

HOW WE RESOLVE CHURCH CONFLICTS AND DIFFERENCES

(Pastor Benny Tan - Kaitaia Abundant Life Centre - 1994)

The Bible stresses the absolute importance of church unity. Lose that, and we really have nothing else to say to or offer the world. We're commanded to protect and promote church unity: "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose; that they may be one, just as We are one" etc. *Eph 4:3; Phil 2:2; Jn 17:22.*

Unity is not automatic. We must desire it, and work at it patiently, purposefully and prayerfully. And when differences occur (and they will!), we urge you to follow these guidelines based on biblical principles:

1. From time to time, (hopefully no more than that!), when you don't like or don't agree with what we do or how we do things here, **DON'T come rushing to complain!**
2. First, examine yourself carefully through prayer and Bible study: on that matter, your motives, attitudes etc. God often uses changes, difficulties etc. to break us and make us. Let Him!
3. After that, if you still feel a need to pursue the matter further, carefully prepare your case: what you disagree with, and why; how it can be improved etc. Impulsive reactions and emotional outbursts are usually counter-productive: you're not heard, and you get hurt!
4. Next, arrange a private meeting at a convenient place and time with the person/head of department/ co-ordinator concerned.
5. Please do not go moaning and groaning behind their backs, from person to person. That'll only breed mistrust, chaos, confusion, taking sides etc. Everybody seems to know about the problem, but the very person concerned! God wants us to be spiritually mature, to speak the truth with each other, face to face. And the aim must always be restoration and reconciliation, love and unity.
6. If the matter cannot be resolved between you two, you may raise it at the corporate men's/women's meeting. This "joint evaluation" allows you to gauge what others feel and think about the matter also.
PLEASE MAKE SURE it's **NOT** a personal issue between you and another member, but simply a general church matter which concerns the majority, e.g. worship style, youth activities, communication matters etc.
7. Finally, if you're still dissatisfied, make an appointment to meet with the pastor and elders, to have the matter resolved. We're open to and welcome members' views, ideas, proposals, suggestions and complaints. But we retain the right to make the final decision on all matters relating to church life and ministry.
8. The joint decision by the pastor and elders will give you 3 options:
 - a. You understand, appreciate and accept our explanations for doing what we do, so you can stay on and give whole-hearted support to help fulfil our church vision.
 - b. You don't fully agree with, or fully accept our explanations, but the issues are really not that vital. In this case, you're mature enough to realize that right heart attitudes and right relationships are much more important than just doing the "right thing". So you stay on and give wholehearted support to help fulfil our church vision.

- c. You don't agree with, and can't accept the explanation and decision by the pastor and elders. In that case, you really have no other option, but to leave and join another church which you can agree with.
9. The Bible clearly teaches that God forbids, will not tolerate, but will judge those who want to get their own way through negative talk: murmur, grumble, accuse, judge, criticise, back-bite, gossip, find fault etc. That's because these sinful actions cause strife and division. And they destroy faith, vision, morale and breed mistrust, chaos, confusion and lastly destruction.
10. And we, as servants of the Lord, are clearly commanded to watch over the flock of God, so that these destructive elements are removed from our midst. Please do your utmost to work with us, so that loving unity and peaceful harmony may continue to abound in our midst.
11. If we all follow the given guidelines for resolving conflicts in this church, we believe we'll know God's favour and blessing on all that we do. **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity! For there the Lord commanded the blessing – life forever.” - Ps 133:1,3.**