

CONFLICT AND PEACE AT BATHURST UNITED

PREAMBLE

We begin by stating that it is important to value healthy conflict and to prevent or resolve destructive conflict. Healthy conflict deals with ideas, facts, methods, and alternative ways of looking at an issue or situation, while destructive conflict focuses on such issues as differences in personalities or communication styles.

Just as conflict has both positive and negative attributes, so does peace. Negative peace is simply the absence of violence, both physical and emotional (in other words, don't rock the boat), whereas positive peace must include open and active justice for all.

The purpose of this conflict resolution process is to create a safe community in which each person is treated with respect and dignity. We aim to foster a culture of openness and trust so that everyone feels welcome to bring forward a concern or to express a difference of opinion. It is also important that if someone appears to be treated badly and is not speaking up for themselves, that others speak up.

This process will apply to members, former members, volunteers, paid personnel, contractors, and visitors. It provides an opportunity to improve communication and understanding. It is also an attempt to ensure that our community takes responsibility for dealing with conflict in a fair and transparent way so that situations are prevented from escalating or festering.

Everyone is encouraged to deal with concerns by direct, informal communication whenever possible and to be open to different perspectives and new insights, "to find that of God in us and in others." A sincere apology can go a long way in some instances. Some disagreements may not need to be addressed immediately, as long as they don't build up resentments, distrust, or hurt. The goal is to prevent destructive conflicts by creating a caring, thoughtful community where everyone feels free to express deeply felt concerns respectfully and explore issues with an open mind without fear of reprisal.

Community building is a constant and active process. When the community becomes too comfortable, community building may slow down or even come to a standstill. To renew our relationships as God's people and remain dynamic and open to change, let us expect and welcome challenges that will undoubtedly occur. Our aim is to constantly move our community toward the positive of both conflict and peace.

We acknowledge the contribution of the new resource by Matt Legge of Canadian Friends Service Committee, "Addressing Conflict Among Friends" (2021), in the writing of this preamble.

GUIDELINES FOR OUR LIFE TOGETHER

As members of Bathurst, we value:

Community, Love, and Compassion
Difference, Validation, and Equality
Integrity, Honesty, and Humility
Patience, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation
Respect, Trust, and Confidentiality
Embracing Peace and Justice

We recognize that each person is unique, and we celebrate one another.

COME	Risk showing up as you are at the moment, open to something new.
CENTRED	Recognize that we are valued, capable and lovable, and respond to others in acknowledgment that they are valued, capable and loveable.
and READY to PARTICIPATE	LISTEN with an open heart; HEAR the truth of the one speaking, becoming aware of your judgements, assumptions and biases and letting them go. SPEAK and ACT in a kind, life-giving way, recognizing the potential for growth in differing opinions.

We commit to being an open, welcoming, and affirming community, working to eradicate all forms of discrimination, supremacy, and oppression.

We acknowledge the reminders of how to participate respectfully from 'Sharing Sacred Spaces,' during online visits to the worship places of other religions (2020-21).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

A key component of the process outlined below is the establishment of a Conflict Processing Circle. This is a group of three to five people to be nominated by the congregation (including self-nomination) and selected from the nominees by the Volunteer and Personnel Committee. The final step is endorsement by the congregation.

The role of the members of the Conflict Processing Circle will be:

- to make themselves available to provide support and mediation in situations of conflict in the congregation or when members of the congregation are not respecting the values of Bathurst United as articulated in this document.
- to listen and be present to both parties, to help clarify what is being said, and to assist in finding and articulating common ground. The Conflict Processing Circle member will not judge or assign blame.
- to provide education and resources to the congregation on the topic of peace building and dealing with situations of conflict.

Members of the Conflict Processing Circle will be trained in conflict resolution and have the skills and aptitude to do this work.

Process involving an individual

If you find yourself in a hurtful or conflict situation with another member of the Bathurst community, and have discerned that you would like to resolve it, the community agrees on the following process:

- Ideally, speak with the person directly, asking clearly for what you would like to see happen and seeking resolution
- If needed, speak to a member of the Conflict Processing Circle
 - For advice as to how to proceed
 - To join you as a neutral party in discussion with the other person
- The Conflict Processing Circle member will listen to discover:
 - What is happening that is creating this situation?
 - What needs are arising for the individuals involved?
 - What actions need to be taken and by whom?
- If the Conflict Processing Circle member determines that they have done everything they can, and the conflict remains unresolved, the option exists to invite one or two Conflict Processing Circle members to assist. A further option would be to reach out beyond the congregation to the United Church or to a private consultant, though the goal is that conflicts will be resolved within the congregation whenever possible.
- The above options can also be followed:

- if you feel someone in the Bathurst community is not respecting our Bathurst values (such as witnessing bullying or hurtful behaviour that has not been challenged).
- if a Bathurst member is aware of someone who has left the congregation as a result of a conflict for whom the process might be healing for both the former member and the congregation

Process for situations impacting the whole community

In situations where conflict or hurtful behaviour or a breach in values impacts the entire congregation, the Conflict Processing Circle will:

- **stop** - and note how the community's well-being has been affected.
 - **look** - at what has happened to disrupt the community's state of equilibrium and ability to undertake its mission.
 - **listen** - to the participants involved in the breach or discord separately and in a community circle of support (with talking stick) to discover what needs are arising.
 - **take action** - to help heal relationships and re-build community.
- For all congregational and committee meetings it is recommended that we review the following Holy Manners at the start, and assess how we did at the end:
 - Allow for full and equitable participation
 - Listen carefully without interruption
 - Welcome a conflict of ideas
 - Speak from an "I" position
 - Consider what we share outside the meeting

(adapted from Holy Manners, United Church of Canada)

Our appreciation goes to the members of Bathurst United for their input and contributions to the development of this process. June, 2021