

Managing Stress and Conflict in the Presbytery
Moderators Conference

The 5 Levels of Conflict

- 1 – A problem to solve**
- 2 – A disagreement**
- 3 - A contest**
- 4 – A fight**
- 5 – Intractable!**

Conflict Management Styles

Avoidance
Negotiation
Collaboration
Coercion
Support

3 Scenarios

- A. You are at home on a quiet Saturday afternoon and the phone rings. It is a member from a neighboring church with whom you have occasionally shared rides to presbytery. The member congratulates you on being elected Moderator of Presbytery and then proceeds to register three complaints – 1) Her pastor is encouraging the Session only to send the portion of the per capita received in a yearly offering to the Presbytery office rather than paying it in full. The pastor believes the presbytery should be grateful they are getting anything with the actions of the past year’s General Assembly! 2) The bands that have been used in Presbytery worship are offensive to the worship of God and this member hopes you will reinstate the singing of the hymns from the Presbyterian Worship Book and 3) This member was elected to serve on the Camp and Conference Committee of the Presbytery last year where she attended one meeting and never received another notice. She wonders if it’s because she spoke against the required sexual prevention training for summer youth counselors. Those kids don’t need to have ideas put in their heads! She expresses hope that you will take care of these concerns and meet her for lunch in a month because “she knows these things take time”.**
- B. An administrative commission created by Presbytery to resolve issues in a church/pastor conflict were given the full powers allowed by the Book of Order including the right to remove the pastor and set aside the Session. After extensive work they informed the Session that they believed it in the best interest of all parties if the pastoral relationship was terminated. They further believed it much better for**

the church if there was a called meeting of the congregation to hear the recommendation to sever the relationship than for the Commission to do it alone. At the congregational meeting the vote was 52 for termination of the pastoral relationship and in favor of the severance package and 53 against. The Commission informed the congregation that they would proceed to sever the relationship believing the vote to indicate the inability of the pastor to reconcile the deep differences in the church. The Commission is to report their action at this Tuesday's Presbytery meeting. You have received seven phone calls informing you that the church has rented a bus and plans on having at least 50 people attend presbytery to "protest" and that they have informed the local newspaper and television station they are coming.

- C. The General Presbyter called and asked you to come to an emergency meeting at his office this afternoon at 3:00. He refused to discuss it over the phone. Although you had a dentist appointment you could tell by the tone of his voice that this was important and so agreed to come. When you arrive, the Moderator of the Committee on Ministry and Presbytery's attorney are also present. The General Presbyter confesses that he has been engaged in an affair with a pastor in the presbytery and is resigning immediately.

Questions for consideration

What is the current level of conflict?

What style is most useful at this initial stage?

What resources do you have available to you?

What do you do?