



2200 Briarwood Way
Birmingham, Alabama 35243
(205) 776-5650

Providing sound biblical and practical theological training to equip leaders for Christ's Church...

Semester: Fall 2020 **Credits:** 2 Hours
Day & Time: Thur, 5:30–7:30pm VC **Course:** PT5621 Conflict Resolution in the Church
Instructor: Prof. Kuna Griggs **E-mail:** kunagriggs@yahoo.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to lay the foundation for biblical approaches to resolving conflict within the context of the church. Course content covers the significance of conflict resolution in the church, common contributing factors of church conflict, biblical wisdom for preventing and resolving church conflict, the biblical process of church discipline, and legal ramifications associated with church conflict resolution.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Summarize biblical approaches in resolving conflict within the context of the church.
- Explain the importance of church conflict resolution.
- Identify common contributing factors of church conflict.
- Apply biblical strategies for preventing and resolving church conflict.
- Exegetically examine biblical passages related to church discipline.
- Assess legal ramifications associated with church conflict resolution.
- Formulate a biblically appropriate course of action for an actual case of church conflict.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. ISBN-13: 978-0801064852.

Barthel, Tara Klena and David V. Edling. *Redeeming Church Conflicts: Turning Crisis into Compassion and Care*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. ISBN-13: 978-0801014284.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Poirier, Alfred. *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006. ISBN-13: 978-0801065897.

Susek, Ron. *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. ISBN-13: 978-0801090912.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Since this course is Video Conference only, all Course Requirements must be submitted through email to kunagriggs@yahoo.com no later than 11:59pm on the due date. Class participants will receive a confirmation email reply stating “Received” within 24 hours of submission. If there is no reply within 24 hours confirming reception of your submission, call or text the professor. Late submissions will incur -3 points per day.
 - Complete the **Signature Page**, confirming that you have carefully read this syllabus, understand it, and willingly accept the responsibilities associated with successfully completing this course. Return the signed page to the professor by **September 24th**.
 - **Interaction Forms:** Class participants will complete 2 Interaction Forms—one on Sande’s *The Peacemaker* and one on Malone’s *How Faith Resolves Conflict*. An **Interaction Form Outline** is attached and entails summarizing the content, giving an overall rating of the content, noting insights you gained, and how those insights affect or will affect your personal life and Christian service. Interactions must be 3-5 pages in length. *The Peacemaker* Interaction is **Due October 22nd** and the *How Faith Resolves Conflict* Interaction is **Due October 29th**. Access the audio file of Malone at https://media.thirdmill.org/mp3-16/Malone_G36_Gen13_1to18.mp3 from the Thirdmill website. **Certificate students** are not required to complete the audio assignment and Interaction Form on Malone’s *How Faith Resolves Conflict*.
 - **Mid-Semester Quiz:** Mid-semester, class participants will be emailed a quiz based on content from Sande’s *The Peacemaker*. Class participants will receive the Quiz through email, complete it without any notes or resource material, and email the completed Quiz back to the professor. A Study Guide for the Quiz will be provided on **October 1st**. The date of the Quiz is **October 22nd**.
 - **Book Critique:** Class Participants will critique *Redeeming Church Conflicts* by Barthel and Edling. Critiques are to respond in written form to the following critical assessments:
 - a) **Summarize** the main theme and any major secondary theme(s) of the book. The summary should demonstrate your comprehension of the content.
 - b) **Analyze** the claims or arguments the authors set forth. Your analysis should focus primarily on how faithfully you think the authors have interpreted and applied Scripture.
 - c) **Evaluate** whether the content of the book takes into account all of Scripture (do the claims or arguments consider Scripture as a whole or are there instances of isolated proof-texting?). Cite instances from the book with page numbers to support your evaluation.
 - d) **Explain** why you agree or disagree with the conclusions set forth in the book, using Scripture to support your conclusions. Also discuss the book’s strengths and weaknesses.
- Redeeming Church Conflicts* Book Critiques are to be a minimum of 4 pages, in Turabian format (each assessment being a separate section), and submitted by **December 3rd**. **Certificate students** are required to read the book, but are not required to submit a Critique.
- **Reading and Audio Completion Record** (attached): Class participants will maintain a record of personal reading and audio assignment completion. The Reading Completion Record is **Due December 3rd**.

- **Case Study & Presentation:** class participants will submit a written case (of an actual conflict situation they have experienced or are experiencing and present their Case Study to the class. Pseudonyms for people and churches should be used for discretion. The written portion must be 8-10 pages in length (6-10 pages for certificate students) and entail the following elements:
 - a) an overview and background of the situation
 - b) an analyses of the situation from a cultural perspective, emphasizing the dynamics of the church community or interpersonal relationships and any potential legal ramifications.
 - c) a discussion of biblically legitimate ways to approach the situation.
 - d) an assessment of whether the church discipline process of Matthew 18:15-20 is warranted
 - e) a concluding paragraph which includes strategies that might prevent similar future conflicts

Presentations are Due December 3rd and December 10th; an Oral Presentation Rubric is attached. Written Case Studies must be a minimum of 4 pages (not including Title Page or Bibliography), in Turabian format (each element being a separate section), and are Due December 3rd. A Form & Style Guide to Turabian can be obtained through the BTS website or the professor.

GRADING WEIGHT & COMMENTS

Course Requirement	Grade Weight	Comments
Interaction Forms	20% of final grade	Each Interaction Form is 10% for MA students and 20% for Certificate students.
Mid-Semester Quiz	20% of final grade	25% for Certificate Students
Book Critique	20% of final grade	Certificate students are not required to submit a Critique, thus greater weight will be allocated to other assignments
Completion Record	7% of final grade	12% for Certificate Students
Case Study Paper	20% of final grade	25% for Certificate Students
Case Study Presentation	13% of final grade	18% for Certificate Students

COURSE SCHEDULE

Day	Date	Agenda & Assignments
Thursday	Sep 10	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Syllabus • Identify a biblical theology of spiritual, relational, and physical conflict, using only the Bible <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>The Peacemaker</i>: Preface and Part 1 – Glorify God
Thursday	Sep 17	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss a biblical theology of spiritual, relational, and physical conflict, using only the Bible <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>The Peacemaker</i>: Part 2 – Get the Log Out of Your Eye

Day	Date	Agenda & Assignments
Thursday	Sep 24	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the biblical significance of conflict against and among the covenant community, using only the Bible <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due: the signed Signature page • Read <i>The Peacemaker</i>: Part 3 –Gently Restore
Thursday	Oct 01	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Guide Provided for <i>The Peacemaker</i> Quiz • Discuss the biblical importance of conflict resolution in the church, using only the Bible <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>The Peacemaker</i>: Part 4 – Go and Be Reconciled and Conclusion: The Peacemaker’s Pledge
Thursday	Oct 08	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss Parts 1–2 of Sande’s <i>The Peacemaker</i> <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>The Peacemaker</i>: Appendix A – F
Thursday	Oct 15	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall Break: No Seminary Classes
Thursday	Oct 22	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss Parts 3–4 of Sande’s <i>The Peacemaker</i> • Due: Complete <i>The Peacemaker</i> Quiz and submit it by 11:59pm <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to Thirdmill audio: <i>How Faith Resolves Conflict</i> by Mike Malone. The audio file can be accessed from the Thirdmill website at https://media.thirdmill.org/mp3-16/Malone_G36_Gen13_1to18.mp3 • Due: <i>The Peacemaker</i> Interaction Form
Thursday	Oct 29	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss the Conclusion and Appendix A–F of Sande’s <i>The Peacemaker</i> <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i>: Intro (pp. 11-21) and Section 1 – Perspective • Due: <i>How Faith Resolves Conflict</i> Interaction Form
Thursday	Nov 05	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss <i>How Faith Resolves Conflict</i> by Mike Malone <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i>: Section 2 – Discernment
Thursday	Nov 12	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discuss Sections 1–2 of Barthe and Edling’s <i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i>: Section 3 – Leadership

Day	Date	Agenda & Assignments
Thursday	Nov 19	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss Sections 3–4 and the Conclusion of Barthe and Edling’s <i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read <i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i>: Section 4 – Biblical Response and Conclusion – The End of Church Conflict is Never the End
Thursday	Nov 26	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanksgiving Break: No Seminary Classes
Thursday	Dec 03	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due: Written Case Studies & Presentations <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due: <i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> Book Critique Due: Reading Completion Record
Thursday	Dec 10	<p>Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Due: Presentations

BTS FORMAT, STYLE, AND WRITING STANDARDS

BTS has adopted Turabian as the standard for writing formal papers. Students should reference the BTS Student Handbook on academic integrity/plagiarism and Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 9th ed.* Below is a formal paper Grading Rubric:

A to A-	B to B-	C to C-	D to D-
Correct spelling and grammar/punctuation	Minor errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Many errors in spelling or grammar/punctuation	Difficult to read due to English writing errors
Smooth writing that provides for effective and efficient reading	Writing is acceptable, but not as organized and coherent	Writing is not smooth, sometimes confusing and inconsistent	Writing lacks clarity, focus, structure, and is incoherent
Person and format are proper for assignment	Person and format are inconsistent	Person and format are not appropriate	Person and format are totally inappropriate
Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriately used, cited, and clearly supports main argument	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are appropriate but need more depth and use of critical thinking	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are inadequate for main argument and do not reflect understanding	Scripture, paraphrases, quotes, and summaries are improperly used, overused, under used, or cited in error
Paper completely conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper generally conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper somewhat conforms to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>	Paper does not conform to Turabian’s <i>Manual for Writers</i>

CLASS POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Refer to Student Handbook:

<https://bts.education/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Student-Handbook-2016-Current.pdf>

INTERACTION FORM OUTLINE

Name:

Date:

Course Title:

Title of Book/Audio:

Author/Speaker:

Your Rating of the Book/Teaching (1 lowest – 10 highest) and Why:

Book/Audio Summary:

What insights have you gained and of what significance are they for your life and/or ministry?

ORAL PRESENTATION RUBRIC

	Delivery	Content/Organization	Audience Engagement
4: Excellent	<p>Holds audience attention with direct eye contact, seldom looking at notes</p> <p>Speaks with fluctuation in volume and inflection to maintain interest and emphasize key points</p>	<p>Demonstrates competent knowledge of subject by answering class questions elaborately</p> <p>Provides pertinent facts, examples, and support for ideas and conclusions</p>	<p>Shows strong enthusiasm about topic during entire presentation</p> <p>Significantly increases audience interest and understanding of subject</p>
3: Good	<p>Consistent use of direct eye contact, sometimes looking at notes</p> <p>Speaks with satisfactory variation of volume and inflection</p>	<p>Demonstrates sufficient knowledge of subject by answering class questions adequately</p> <p>Provides facts and support for ideas and conclusions</p>	<p>Shows some enthusiasm about presentation topic</p> <p>Increases audience awareness and understanding of subject</p>
2: Fair	<p>Occasional eye contact with audience, generally looking at notes</p> <p>Speaks with inconsistent intonations</p>	<p>Demonstrates some knowledge of subject, but is only able to answer rudimentary questions</p> <p>Provides some support for ideas and conclusions</p>	<p>Displays mixed feelings about presentation topic</p> <p>Contributes to audience understanding of subject on some points</p>
1: Deficient	<p>Holds no eye contact with audience, mostly reading from notes</p> <p>Speaks in low volume and monotonous tone</p>	<p>Demonstrates insufficient knowledge of subject and cannot answer questions</p> <p>Provides weak or no support for ideas</p>	<p>Shows little or no interest in presentation topic</p> <p>Makes little or no significant contribution to audience understanding</p>

ANNOTATED SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Barthel, Tara K. and David V. Eding. *Redeeming Church Conflicts: Turning Crisis into Compassion and Care*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012. In this book, Barthel and Eding guide readers through the Acts 15 model of approaching conflict in order to demonstrate a clear and godly pattern of redemptive reconciliation, regardless of how the people involved respond or fail to respond. From their experience as Peacemaker educators and mediators employing the model of Acts 15, Barthel and Eding present four universal principles: Eternal Perspective, Discernment, Shepherd Leadership, and Biblical Response. These are not a formula, but a set of broad directives that are applicable to most situations, no matter how complex.
- Cunningham, Thomas Frank. *Conflict Resolution Strategies and the Church: The Church's Role as an Agent of Social Change in the Political Conflict in South Africa*. This dissertation investigates the significance conflict resolution as a meaningful ministry of the Church in ecclesial, social and political conflict. The research focuses on the Church's role in socio-political conflict during the years of the National Party rule in South Africa. The thesis is that conflict, inherent in all human experience, is not good or evil. Rather it has the potential for destruction and transformation. The scope of reconciliation includes (a) the initiative of God, (b) addressing the predicament of alienation, brokenness and distress (c) through the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ the Mediator (d) who reconciles the universe to God.
- Halverstadt, Hugh F. *Managing Church Conflict*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991. In this instructive book, Halverstadt advocates a Christian vision of shalom for an ethical process of conflict management. He maintains that respectfulness, assertiveness, accountability, and a focus on the common good should be standard Christian behavior. The book is organized according to an in-depth *Flow Chart for Managing Church Conflict* that addresses the dynamics of interpersonal and group conflicts that influence the entire congregation. It also offers advice on how to educate, coach, manage, and/or constrain the parties involved.
- Poirier, Alfred. *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. Poirier argues that seminaries do well in training pastors in biblical exposition, well-ordered worship, and good theology, but not with practical know-how about one of the most important functions they will be expected to perform—conflict resolution. He provides a survey of the nature and kinds of conflict typical in the pastorate, explains the importance of a reconciliation ministry, proposes a theological framework for peacemaking, and suggests practical tools for facilitating the peacemaking process.
- Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004. Sande presents a comprehensive and practical theology for conflict resolution designed to foster harmony. Sande takes readers beyond resolving conflicts to life-changing reconciliation with family members, coworkers, and fellow believers. Sande also shares practical wisdom from his years of experience as an attorney and as president of Peacemaker Ministries.

Susek, Ron. *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. Susek offers practical suggestions on how to avoid and overcome the destructive relational conflicts many churches have experienced with members, and leaders. He believes church conflicts progress in six phases: 1) Sparks, 2) Sparks Igniting a Firestorm, 3) Firestorm in Full Fury, 4) Consuming Winds, 5) the Final Burn, and 6) Rebuilding on Burnt Timbers.

Journal Articles

Carson, Donald A. "On Abusing Matthew 18." *Themelios*, 36 no 1 (May 2011): 1-3. Carson challenges the use of Matthew 18 to accusingly ask, "Did you communicate with that person in private before rebuking him or her publicly?" Carson contends that at least two facts of the text must be observed: 1) The sin described in the context of Matthew 18:15–17 takes place on the small scale of what transpires in a local church. And 2) In Matt 18, the sin in question is, by the authority of the church, excommunicable.

Hollenberg, Nathan. "Matthew 18: A Call for Communication Not Excommunication." *Brethren Life and Thought*, 61 no 2 (Fall 2016): 16-24. Hollenberg observes that it is common for scholars and church leaders adopt a default position of either avoidance based on the assumption that churches should have no conflict or authoritarian discipline based on their interpretation of Matthew 18:15-20. Hollenberg proposes a third way that reconsiders the text of Matthew 18 in tandem with wisdom gleaned from the field of conflict transformation.

Laney, J Carl. "The Biblical Practice of Church Discipline." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 143 no 572 (Oct–Dec 1986): 353-364. Laney references The Belgic Confession (1561) to identify three marks "by which the true church is known." These marks are 1) the preaching of pure doctrine, 2) the administration of the sacraments, and 3) the exercise of church discipline. He posits that renewed interest in the third characteristic has risen out of several highly publicized cases in which church discipline resulted in lawsuits against the pastor and church leaders. Laney offers a fresh look at the biblical doctrine of church discipline to guide reluctant churches through procedures for a scriptural restoration of fallen saints.

Robertson, C. K. "Courtroom Dramas: A Pauline Alternative for Conflict Management." *Anglican Theological Review*, 89 no 4 (Fall 2007): 589-610. Robertson notes the tendency among many in the Episcopal Church to use litigation or the threat of litigation as a weapon in ongoing conflicts between members. He examines 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, an oft-neglected passage, to discuss the destructive nature of lawsuits in a first-century Pauline community. Combining biblical exegesis with sociological tools, this article explores the apostle's use of familial imagery in reshaping the corporate self-understanding of church members, and the relevance of that approach for Episcopal Christians today.

Taylor, Thomas F. "Will Your Church Be Sued? How to Anticipate and Avoid Lawsuits in an Age of Litigation Overkill." *Christianity Today*, 41 no 1 (Jan 06 1997): 42-45. In response to an increased number of lawsuits filed against ministers and churches, Taylor proposes concrete steps to lessen the likelihood ministers and churches being taken to court. Since lawsuits vary, Taylor discusses what he calls the "seven deadly lawsuits" which are particularly damaging to churches because they involve claims of moral as well as legal wrongdoing.

READING COMPLETION RECORD

Name: _____

PT5621 Conflict Resolution in the Church

Fall 2020

Due Date	Reading or Audio Assignment	% Done
Sep 10	<i>The Peacemaker</i> : Preface and Part 1 – Glorify God	
Sep 17	<i>The Peacemaker</i> : Part 2 – Get the Log Out of Your Eye	
Sep 24	<i>The Peacemaker</i> : Part 3 – Gently Restore	
Oct 01	<i>The Peacemaker</i> : Part 4 – Go and Be Reconciled	
Oct 01	<i>The Peacemaker</i> : Conclusion: The Peacemaker’s Pledge	
Oct 08	<i>The Peacemaker</i> : Appendix A – F	
Oct 22	Thirdmill Audio: <i>How Faith Resolves Conflict</i> by Rev. Mike Malone MA students only	
Oct 29	<i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> : Intro (pp. 11-21)	
Oct 29	<i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> : Section 1 – Perspective	
Nov 05	<i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> : Section 2 – Discernment	
Nov 12	<i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> : Section 3 – Leadership	
Nov 19	<i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> : Section 4 – Biblical Response	
Nov 19	<i>Redeeming Church Conflicts</i> : Conclusion – The End of Church Conflict is Never the End	



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STUDENT SIGNATURE

Your signature below indicates that you have read this syllabus, understand it, and willing accept the requirements and responsibilities for successfully completing this course.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____