

Hamline Church, United Methodist

Living By the Rule of Christ

It is the belief of the Church that allowing conflict to go unaddressed is not healthy for the Body of Christ. The Bible provides us a guide for how to resolve conflict in Matthew 18. Often called the “Rule of Christ,” we have utilized this teaching to develop our process for dealing with conflict within the church.

Matthew 18: 8-20

If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; It is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and thrown into the hell of fire. If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two of others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

When a concern or conflict develops within Hamline Church the following steps are to be followed:

1. Discern God’s will (verses 8-9) – the concerned party(s) should spend time praying to discover whether this concern should be brought forth. The person should engage in reflective thinking on the situation as to:
 1. Can I let it go or do I need to work for resolution?
 2. What part am I responsible for?
 3. What does God want?
2. If the concern can not be let go, then go to the other person (or the church committee it involves) in order to work it out (verses 15 & 16):
 1. Be aware of my assumptions
 2. Listen first to the other party
 3. Share my view with “I” messages
 4. Bring a witness or facilitator to the meeting if desired

If steps 1 and 2 are completed and issues still exist, then members should move to step 3 involving the Staff/Parish Relations Committee & Senior Pastor (verses 17).

3. Staff/Parish Relations Committee & Senior Pastor are contacted and a one-page concern summary form is completed by the concerned party(s)
 1. Concern summary forms are available on the Hamline Church website (www.hamlinechurch.org) or from the the church office (651-645-0667).
 2. Summary should be sent to the Staff/Parish Relations Committee and the Senior Pastor
4. The Staff/Parish Relations Committee will review using the method of Mutual Invitation outlined below at their next meeting. If needed, the chair and the Senior Pastor may meet with concerned party(s) in person prior to the meeting.
 1. Copies of the concern summary are passed out to the committee members at the meeting
 2. Time will be given for reading and silent reflection. Members may write down their thoughts during the reflection period.
 3. A process of Mutual Invitation is intended to encourage participation from all members in a group. The first person of SPRC shares their point of view. No comments are allowed from the group. They then invite the next person to share. That person may share (or not) and then invite the next person to share. Continue to do this until all have been invited to share.
 4. The conversation is then opened up to let persons respond and discuss.
 5. The Staff/Parish Relations Committee group discussion should focus on:
 - i. How can and/or should we help?
 - ii. Possible solutions for this concern are....
5. Staff/Parish Relations Committee will assist in producing and carryout mutually agreed upon steps towards resolution.
 1. Agree on next steps
 2. Assign responsibilities
 3. Review the meeting and determine communication protocol

Matthew 18: The Rule of Christ

Talk WITH God (discern) v.8-9

The first step in the Rule of Christ is to examine your own role in the conflict. Take this concern to God. Pray about it. And then ask these questions:

- Can I let it go?
- What part am I responsible for?
- What does God want? What is God's point of view?

If the conflict is not resolved then you need to prepare for a one on one meeting with the other person.

Talk to the other (“carefront”) v.15

This next step is a one on one meeting with the other person. Think about approaching this person and working together to find a resolution that is satisfying for both. You might think of this as “carefronting” the other person. Prepare for this meeting by finishing these sentences.

- Help me understand...
- Tell me more about...
- I feel...

RULE OF CHRIST DISCERNMENT JOURNAL

Begin in prayer. Ask God for direction and then complete this journal. Briefly identify the issue: (Use only one sentence. This will help you focus)

Your position on the issue:

Your perception of the other person's/group's position on the issue:

Put yourself in the other person's/group's shoes. What might they say that you have contributed to the conflict?

Describe the need you want to have addressed. There is a need for:

What are some possible Scripture images for this situation:

Is there a history behind your concern? Is this history impacting your reactions?

What steps can you take to remain calm, confident and connected to the other person?

Matthew 18 provides a process Christians can use to resolve conflicts. The first step in this process (verses 8- 9) asks you to examine yourself. This journal will help you do that. The second step in the process (verse 15) is to go directly to the person, "when the two of you are alone" and work it out if you can