or negative light, but

probably realistic.

Table 6. Female Respondents' HELPS Scale/Medium

Female Respondent Total	H	E	L	P	S
8	13	12	27	22	16

Male/female respondents combined. Table 7 shows male and female

respondents' combined BASIS-A Instrument results. Thirty-three percent of combined

male and female respondents were high in wanting recognition (WR), a characteristic of

being success-oriented and achievement focused. Approval for success is important.

Thirty-three percent were low in taking charge (TC) indicating respondents' preference

for being a leader. This also distinguishes the degree to how directive or controlling one

is. The low is also shared (33%) with belonging in social interest. A third (33%) of

respondents were in the middle of taking charge (TC).

Table 7. Male/Female Respondents' Combined BASIS-A Instrument Results

	BSI	GA	TC	WR	BC	Total
Male/Female /High	2	5	3	6	4	20
Male/Female /Low	6	2	6	3	3	20
Male/Female/Middle	3	4	6	4	3	20

Male/Female/Respondent/High   33% Wanting Recognition

Male/Female/Respondent/Low   33% Taking Charge/Belonging in Social Interest

Male/Female/Respondent/Mid   33% Taking Charge

     Table 8 shows male and female respondents' combined HELPS Scale medium. The HELPS Scale indicates that the respondents were not harsh (H) in their perception of childhood experiences. Respondents' low score in entitlement (E) indicates a low level of need for attention from others. Respondents' middle score in liked by all (L) indicated neither a high nor low need to have the approval of others. Respondents' middle score in striving for perfection (P) indicates neither a high nor low confidence in doing things well. Their standards are in the middle and may not be as sensitive to making mistakes. Respondents' middle score for softness (S) indicates they saw their childhood not in appositive or negative light, probably realistic.

Table 8. Male/Female Respondents' Combined HELPS Scale/Medium

Male/Female Respondent Total	H	E	L	P	S
20	12	12.5	24	21.5	17

    Analysis. The BASIS-A indicated that male pastors were high in going along (GA) and low in belonging-social interest (BSI) and in the middle with taking charge (TC). This indicates that male pastors may live in a taking charge (TC) place. When in a position of conflict, their first tendency may be to go along and they prefer dealing with conflict in smaller group settings.

    Female pastors were high in wanting recognition (WR) and low in taking charge (TC) and in the middle with taking charge (TC). This indicates that female pastors may live in a take charge (TC) place. When in a position of conflict, their first tendency may be to take charge in hopes of being successful in the conflict management process.

Research Question Analysis

In this paper the researcher asked the question, "Can church pastoral leaders use conflict management, not in a fear-based way, but in a positive growth-producing way for their churches?"

The author collected data from twenty Christian pastors using three instruments: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, the BASIS-A Instrument, and an in-person interview process using seven open ended questions. Three questions are analyzed from the respondent data.

1. Are there conflict management strategies in place within their church?

2. How does each pastor's depth of knowledge, experience and conflict management style impact the use of conflict management strategies within each church?

3. How has having or not having conflict management strategies in place impacted the health of their church?

The results indicate that the majority (80%) of twenty church pastors participating in this study had a conflict management strategy within their church. Each strategy was implemented for varying reasons. A formalized conflict management strategy typically followed a time of conflict, exodus of members and or pastoral leadership.

A modality found in the research is that out of the twenty pastors interviewed all used biblical principles in managing conflict. Those principles are found in the book of Mathew, chapter 18:15 of the New Testament:

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. (Alexander, p.1498)

The PeaceMaker Conflict Management Model was indicated as being used by

20% of all pastors interviewed as their conflict strategy. Of the 20%, 16% were male

pastors and 20% were female. The PeaceMakers Model was created by Ken Sande,

president of PeaceMaker Ministries, who conducts seminars throughout the United States

and internationally on Biblical conflict resolution (Sande, 2004). The approach is based

solidly on God's Word taken from the Bible and summarized in four basic principles of

which is referred to as the four "G's" (Sande, 2004):

- Glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31). Biblical peacemaking is motivated and guided by a

  deep desire to bring honor to God by revealing the reconciling love and poser of

  Jesus Christ.

- Get the log out of your eye (Matt. 7:5). Attacking others only invites

  counterattacks. This is why Jesus teaches us to face up to our own contributions to

  a conflict before we focus on what others have done.

- Gently restore (Gal. 6:1). When others fail to see their contributions to a conflict,

  we sometimes need to graciously show them their fault. If they refuse to respond

  appropriately, Jesus calls us to involve respected friends, church leaders, or other

  objective individuals who can help us encourage repentance and rector peace.

- Go and be reconciled (Matt. 5:24). Finally, peacemaking involves a commitment to restoring damaged relationships and negotiating just agreements (p. 12).

Ten percent of all pastors interviewed used a mediation strategy in dealing with conflict. All 10% were male pastors. Those using the mediation process believe it to empower people to have ownership over the process and the outcome, and can provide a powerful way to experience God's life-changing grace (Sande, 2004).

Twenty percent of all pastors interviewed had no formal conflict management strategy in place at the time of the interview. Of those who do not currently use a formal strategy, 25% were female pastors and 16% were male pastors. They all rely on biblical principles and hope to move towards a more structured conflict management process.

How does each interviewed pastor's depth of knowledge, experience, and conflict management style impact their conflict management strategies use in their church? A prevalent theme was that 95% of all pastors were never exposed to any conflict management training or education in seminary. Of the 95% respondents, 80% did not formally introduce a conflict management strategy until after members and or pastoral leaders had left the church because of conflict.

Of all pastors interviewed, 40% did not get involved with a conflict unless the parties in conflict were unable to resolve the issue on their own, of which 50% were female and 50% were male respondents. Both female and male pastors were high in accommodating; however female pastors were more inclined to address conflict while male pastors were more likely to avoid conflict.

Of all pastors interviewed, 50% indicated they become moderately anxious when dealing with conflict. A quarter (25%) of the males will go along, be agreeable and

structure-focused, when dealing with conflict. Half (50%) of females wanted recognition, success, and were results driven, possibly seeking approval through the process.

The last place 35% (of which, 42% were female, 25% were male) of all pastors interviewed will go when dealing with conflict was a place of competitiveness. This may indicate a feeling of powerlessness or having trouble taking a firm stand, even when they see the need (Thomas & Kilmann, 1977).

The majority (85%) of all pastors interviewed indicated a desire to be more equipped in their knowledge and style in handling conflict. This might come in the form of outside counsel, educational workshops, consultants, or outside perspective. All (100%) females and 75% of males asked for help in conflict management.

The last question to review is how having or not having a conflict management strategy in place impacted the health of their church. 60% of all pastors interviewed believed; regardless of having a conflict management strategy in place, members would still leave the church. Those of this position were 66% male pastors and 50% female pastors. 35% of male pastors believed that with a conflict strategy in place more people would stay and 50% of female pastors believed with a conflict strategy in place more people would stay.

Summary of Results

All twenty pastors in this research project indicated that conflict management within their church was an important issue. The majority (95%) of respondents entered into the role of pastoral leadership without any prior formal education on the conflict management process. Their shared belief is that sound biblical principals are the foundation of any conflict strategy and is their first conflict strategy to use. The majority

of pastors in this research become involved in conflict when the parties in conflict had met and are unable to resolve their issues.

    Male pastors were more prone to avoid conflict and had a strong propensity to go along and be agreeable. To accommodate the needs of those in conflict was the most likely conflict management strategy for male pastors and to compete and win was their least likely. Female pastors had a strong propensity to want recognition, be success-oriented and achievement-focused. They too accommodated the needs of those in conflict and competing was the least likely option they would select for handling conflict. Both male and female pastors had the ability to take charge and call upon it when the need arose.

According to 60% of respondents, a conflict management strategy in place did not mean that less people would leave the church. More female pastors than males had a belief that with sound practices in place less people would leave.

The analyses from this research indicated subtle differences between male and female pastors, yet differences were present. Female pastors have a high propensity toward achievement and success. A greater percentage of church members believe that female pastors will deal with conflict when the need arises and that female pastors can move through difficult situations easier than males.

This study supports conclusively that conflict needs to be managed in the church and that those in charge of dealing with conflict have not been educated in the process of conflict management. Consequently, pastors have learned about conflict due to experiences of people leaving the church as a result of conflict. The majority of respondents believed that people will still leave the church whether or not there is a

conflict management process in place. Regardless, church and pastoral leaders have a responsibility to deal with conflict; it is not to be ignored.

Conclusion

Pastoral leaders accept the fact that conflict will inevitably arise, occuring in the church whenever different personalities find themselves in various relationship interaction. David Augsburger (1981) underscores this assessment: "Conflict is natural, normal, neutral and sometimes even delightful. It can turn into painful or disastrous ends, but it doesn't need to. Conflict is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. Conflict simply is" (p.4).

Pastoral leaders must learn to deal effectively with conflict. Pastors are potentially always in the firing line due to their public presence and the many decisions they make for all to see. John Gardner, leadership scholar and presidential advisor, states: "Pity the leader caught between unloving critics and uncritical lovers."

Conflict can be a teacher of pastors as they work through difficult situations in the pursuit of leadership. Through conflict, the pastors interviewed for this research paper were at times forced to discover what was really important; at times compromising their leadership by accommodating the wants of a member; collaborating when the concerns of both parties were too important to be compromised; or simply choosing to avoid a situation when the potential costs of confronting a conflict outweighed the benefits of its resolution.

Men and women, called into the ministry of the Christian Church, are gifted with God given gifts and talents. But seminary does not prepare them for the complex dance of conflict management. Only through the loss of church members or their own personal

experience of church exodus, do they begin to learn their way. And for some, it is easier to bring in outside sources than to add just one more level of responsibility to their already full plate.

But to not address conflict is not an option for the Pastors interviewed in this research paper. "Avoiding Conflict is a decision not to make a decision, to stay 'dead center.' The 'pain' we feel is the price we pay for not making the decision" (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999, quoting Alfred Adler). It was the belief of many, that church members may leave the church, whether or not there is a conflict management process in place, but it might make them think just a little bit differently the next time.

Recommendation

The author of this paper would recommend a deeper look at the leadership differences and similarities between female and male pastors. Female pastors in this study showed a strong desire for wanting recognition and a need to be heard, and a stronger willingness to face conflict issues than their male peers. And yet, the majority of Christian church senior pastoral positions still are male.

A second recommendation would be to look at the seminary educational system. Conflict in the church is a major divisive issue and yet the educational system is not preparing men and women entering the ministry on how to deal with it. Why is there such a disconnect between the need for greater conflict management training and the existing educational system? Ronald Kaybill (2005) emphasizes the importance of intentionally managing conflict: "Manage conflict, or it will manage you. Whenever churches have faced conflict openly, the congregations have grown stronger in the process."

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