

Practical Peacemaking: Tools for Communal Conflict Resolution

The reconciliation circle:

This process works best in a level two or three conflict in a small to medium size leadership group. Participants need to be willing to work through conflict toward interpersonal reconciliation. Like any group process careful and clear facilitation is important to protect people from further injury. This process allows relationships to be put right before moving toward working together on issues. All members must be present for this to work.

1. Prepare: Before facilitating this process ensure you understand clearly the dynamics and the process of this exercise. Practice it and check with a supervisor if you are unsure. Make sure you have an exit plan to what to do if things get 'hot' or 'the anxiety level gets too high'.
2. For this exercise you need to do your maths ahead of the session. How many in the group? (e.g. 8 leaders) How many relationships does this represent? (e.g. $8 \times 7 = 56$) At a level three conflict what number of broken or tense relationships would this process be able to handle? Have all of these numbers clear in your mind before starting.
3. Pray together as a team of facilitators
4. Have the group sit around in a circle. Give each participant some slips of paper (A5 or A6 size) and a texta or heavy pen. The number of pieces needs to be equal to one less than the number of participants in the circle. I.e. 1 piece of paper for each other person representing each relationship.
5. Read a short passage of scripture and pray (Maybe something out of Ephesians 4)
6. Outline briefly the purpose of this exercise not the details.
7. Ask the participants to consider each relationship they have with each other person and indicate the health of this by a number 1-5 based on the descriptions below. You might like to put these on a whiteboard. Ask everyone for the time being to keep their reflections to themselves. Do not place names on the papers. One number on each piece of paper representing each relationship.
 1. = This relationship is warm and in good health.
 2. = While this is not a close relationship, I am not aware of any difficulties.
 3. = While there have been issues in the past these have been resolved to the best of my understanding and nothing is currently outstanding.
 4. = There is some unsettledness and tension in this relationship.
 5. = I have a broken relationship with this person - there is substantial hurt and tension.
8. Ask the group to lay down the 4's and 5's in front of them on the floor. This will quickly indicate how many broken and hurting relationships there are in the room.

Caution: If the number of broken relationships is more than 30-40% of the whole then do not proceed past this point. Indicate to the group that the level of conflict is greater than you had previously thought and you would like some further time to consider a different approach.
9. If there are less than 30-40% of relationships at 4 or 5. Ask the group to pick up the pieces of paper and write their own names at the top of the page above the number and then write the first names of the person referred to in each relationship on each and lay

them down again in front of their chairs. No discussion at this point except to explain the process.

10. Ask the participants to stand and without speaking to each other, walk quietly and slowly around in a circle and take note of where their names appear. Allow them to return to their seats and reflect in silence for a few minutes on what they have learned.
11. Ask the participants to pick up their papers and add a further indication in the bottom left corner to each paper that had a 4 or 5.

Ask; “Are you willing to engage in a process of interpersonal reconciliation with this person?” Get participants to add to their papers a response for each relationship.

“Y” = Yes, I am prepared to meet one to one with this person and apologise for hurt I have caused, share where I have been hurt, to offer and receive forgiveness.

“YF” = Yes, I would like to do this but feel I need someone to facilitate or mediate this meeting. I am willing to apologise for hurt I have caused, share where I have been hurt, to offer and receive forgiveness within a facilitated environment.

“N” = No, I am not willing to participate in interpersonal reconciliation with this person.

NB: explain this is not about sorting out the issues but simply about putting relationships right one by one so that we can work together on the issues.

12. Ask the group again to take their pens and walk quietly around the chairs and observe where their name appears and what one to one processes they have been invited into. On finding their name in any place they write their response in the bottom right the paper opposite the “Y”, “YF” or “N” and circle their own response. They also indicate “Y”, “YF” or “N” with a circle. Papers are replaced on the floor.
13. Share what will happen now.
 1. Where both parties have indicated “Y” “Y” - a sheet on interpersonal reconciliation can be collected before they leave and they can be encouraged to make a time within the next 10 days and report back to the facilitators as how this has gone.
 2. Where one or both indicate “YF” arrangements will be made for someone to facilitate their meeting within the next two - three weeks depending on availability. This will be the facilitator's / or oversight group's responsibility to arrange. Assistant mediators may need to be accessed for this.
 3. Where there is an unwillingness to move toward reconciliation indicated by “N” there will be a meeting scheduled with the individual and the facilitators to enable consideration of this individual's role in the process. (Normally an unwillingness to participate in reconciliation by definition requires a person to step down from leadership and rules them out of participation in the next stage of resolution. There needs to be care in how and when this is communicated.)
14. Close with prayer and ask people to spend some time in reflection and consideration of others before contacting each other.

Egs:

Peter and James will need a facilitated session. Peter and Gwen can meet themselves. Craig will need a personal meeting and may be excluded from continuing in the resolution process and it be recommended that he resign from leadership.

Peter 5 James YF <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Peter 4 Gwen Y <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Peter 4 Craig YF N
--	--	------------------------------------