

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

COMPETITION

- win-lose
- either-or
- power to control
- us/them
- argument
- *conflict* -> *battle*-
-> *hate*

COOPERATION

- win-win
- neither-nor
- power to serve
- us-us
- consensus
- *test* -> *risk*-
-> *trust*

- inflict violence**
- sacrifice morality**

- suffer violence**
- high integrity**

Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love



Commitments for Mennonites in Times of Disagreement

“Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:

IN THOUGHT

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| Accept conflict | 1. Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. <i>Romans 14:1-8, 10-12, 17-19; 15:1-7</i> |
| Affirm hope | 2. Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict we can work through to growth. <i>Ephesians 4:15-16</i> |
| Commit to prayer | 3. Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution (no prayers for my success or for the other to change but to find a joint way). <i>James 5:16</i> |

IN ACTION

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| Go to the other... | 4. Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism.* <i>Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15-20</i> |
| ...In the spirit of humility | 5. Go in gentleness, patience and humility. Place the problem between us at neither doorstep and own our part in the conflict instead of pointing out the others'. <i>Galatians 6:1-5</i> |
| Be quick to listen | 6. Listen carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding. Seek as much to understand as to be understood. <i>James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13</i> |
| Be slow to judge | 7. Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name calling, discard threats, and act in a nondefensive, nonreactive way. <i>Romans 2:1-4; Galatians 5:22-26</i> |
| Be willing to negotiate | 8. Work through the disagreements constructively. <i>Acts 15; Philippians 2:1-11</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify issues, interests, and needs of both (rather than take positions).• Generate a variety of options for meeting both parties' needs (rather than defending one's own way).• Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides (not one side's values).• Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so both sides gain, both grow and win).• Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept the possible, not demand your ideal).• Reward each other for each step forward, toward agreement (celebrate mutuality). |

IN LIFE

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| Be steadfast in love | 9. Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. <i>Colossians 3:12-15</i> |
| Be open to mediation | 10. Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation in the larger church. <i>Philippians 4:1-3</i> |
| Trust the community | 11. We will trust the community and if we cannot reach agreement or experience reconciliation, we will turn the decision over to others in the congregation or from the broader church. <i>Acts 15</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In one-to-one or small group disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate.• In congregational, conference district or denominational disputes, this may mean allowing others to arbitrate or implementing constitutional decision-making processes, insuring that they are done in the spirit of these guidelines, and abiding by whatever decision is made. |
| Be the Body of Christ | 12. Believe in and rely on the solidarity of the Body of Christ and its commitment to peace and justice, rather than resort to the courts of law. <i>1 Corinthians 6:1-6</i> |

*Go directly if you are European-North American; in other cultures disagreements are often addressed through a trusted go-between.

THE PATH TO JUSTICE, PEACE AND SHALOME

INJUSTICE,
VIOLENCE,
ALIENATION

ANGER

REDEMPTION
THROUGH
VIOLENCE

→ GIVE IT:

- hate
- revenge
- punish
- control

→ ABSORB IT:

- love
- forgive
- reconcile
- out of control

Principles of Panchayat

The village panchayat is a council of elders drawn from various segments of the social structure of the village. The panchayat itself should be viewed more as a process than as a structure. It is the traditional way of making decisions and settling disputes among villagers of India. Its major function is to maintain peace and harmony in the community and to insure that the fabric of the society remains strong and whole.

In suggesting that this might be a model for the functioning of the local church, we need to realize some modifications are necessary. However, the aspects of plural leadership, consensus decision making, and concern for the unity and harmony of the community as a whole translate well into the church setting. This would be true almost anywhere in the world, but how much more in a society where this process is an integral part of the culture, and will not be understood as something foreign or alien.

Unfortunately, too often missionaries to India insisted on structuring churches along the lines of the democratic processes of the West. The following comparisons are made to help us understand the differences between panchayat and democracy.

	<u>Principles of Panchayat</u>	<u>Principles of Western Law</u>
VIEWPOINT	Therapeutic, to heal society	Punative, to punish evil
JUSTICE	Art of the socially possible	Determine innocence or guilt
STANDARD	Acknowledge cultural and Individual differences	Demand of uniform law system
SCOPE	Total social and historical problem Is reviewed and hidden problems Uncovered	Confined to narrow case at hand-- little concern for extenuating circumstances
APPROACH	Both accuser and accused are on Trial	Adversarial approach. One is presumed innocent, one guilty
MEANS	Consultation with those involved. Each is expected to represent His or her own bias	Trial by a party of supposedly Disinterested and unprejudiced Persons
DECISION PROCESS	Consensus: discussion toward a general agreement as a common Denominator	Majority or unanimous vote of clearly defined body
PARTICIPATION	Open to anyone interested in the case or decision	Limited to witnesses and authorized decision makers
ENFORCEMENT	Social ostracism	Physical punishment, incarceration, and death are the ultimate sanctions

**PRINCIPLES OF
PANCHAYAT**

**PRINCIPLES OF
WESTERN LAW**

VIEWPOINT

JUSTICE

STANDARD

SCOPE

APPROACH

MEANS

CONFLICT RESOLUTION