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Conflict Transformation Skills: An Adult Education Series for Churches

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center offers a unique educational program in conflict transformation to churches for the regular Sunday school hour or a special evening series. The series is designed for those interested in improving their interpersonal peacemaking skills for managing conflicts more effectively in the family, on the job, in the church, and in one's neighborhood. Sessions will involve a combination of lectures, personal exercises, demonstration role-plays and discussion in small groups and in the whole group.

If needed, the series can be lengthened to fit into the hosting church's standard framework for such programs. Other topics which can be added include: **Conflict Transformation Skills for the Family**, or **Conflict Transformation Skills for the Workplace** and others. Additional sessions providing more input on family systems theory and the emotional process dynamics relevant to conflict can also be added.

Session #1 - Introduction: The Nature and Role of Conflict

We often approach conflict with fear and anxiety because we often view conflict negatively. In this session we will suggest that conflict does not need to be bad, but that it can be an opportunity for growth if we approach it using skills and strategies anyone can learn and practice.

Session #2 - Conflict in the New Testament: Finding Renewal in Conflict

The New Testament teaching on conflict supports a positive view of conflict; indeed the Bible makes it clear that conflict can be an arena for divine revelation.

Session #3 - Self Assessment Exercise: Understanding and Improving Your Own Style of Response to Conflict

Because conflict is ultimately a very personal matter, we must first discover what our own preferred style is in responding to conflict before we can know how to work at developing more appropriate and healthy styles. This exercise will not only provide insight into one's own style, but it will also help us to understand and respond appropriately to the conflict styles of others.

Session #4 & #5 - Interpersonal Peacemaking Skills: How to be Effective When People are Angry

We will discuss the full range of communication skills that are useful in transforming conflict, with particular attention given to listening and other collaborative skills. Given the "hands-on" nature of the training, participants will have ample opportunity to practice the skills during the sessions.

Session #6 - An Introduction to Mediating Conflict Between Individuals

This session will provide an overview and demonstration role-play of the process for mediating interpersonal conflicts. Various models will be discussed where mediation can be used in the community.

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All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. – 2 Corinthians 5:18

Session #7 & #8 - Congregational Conflict: Understanding Conflict in Groups and How to Manage it

Conflict can either tear groups apart or bind them closer together. To bind a group together in conflict, group leaders must be able to classify the nature of the conflict properly and be able to implement a procedure that will confront the issues directly while giving opportunity for all sides to be heard. This session will empower leaders to manage conflict in a way that enhances the spirit of community within groups.

The leader for the series would be either Richard Blackburn, LMPC Executive Director, Victoria Wilcox, LMPC Assistant Director, or Bob Williamson, who serves with LMPC in an Adjunct Faculty role. LMPC staff have broad experience in mediating a wide variety of interpersonal and organizational disputes, in addition to training people in conflict transformation skills. In addition to their long involvement in issues related to Christian peacemaking, their training in family systems theory makes them uniquely qualified to lead conflict transformation

Some comments from previous participants in the conflict transformation skills workshop led by LMPC staff:

“ I came away learning effective and practical methods that I can use in life situations in my family and in my work.”

“It was time well spend; it gave me new ideas to think about, new ways to communicate. It made me aware of how important listening is in our everyday lives.”

“Extremely valuable material... lots to learn and use.”

“Very worthwhile—concrete ideas about recognizing and dealing with conflict.”

“Well done and helpful, certainly a timely topic... and hopeful!”

“Extremely practical for daily living—challenging participants to reflect upon their own patterns of responding to conflict.”

“This workshop was full of information and interaction, and those who missed it... missed it!”

“It was very practical and helpful for every area of my life — work, family, personal, etc.”

“I was honestly challenged and given proof of ideas in action, not just the words to describe the ideal.”

“Make arrangements now to participate in an event like this presented by this person.”

Groups interested in exploring the possibility of hosting this event can contact the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at the above address or phone number.