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Utilizing Conflict in the Church

by

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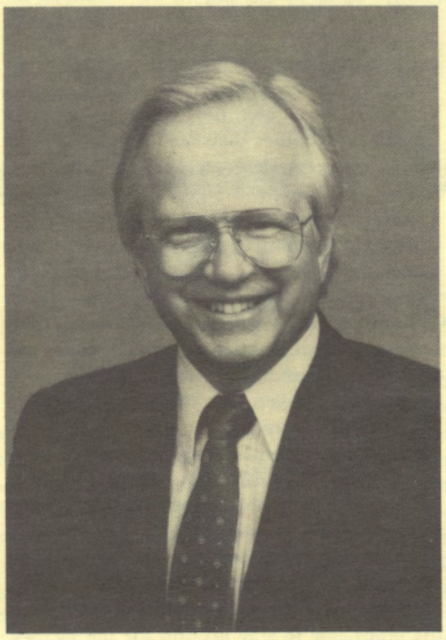
Conflict is to be expected

Three couples were finishing up some dessert following a pleasant evening together. They were good friends, and had met regularly for many years. During a lull in the conversation one of them asked: "Tell me, Pat, how are things going in your church these days?"

Two hours later the two guest couples headed for home. Each of the couples belonged to a different church, and in those two hours they talked about the problems and conflicts that were currently raging in all three of the congregations. "Why can't we just act like church people?" one of them had asked. To which the reply came: "We have been."

This incident illustrates what is recognized by most people who work with congregations today: there is a lot of conflict taking place in churches around the country, but many church leaders do not believe it should be there and do not know what to do about it. The most typical reaction is to ignore it and pretend it does not exist, which often causes the conflict to escalate and lead to more problems than if it was faced when it first surfaced.

People who are experienced with working with conflict suggest that if you want to have less conflict in the church, you ought to encourage it to take place. That is, you ought to encourage differing views to be expressed and get out in the open. Ronald Kraybill[1] reports visiting two congregations on successive weeks that were dealing with very similar issues. One congregation was almost paralyzed by conflict over the issue. The other congregation seemed to be taking it in stride. He asked the pastor of the second church why he felt they were handling things so well, and here was the response: "I figure if you've got this many people growing together, you're bound to have your share of differences." This church, which was not trying to bury conflict, seemed to have less of it.



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The material in this article comes from a six-week course (with the same title) created by the Congregational Development Committee of the Christian Church in Kansas. The course is not designed as a conflict resolution tool for congregations in the midst of conflict, but as 'preventive maintenance' for rather stable congregations that desire to learn how to utilize conflict in their ministry.

Conflict is not all bad. In fact, it can—and often does—lead to very positive results. In the Chinese language, a "crisis" is the word for "dangerous opportunity." One writer makes a very strong statement about the benefits of conflict by saying: "I am sure we can begin by agreeing that every major advance in civilization has resulted from conflict." This is hard to dispute.

Acts 15 describes the Jerusalem Conference. Paul had been preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and not requiring that they be circumcized. Some Jerusalem Christians were upset with this. Paul and Barnabas came down to Jerusalem, they put the issue on the table, and it was settled. That was a great breakthrough that helped lead to the gospel being spread throughout the world.

People are afraid of conflict in the church because they fear it will get out of hand and destroy the congregation. And this can take place. But it does not happen that way most of the time. Church people are normally very strong; they can handle conflict, and, in fact, find some benefit from the challenge. It is fear of what might happen that gets in the way; it is blind obedience to the norm that conflict is wrong or unChristian that sends individuals scurrying to the woods when conflict may be imminent. The group norm that conflict is a no-no is a debilitating concept! Honesty, openness, mutual concern are preludes to growth, change, and new life.

It may be that one of the Church's problems is a lack of the right kind of conflict. One of the "elder statesmen" among church leaders in America, D. Elton Trueblood, has suggested that there is a need to create "holy dissatisfaction" in the church. We need to be asking: "Are we increasing Christ's kingdom? Are we in any sense doing what he intended for the church to be doing?" The Church should be penetrating the world not for its own aggrandizement but to change the world. Almost all of Christ's metaphors for the Church are penetrators—salt to penetrate food and save it from decaying, light to

penetrate darkness, leaven to penetrate the lump. Church leaders should be creating the kind of conflict—a "holy dissatisfaction"—that leads to creative change and a moving forward in the ministry God has given the Church.

Eliminating conflict from the life of the congregation should not be the goal for church leaders (and it would be an impossible one). It is far more fruitful to recognize conflict when it exists, get it out in the open, and seek to find how God can be using the conflict to help the church in its work.

Understanding conflict in the church

Understanding conflict and how it develops in the church can help reduce the intensity of fear that people feel when confronted with confict. Church leaders' first response to a conflict situation may instinctively be, "Oh, no, what's going to happen this time?" But if they know in their minds that conflict need not be destructive and that it may lead to creative opportunities, they may be able to respond more helpfully once the initial emotional reaction settles down a bit.

Speed Leas, a nationally-known church consultant of the Alban Institute,[2] has written about several different levels of conflict which he has observed in churches (and other institutions), and his insights are most helpful for people who want to understand conflict.

Level One conflict is what Leas calls "problem-solving." This is really the ideal situation: the major objective of the leaders is to solve the problems that arise. Real differences are allowed. People are encouraged to disagree and present their ideas. The focus is on the issue, the task at hand. The participants' language tends to be specific and clear. Real differences exist, but people are not hesitant in talking about their ideas; they say it right out. People are willing to take risks, and by and large the parties to the conflict are open with one another about the problem. People are optimistic: "we will be able to work this out." "If you work hard and are sincere, it will get better." The parties believe that rational methods and rational solutions will fix the problem.

Level Two is "disagreement." There is a subtle but powerful shift. People begin to take care of themselves first and then work on the problem. They want to come out looking good. The mood is one of self-protection. The language of the participants' tends towards generalizations, and will probably have a higher emotional content. Some organizations function this way all the time. People are concerned about how they will be evaluated. There is turf-orientation, with a focus on "my department." There is less trust between participants, and not all the data is shared: some cards are kept close to the chest. No one quite knows what's going on, for the language doesn't tell you quite enough (too generalized). People will withhold information that is hurtful to their case and helpful to others. The level of mistrust increases. People start to look for help, and may go outside the immediate organization to tell others what is going on. Participants begin to lose some of their optimism and to think about compromise: "If we are going to resolve this, then everyone will have to compromise." Parties are likely to point out the inaccuracies in the other's cases more to score a point than to solve the problem. Jokes tend to have a hostile edge—zapping—and are received as more than a joke.

The next level, Level Three, is "contest." People shift from self-protection to making sure they win. The major objective is to make sure your position is sustained, that your party wins. Power and control is the concern now, not the issue at hand. The language shifts again, tending to reflect perceptual distortion: dichotomizing (everything is black or white, right or wrong, with few if any grays: "The church is split down the middle!" which is seldom true); universalizing ("you never . . ."; "you always . . ."; "nobody cares"; "everyone's upset"; seldom is this descriptive of what's really happening); magnification (people on the right side are "utterly right"; a magnification of one's own benevolence); deletion (people tell another their feelings but they do not tell them why they feel the way they do; they send feeling messages but will not talk about it; they send feeling messages with no data, deleting information needed to understand what's going on). Groups or coalitions begin to take form, which Leas calls "clumps." These groups do not meet, they have no identifiable leaders, they have no clear boundaries. They include a mixture of people who happen to agree on one particular issue, but may not on other issues. Personal attacks increase, and are substituted for problem identification. Parties do not easily talk informally. Emotional appeals are used to influence rational thinking. There is often a dispute about who initiates peace overtures. In a church, the groups are saying "we've got to do it our way," but they want the other side to stay around for the victory party.

Level Four is "fight/flight," or divorce. The major objective now is to break the relationship either by leaving or getting the other to withdraw. It is not enough to win: you've got to get rid of the opponent. The relationship is moving quickly towards dissolution. There are efforts to hurt, weaken, punish or humiliate the other. People want to purge the organization of the strange, foreign, evil influence (which may or may not be the pastor, in the case of a church). People will act out their feelings by slamming doors, etc., and by using certain words that are guaranteed to be offensive to the others. Clear, identifiable factions begin to emerge, with strong leaders. The groups are probably meeting. The followers will conform to the decisions of the leaders (like in a tribe). One or two will usually be allowed to lead the way. There is less conflict behavior between others within the sub-group and a strong sense of cohesiveness, solidarity and unity, which becomes more important than total group cohesiveness. Attempts to defeat the others are more important than efforts to solve the problem. Parties will push their own will at the expense of the whole. "We're standing on principle now." Parties will attempt to enlist outsiders on their side of the issue (e.g. phone calls or visits to judicatory staff). They are looking for audiences that will see the righteousness of their cause. They do not want a third party to be neutral, but to be on their side. A consultant will be considered dumb because he/she will not take sides. The conflict shifts from issues or causes to principles. Parties attempt to expel one another from the organization.

The highest level, Level Five, is called "intractable." It is not enough to get rid of the other now: they have got to be destroyed. If it is a pastor, he/she must be defrocked as well as fired. People feel called by God to protect the world from the bad people, and it would be ethically irresponsible for them to stop fighting. They have got to stay with the fight, they are so dedicated to doing damage to the other. Parties display themselves to outsiders in larger-than-life terms. Parties perceive themselves to be a part of an eternal cause, fighting for unambiguous principles. Since the ends are all-important, any means justify them. The costs of withdrawal are seen to be greater than the costs of defeating the others; continuing the fight is the only choice, and one cannot choose to stop fighting. Ideological organizations (as opposed to informal "factions") are formed.

Leas does write about a sixth level, which he calls Level Zero, or "anti-conflict." An anti-conflict posture is very common after a traumatic situation. "We are not going to have conflict in this church." People are active in not allowing conflict, suppressing challenges to leadership. This is an unhealthy situation and causes problems, because it involves avoidance and suppression. An organization in this situation cannot adjust to the environment and will stagnate. The anti-conflict level is not unusual for a year or so after a major trauma, but if it continues, nothing very creative will take place.

Most conflicts do not fit neatly into one level or another. It is not at all uncommon for some people to be at Level Three or Four while other members of the congregation do not even know there is any conflict going on. Also, a conflict does not necessarily move from one level to the next level. A Level One or Level Two situation can escalate to Level Four very quickly. In deciding which level of conflict is present in a congregation, it is important to know the approximate percentage of people at various levels. If most of the people are at Level Three and only a couple of families are at Level Four, it is probably a Level Three conflict. If, on the other hand, over one-half of the key leaders are at Level Four while much of the membership is at a lower level, it is probably a Level Four conflict.

An understanding of the various levels can help church leaders—or an outside consultant—assess what is happening and be in a better position to make good decisions about appropriate action. At Levels One, Two, and Three, it can be very helpful to get various people involved in the conflict to talk about their feelings and what they would like to see happen. Communication and trust-building can be useful at these levels (though they are more difficult at Level Three). At Level Four, however, any attempts to "talk things out" will just make matters worse. At this level, clear decisions need to be made by the appropriate ruling bodies in the congregation and these decisions must be enforced. People will simply have to decide whether they can stay in the church if this is the direction it is headed. At Level Four it is *not* wise to empower people who do not agree with the decisions made by the official leadership bodies. People at Level Four are not interested in being heard; they want to be in control. There are times when the church leaders need to say: "This is the kind of church we are and the direction we are going. You are welcome to stay if you can accept these goals. If not, perhaps you would be happier elsewhere."

A congregation's norms for dealing with conflict

Every congregation or organization follows certain *norms* in their everyday life. A norm is a rule the congregation follows (usually unwritten) in how it does things. Often norms are not recognized: "This is the way we do things around here." For every norm there is a *sanction*. A sanction is what is done to people who break the norm. Again, sanctions are usually unwritten, but still quite effective.

For example, in one congregation there was a norm which said that all deacons (they were men at that time) had to wear coats when serving communion, in summer and winter. When women began to serve, the norm still applied to the men. If a man was supposed to serve as deacon and came to church without a coat, and could not/would not borrow one, he could not serve that Sunday. The sanction also included a "tongue lashing:" "You know we wear coats here."

Congregations have norms for how they deal with conflict. For example, one church had a norm that controversial matters were never to be brought out at Board meetings. The sanction was a lecture from the Board moderator along the line of "why are you being a rabble rouser and causing conflict?"

Another congregation had a norm of "always trying to please everyone all the time." If someone pushed an issue to try to force a decision that might be unacceptable to some people, that issue would probably be ignored. The sanction was ignoring the issue and refusal to respond to the person who suggested facing the issue.

A good exercise for leaders of a congregation is to take a look at their norms for dealing with conflict. At a Board meeting or retreat members could be divided into small groups of 4-6 people and asked to discuss these two questions: 1. What are the norms of this congregation in relation to conflict? 2. Which norms are helpful and which are not helpful? After 10-15 minutes (depending on how discussion is going) the small groups could share their list with the larger group. Make a list of those that are most unhelpful, and assign one norm that needs to be changed to each small group and have them suggest how that norm should be changed and what the appropriate sanction should be.

This exercise will help the leaders of a congregation begin to see how they are currently handling conflict, and will point to some directions on what might be done to improve the situation, so that conflict will be dealt with more openly.

What about difficult people?

Most churches have members who might be called "difficult people." They seldom want to try new ideas, they usually look to the past rather than the future, they often complain about what is going on in the life of the congregation, and they commonly enjoy a powerful position in the decision-making process in the church. It does not take much time before pastors can identify the "difficult people" in their congregations.

In a book entitled *Antagonists in the Church,*[3] Kenneth C. Haugk calls these people "antagonists." They are individuals who

> on the basis of nonsubstantive evidence, go out of their way to make insatiable demands, usually attacking the person or performance of others. These attacks are selfish in nature, tearing down rather than building up, and are frequently directed against those in a leadership capacity.

Haugk distinguishes three levels of antagonists, "hard-core antagonists" (seriously-disturbed people with whom you cannot reason), "major antagonists" (who refuse to reason), and "moderate antagonists" (who have less perseverance than the others). Whereas everyone acts antagonistically at times, these individuals have an insatiable need to act this way, and create unhealthy conflict in the church. They look for an issue over which to create a problem, and jump in when there is not strong leadership to thwart them. Most church leaders, both lay people and clergy, want to be nice, friendly, caring, and understanding people, and are thus not very quick to stand up firmly against antagonists. Since antagonists seek out weakness and leadership voids, they will make strong headway against church leaders who are not strong.

Haugk refers to several Biblical passages which he suggests point to the presence of antagonists in congregations, including Ephesians 6:12—"For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Another passage he mentions is Romans 16:17—"I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them."

Haugk suggests that the best way for church leaders not to let antagonists cause unhealthy conflict in the church is to 1) recognize them before things get too unhealthy, and, 2) use appropriate strategies against them. Antagonists, Haugk contends, exhibit several "red flags" that make it possible to recognize them. He identifies twenty red flags. They will often, for example, make comments like "There are X number of people who feel as I do," but antagonists will not identify these people by name. Antagonists also are likely to repeat their tactics. "Once an antagonist, always an antagonist." If a person has acted like an antagonist before, church leaders should keep a sharp eye on him/her.

As for strategies to prevent antagonists from causing too much harm, church leaders should closely follow the constitution and guidelines of the congregation and denomination and not allow antagonists to short-cut the process. Antagonists respond to strength, and will be held in check best by strong leaders who understand what is happening and work effectively to prevent one person—perhaps with a few followers—from controlling the decisions of the church.

The reaction to Haugk's book has been mixed. Some church leaders have found it very helpful. They had experienced the work of antagonists in their congregation, and Haugk's analysis helped them understand what had happened and also helped them to feel less guilty about how difficult it was for them to deal with the situation. Ministers and lay leaders often blame themselves for the havoc caused by antagonists when this is not a valid interpretation of the situation.

Other readers feel that Haugk is too categorical in this book. He labels some people as antagonists, and once they have been identified as such, he sets up very definite guidelines for dealing with them, almost as if they are unredeemable. He draws a strict line between those who are antagonists and those who are not, though it is not easy to know which side of the line particular people are on. Readers who feel this way agree that there are people who act antagonistically in the church and do cause lots of problems and unhealthy conflict, but it is often hard to classify them as antagonists. On some issues they might be quite reasonable even if antagonistic on others. As for dealing with people who act antagonistically, it is important to operate from strength, carefully following the constitution and guidelines, so as not to let antagonistic people have their own way.

Whether or not a congregation's leadership agrees with Haugk's description of certain people as "antagonists," it is important for them to understand that there will be people in the church who hold powerful

positions who do not want to see change take place. Wise leaders will expect this type of opposition and will not be surprised when it appears. They will prepare a clear case for the new directions that the congregation needs to take and be willing to move forward when the majority of the people are ready, in spite of what may be loud and defiant opposition from some of the old guard. Far too often a church board has voted 10 "ayes" and 2 "nays" on a new idea, but the "nays" win the day because they intimidate the others into not moving forward. Very seldom will a church be able to make creative new decisions for ministry and service if the leaders wait until everyone is ready to vote "yes."

Having correct information

Many church leaders think they know how the people in their congregations feel about various issues. "There are a bunch of people against that." "Why, that would split this church right down the middle." "Everyone wants to do this."

All too often, however, church leaders do not really possess accurate information, and may make decisions based on a false understanding of what is going on. How many, for example, is a "bunch?" Sometimes the statement "there are a bunch of people against that" turns out to be only a couple of families. Or a bunch might be a third of the congregation. (There are, of course, those congregations where a couple of families could be a third of the congregation.) And quite often a careful count following a statement that a certain program "would split the church right down the middle" reveals that 20 people are on one side and 80 on the other. This is not to minimize the importance of caring about the feelings of the 20 people, but 20 out of 100 is not "split down the middle."

There are at least three ways to get information about how the people of a congregation feel on a particular subject. The most popular of the three, a questionnaire, is usually the least effective. Written questionnaires are commonly vague: different people understand the questions in a different way, and thus the answers are confusing. If people are asked to mail the questionnaires back to the church or to turn them in on Sunday, most of the fringe people will not be included. The best kind of written questionnaire would be one with two or three simple, direct questions which are inserted in the Sunday bulletins which people are asked to fill out and pass to the end of the aisle to be picked up by an usher during the worship service.

A second kind of survey is to invite outside people—usually judicatory staff assisted by pastors and/or lay people from other congregations—to conduct 30 minute individual interviews with a large number of members. A questionnaire is prepared, but it is filled out by the outside person during the individual interviews. An aggressive telephone calling program is used ahead of time to sign up members for the interviews. This type of survey will usually yield quite accurate data about the number of people who agree/disagree on issues confronting the congregation. It can also help all the members feel that "someone cares about my opinion and feelings," so that the process is as valuable as the results.

The third type of survey is group interviews. An outside person (or more than one) meets for one hour with a group of about 12 people (this is repeated as many times as necessary to include everyone who will attend) and they talk about the issues in the church. The group leader can gain accurate information about how many people are for/against a particular issue, as well as giving people the opportunity to have their say. There are two advantages to the group survey: one, it takes less time from the outside leadership, and, two, it enables members to hear what others are thinking.

Good data-gathering is important in a congregation. Better decisions will be made when the leadership is acting on accurate information. And it is normally helpful to allow as many people as possible to be part of the process.

Is there a vision

A healthy church lives out of a healthy dream. And the size of the dream is crucial. What we expect out of life is usually what we get.

In *Winnie-the-Pooh,* Pooh and Piglet take an evening walk. For a long time they walk in companionable silence. Finally Piglet breaks the silence and asks, "When you wake up in the morning, Pooh, what's the first thing you say to yourself?"

"What's for breakfast?" answers Pooh. "And what do you say, Piglet?"

"I say, 'I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today?' "

Small expectations yield meager results. Unhealthy visions produce sick congregations. A church can choose a "breakfast dream" or an "excitement dream." When congregations have "breakfast dreams" or no dream at all, the time and energy spent on dealing with conflicts will often be wasted. When one conflict is put to rest, the people wait around for another to arise.

In congregations with "excitement dreams," however, the conflicts are more likely to be helpful. When a decision is made to move forward, even when it is a painful decision that comes out of conflict, the congregation will be seeking to fulfil its ministry, not just surviving.

Having a clear vision for where God is leading the congegation will not keep conflict away. In fact, it may increase the amount of conflict. But at least the conflict is more likely to be related to important issues dealing with the call of God to the church to be faithful than over survival issues. Healthy dreams lead to healthy churches, and a church that is frustrated by conflict might well spend energy trying to discover God's vision rather than focusing on internal problems.

Selecting qualified leadership

One way to prevent unnecessary and negative conflict in the church is to select high-quality people for church leadership positions. Typically, the comments heard during a meeting of the Nominating Committee illustrate that very little thought is given to finding the highest quality leadership. "He's not been coming for a year or so; maybe if we elect him to an office he'll start coming back." "She's been so faithful and comes to every meeting; let's nominate her to be moderator." "They'd be willing to say 'yes.' "

The Nominating Committee needs to include mature, spiritual people who know the people in the church and can maintain confidences well. It may be a new committee each year, or it may have rotating membership, with people serving for two or three years and different ones rotating off each year. Also, the Nominating Committee should not just meet at the time that officers need to be elected, but should meet regularly through the year and be giving regular consideration to their task.

As they think about who should be filling the offices for the coming year, they need to establish criteria that make it more likely that qualified people will be elected. These criteria might include the following: 1. Regular worship attendance. Do not seek to bring an inactive member back into activity by nominating a person to an office. 2. Regular financial support of the church. Have the financial secretary check through the list if necessary. 3. Spiritual maturity. Good looks and having reached a certain age are not good enough qualifications. 4. Personal attitudes. Negative, hostile people are not helpful on the church board and committees.

There are other tasks necessary in order to have strong leaders. It can be very helpful to have clear, well-written job descriptions for each position, so people will know ahead of time what is expected of them if they agree to accept a position. Also, job training is essential, so that people can be given the skills they need to fulfill their responsibilities.

Strong lay leadership in a congregation can help assure that conflict will be dealt with maturely and creatively, but it may take several years of careful work by a conscientious Nominating Committee to reach the point where good leaders are trained and in place.

In case of moral problems

One basic principle in utilizing conflict in the church is that issues need to get out in the open where they can be examined and faced. There are times, however, when issues should not be brought before the whole congregation, and it would be wiser to appoint a small *ad hoc* committee to look into them.

One of these issues is when there is the suspicion about the pastor's or a lay person's moral integrity. The Board Chair could appoint a small, blue-ribbon committee of respected people. If the congregation is divided over this or other issues, probably each side should be represented. The task of this committee is to look into the issue and make a recommendation to the Board. They might be well-advised to consult with a judicatory staff person about the nature of their work and the process they decide to use.

The *ad hoc* committee will not report all of the details to the Board, but only their process, conclusions and recommendation. For example, their report might read: "There have been some rumors about certain conduct by our pastor. Our committee has interviewed twelve persons including the pastor and the pastor's spouse and we have concluded that there is no truth to these rumors and that no action needs to be taken." If anyone asks the moderator about these rumors, the moderator can tell the person that the matter has been looked into thoroughly and should be dropped.

If, however, there proves to be substance to the rumor, the *ad hoc* committee's recommendation should still include this recommendation. "There have been some rumors about certain conduct by our pastor. Our committee has interviewed twelve persons including the pastor and the pastor's spouse. The pastor agrees that the findings of the committee are accurate and promises that this behavior will cease." (Or, "the pastor agrees that the findings of the committee are accurate and has submitted his resignation effective in 90 days.")

The purpose of this *ad hoc* committee is to look into sensitive issues without having to bring all of the facts before the whole congregation, but doing it in such a way that the members feel it is being dealt with directly and forthrightly.

A summarizing word

Two things need to be said about conflict in the church. First, some conflict is normal whenever people meet and work together, even in the church. It is not necessarily something evil which we should seek to avoid at all costs. We should expect some conflict to take place.

Second, conflict can lead to creative new beginnings. When church people understand that conflict will be present and make up their minds to accept and recognize it, many good things can happen. When led by the Holy Spirit in understanding whatever conflict arises, we often find that new doors for ministry open before us.

This is not to suggest that good will always come out of conflict, or that everything that results from a conflict in a church will be positive. All too often the hurts are very real, and people pull away from the fellowship as a way of protecting themselves from the pain and suffering. But the pain and the hurt can more likely be kept to a minimum when people are not afraid of facing the conflict and are willing to get it out in the open where everyone involved can clearly see what is going on.

To paraphrase Matthew 18:20, "where two or three are gathered in my name [and get into a big fight], there am I in the midst of them [to help redeem the situation]."

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[1]Kraybill, Ronald, *Repairing the Breach: Ministering in Community Conflict,* Herald, 1981.
[2]Leas, Speed B., *Leadership and Conflict,* Abingdon, 1982.
[3]Haugk, Kenneth C., *Antagonists in the Church,* Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1988.

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"Compassion and Fatigue:
Maintaining Your Compassion Quotient"

This theme, adopted for the Fall 1990 Kansas School of Religion Conference, proved to be very popular to the many registrants who were attracted to the one day workshop. It was sponsored by the Kansas School of Religion with the Washburn School of Nursing and by the Ministerial Associations of Salina, Hutchinson, and Parsons, and by Interfaith of Topeka. Registrations arrived early and due to space limitations, not all registrants could be accomodated. This was the twelfth annual KSR Conference, whose goal has been to help health care and social work professionals to think ethically and spiritually about their work and to help clergy and religious professionals to think clinically about theirs.

The success of these conferences can be attributed to the O'Brians, the participants, and to the local committees, chaired by Kerry Ninemire (Salina), Greta Snell (Hutchinson), Beverly Settle (Parsons), and Faith Spencer and Alice Young (Topeka). A special thanks to the Washburn School of Nursing and to Faith Spencer for her tireless efforts in chairing the State Conference Committee. They have carried on the tradition established so well by earlier committees, the State KSR Committee, and, in particular, Steve Fletcher and the late Lynn Taylor.

1990–1991 KSR Scholars

Darrin Lile entered the graduate program in Religious Studies in August of 1990 with an interest in Christian origins and Greek culture. He received his B.A. degrees from the University of Kansas in Religious Studies and Theatre & Film. He hopes to continue his studies in a Ph.D. program while still working with film and video as research and educational tools.

John L. Allen Jr. is a graduate student in Religious Studies with an interest in medieval Christianity. He received his B.A. in Philosophy from Fort Hays State University and has done subsequent coursework as a Roman Catholic seminarian. Mr. Allen plans to devote special attention to Christian history in the medieval period, focusing specifically on institutional and doctrinal aspects. Upon completion of the M.A. degree he intends to enter a doctoral program and hopes to teach in the field.

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