

BY-LAW PROPOSAL APPROVED BY MUTUAL MINISTRY 2/24/11
AN INSTRUMENT OF PEACE
Grievance Reconciliation Procedure
BY-LAW FOR ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, TAMAQUA, PA
By-Law Chapter 16: Discipline of Members and Adjudication

16.1 *Introduction:* This By-Law, *Grievance Reconciliation Procedure*, based on Matthew 18:15-17, provides a formalized way to deal with problems and becomes the accepted way grievances are addressed by Zion leadership. Here is a Biblical way of approaching the grievances, disagreements, and concerns that are always present in any church or human organization. It should help members learn habits appropriate for Christians. Its use should help the Zion congregation to sustain relative peace and harmony in Christ without having to use the "Discipline of Members" procedure described in our Constitution Chapter 15.

16.2 Parking lot meetings, gossip, complaining to others, personal attacks, quiet withdrawal—church members have developed many *ineffective* methods for dealing with grievances.

16.3 When a member raises a concern, he/she is advised of the process for addressing it. *The Mutual Ministry Committee will be proactive in identifying conflict within the congregation and prayerfully helping members find resolution.* This assures that the Pastor and Church Council members are not dealing with second-hand complaints or other indirect ways of registering complaints.

Matthew 18:15-17

16.4 15 "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.

16 But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

17 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.

Grievance Reconciliation Steps

16.5 As in any organization, occasional concerns - problems or disagreements - arise and need solutions. When differences arise, it is incumbent upon the members of Zion to remember that they are called by Christ to be God's church and to show God's love and forgiveness. Jesus' directive to us is to "love one another even as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

16.6 Concerns are understood to be those things that, for whatever reason, are resulting in unhappiness, dissatisfaction, or frustration. Using this procedure will ensure that the concern will be formally, adequately, and promptly addressed by Church leadership.

16.7 If it is determined that the issue raised is one alleging a criminal or legal matter, fact-finding of the concern must be achieved as soon as reasonably possible in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

16.8 If differences arise among us, we need to follow these steps, based upon the directives that Jesus sets forth in Matthew 18:15-17:

1) Try to settle the differences between yourselves*. This may call for much prayer and love on your part. It also calls for an effective approach to the discussion. An “I statement” is a good starting point. For example, “I feel sad when you won’t talk to me because I thought we were friends.” Or “I felt disappointed when you told others about our conversation because I thought I could trust you.” Or “I felt angry when you threatened me because that’s not the way we Christians are supposed to act.”

2) If this cannot be done, take one or two others with you as you try again to resolve the issue. Again, use the “I feel ... when you ... because” statement. It will get your concern across in a less threatening way and cause the other person to be less defensive and more open to a discussion. Avoid defensive reactions.

3) If steps 1 and 2 are unsuccessful and the problem still exists, write down your concerns, sign it, and present it to the Pastor and the Mutual Ministry Committee.

4) If the problem still exists, present it to the Church Council in writing. Church Council may decide who is best equipped to investigate and address the concern. Council will establish a time frame for those investigating the concern and report back by the next regular Council meeting. A response to the person raising the concern must be made within 60 days.

5) If Council cannot resolve the issue, then Council may approach the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod for advice or resources. (The Synod’s Conflict Resource Team might also be a possibility.)

Remember: We are ALL responsible for success; everyone's participation is needed and expected.

16.9 In the case of a difference or problem with the Pastor:

1) Meet with the pastor to see if the concern can be resolved simply by direct communication.

2) If an individual does not wish to communicate directly with the pastor or if direct communication does not resolve the concern, then contact any member of the Mutual Ministry Committee with the issue. The Mutual Ministry Committee will work with the Pastor and the concerned person(s) to seek a solution. If a Mutual Ministry Committee is not operational at the time, then concerns can be addressed to Executive Council (council president, council vice president, council secretary and treasurer). Executive Council will work with the Pastor and the concerned person(s) to seek a solution.

3) If the issue cannot be resolved by the Mutual Ministry Committee, the next step is for the concerned person(s) to present the issue to Church Council in writing at least 10 days before the monthly meeting at which it is to be considered. Those raising the concern will be given a chance to speak.

4) If Church Council is unable to resolve the problem, Council may approach the Bishop for advice and resources.

16.10 Please note that neither the Pastor nor Church Council will entertain members who bring their concerns to them in person until, or unless, they have submitted something in writing AFTER utilizing the first steps of the procedures described above.

16.11 Anonymous concerns are viewed as rumor and gossip and will not be addressed.

16.12 At all times as we deal with differences, we need to seek God's guidance in prayer, asking that God's Spirit would guide us and that our actions would further God's purposes.

16.13 *NOTE: Employee/personnel issues concerning employment and job descriptions, job evaluation and job supervision, or any other employment issue, should first be addressed between employees in private or between the employee and the Parish Employee Relations Team (PERT). If the issue is not resolved, it can be referred to Church Council or a body designated by Council to handle these areas of church life.

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