



# CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

## 1. PURPOSE

It is important to recognize and manage conflict in a healthy manner. Conflict is inherent in any organization. As a growing, thriving church, it is expected that NorthStar Ministries will from time to time experience internal conflict. Conflict can be good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, constructive or destructive.

NorthStar Ministries recognizes that healthy resolution of church conflict requires that those involved value one another as human beings, put forth the effort required to understand opposing points of view, and mutually agree that the good of the congregation is paramount. Members are to be committed to handling conflict in a mature, loving and constructive manner, and are to expect the same of church leadership and staff.

## 2. HEALTHY CONFLICT

NorthStar Ministries recognizes that healthy conflict is necessary to keep an organization mindful of and focused on its mission. Healthy conflict is that in which members deal with their issues up-front and talk directly to those with whom they disagree. They bring substantive evidence with their particular viewpoints and their demands are reasonable. They present their viewpoints as clearly supportive of the mission of the church. They clearly have a deep love for the church, love and respect for the leadership of the church, and are honorable in sharing their viewpoints. They do not make personal attacks on others. They are introspective and concerned that they have correct information. They view themselves as working with the church leadership to find peaceful, loving solutions to the issue at hand for the good of all people concerned. Once a vote is taken on an issue, they support the witness of the body evident in the vote, whether or not they are/were in agreement with the decision. They continue to be constructive and positive in their work for the common good of the church.

## 3. UNHEALTHY CONFLICT

Unhealthy conflict is that in which one or more members, based on non-substantive evidence, makes insatiable demands, usually attacking the person or performance of others. Any such unhealthy conflict has the potential to disrupt and even to destroy the mission and ministry of the church.

NorthStar Ministries recognizes the responsibility of all Members to create and maintain a safe and healthy spiritual environment. NorthStar Ministries understands destructive behavior to be opposed to the creation and maintenance of such an environment.

#### **4. DIRECT DEALING**

It is the policy of the church and its leadership to directly deal with people regarding issues of the church and to instruct all members in direct dealing. The Administrative Team and the Pastoral Team will refuse to deal with proposals or concerns when the proponents of such are not willing to identify themselves by name. A member who purports to represent “many others in the church” or “they” will be asked to identify by name these other individuals. The individuals so named, as well as the person said to represent them, must acknowledge their interest in person or in writing before the concern or proposal will be considered. If the individual(s) is(are) not willing to represent themselves or be identified, the Administrative Team and the Pastoral Team will consider the matter a non-issue.

#### **5. CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Following Scriptural guidelines, persons who have a grievance or concern will be requested to take their concern directly to the person(s) or ministry team involved. If that person or group is unable to resolve the issue then the parties are required to schedule a meeting with the Lead Pastor to assist them in resolving the conflict. This meeting will be held only with all parties present.

If the conflict is still unresolved, the Lead Pastor may request that the Board itself act directly in the matter of seeking a resolution. Again, all parties involved must be present at any meeting called for the purpose of addressing the conflict.

Issues that have not gone through the above process will not be placed on the agenda and will therefore be ruled out-of-order by the Lead Pastor if raised at any Board or Congregational Meeting.

#### **6. EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD DEALING**

It is the policy of the Administrative Board to be aware of unhealthy conflict in the church and to ensure that unhealthy conflict is dealt with immediately and directly. The Board may choose to appoint two members to meet with the person(s) involved in any such activity(s) and discuss the behavior. The goal of all such actions will be the restoration of a loving, ethical and healthy community of faith at NorthStar Ministries.

Members must realize that to deal effectively with issues in the church, they must be willing to take ownership of and be identified with those issues. For the Administrative Board to handle conflicts effectively, it must have access to pertinent information, and further, such information may at times have to be shared with the full Board. Board Members will refrain from being bound to keep secrets regarding church issues. Board Members will refrain from taking part in divisive conversations. When information regarding the church is discussed with one Board Member, that information will be open to all Board Members. Therefore, when talking to church members or other interested parties about church concerns, Board Members must use discretion in the event their confidence (or their assurance of confidentiality) is requested.

#### **7. PERSONAL VS. CONGREGATIONAL ISSUES**

Not all issues brought to the Administrative Board are congregational issues. Because we are a diverse group of people, personal issues may arise. These matters are to be dealt with differently than congregational issues.

- A. A congregational issue has the following identifiable characteristics:
  - 1. A majority of the Administrative Board can witness to several different members having raised the issue in a church meeting or with them in person.
  - 2. Board Members themselves witness to the issue being of concern to the congregation.
  - 3. A substantial number of individual members raise the issue of their own volition rather than having been prompted by the lobbying efforts of another individual in the church.
  - 4. The issue is repeatedly voiced on different occasions by those persons described in items 1, 2, or 3.
  - 5. The issue is especially voiced by trusted members of the congregation, by those who have proven commitment to the mission of the church over time, and/or by individuals or entities who are known to support the common good of the church in positive and constructive ways.
  
- B. A personal issue has the following identifiable characteristics:
  - 1. It is brought up as an issue by only one or a few people.
  - 2. The issue is made known to the Administrative Board only through or as a result of the lobbying efforts of a single individual.
  - 3. The Administrative Board is unable to witness to the matter being a congregational issue as described above.

If the Administrative Board deems that an issue is personal and also believes that the church can assist the person(s) involved, Administrative Board will refer the individual(s) to the appropriate ministry/program or staff persons for support. The Administrative Board will not reconsider personal issues from the same person(s) regarding the same content in subsequent Board of Directors meetings.

## **8. UNITY**

The Lead Pastor should never be uniformed of any conflict situation. Staff and Volunteer Leaders are mandatory reporters of any conflict to the Lead Pastor. The responsibility of informing the Administrative Board regarding conflict rests solely on the Lead Pastor.

In the event a Volunteer Leader withholds information regarding conflict within a ministry team or individual, this will be considered grounds for a mandatory coaching of any Volunteer Leader that kept the conflict secret.

In the event a Staff Member withholds information regarding conflict within a ministry team or individual this will be considered grounds for mandatory resignation. No exceptions will be given. Unity shall be the driving force of ministry at NorthStar Ministries. Without unity our work is in vain.