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CONFLICT RESOLUTION AMONG MULTI-STAFF MINISTRY  
IN SOME OYO WEST BAPTIST CONFERENCE CHURCHES

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## ABSTRACT

Resolving or managing conflicts is a tool towards the enhancement and strengthening of leaders among local church as well as staff. The importance of conflict resolution cannot be overemphasized. Adequate knowledge, leadership and management ability of a pastor is essential in administrative practices. It guides essential practices and prevent work place discords.

The research work explores qualitatively how conflicts are been resolved among 10 selected churches in Oyo West Baptist Conference Area. In-depth interview as well as Key Informant Interview was used in eliciting the opinion of respondents towards the subject matter. The research revealed that multi-staff ministries experience a lot of conflict or crisis on regular basis as one differs to the other. While some are between leaders – leaders, others are between leaders – members as well as between members – members. The causes of these conflicts also varied which includes; moral failure, incompetence of the leader, low or lack of essential educational qualification to assume position, pride or influence, negligence and oversight and power. They create mayhem in various capacities and when not curbed, escalate into major crisis. Although crisis is present, most of the multi-staff ministries has also adopted various ways of controlling this. Creating an atmosphere of mutual respect, harmonious relationships, setting up of various committees, relation with the Association, Conferences and the Convention are the methods used by the multi-staff ministries to resolve conflicts. The findings revealed that the Convention has proved to be the most successful source in resolving conflicts among churches. The study concludes that prompt response should be available at all time by the association, conference as well as the convention to avert the consequences of conflict when it is beyond the control of resident pastors. These authorities have been proved to be the most effective tool in resolving conflict when they are noticed. Their role should be more pronounced, not until conflict is noticed

## 5.2 CONCLUSION

Today, the Lord Jesus also affirms the efficacy of the common prayer of the Church, “If two of you agree on earth about anything on which you are to pray it will be granted by my heavenly Father” (Mt. 18:19). The reason for the efficacy of the prayer of a small number of people is that Jesus, himself, is present in their midst.

Today’s gospel message challenges us to reconcile and resolve conflicts with one another, not only on the physical level, but also on the spiritual level. Sincere reconciliation is necessary for our prayers to be acceptable to God. Jesus demands that we reconcile with one another first, before bringing our offerings (prayers) to God (Matthew 5:23-24). This is a great challenge for every one of us! It is not an easy thing to do, but it is possible.

Moreover, when we unite together to pray for a common intention, we are assured that God will answer us. But reconciliation comes before unity. Let us pray today for the spirit of reconciliation among families and Christian churches all over the world.

With so much conflict, it makes you wonder how the church holds together at all. With so many different ideas and vested interest. It seems there are plenty of sources of conflict in multi-staff ministry. First of all there is all the normal stuff, what you might expect from any social organization. The church is apparently not exempt from the competition for scarce resources and the corresponding power dynamics associated with organizational decision making. Competition for position, finances, favoritism and budget wars. Somebody is going to direct the choir...and somebody

else isn't. If you spend the money on a new air conditioner, the same money just aren't going to be there to hire a new associate pastor.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Christians should exhaust all available recourse using Biblical methods through the church or other avenues of peacemaking. While Jesus praised peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), the Gospels record little of His teachings about the practical means to accomplish it. Scripture instructs that believers are to resolve their disputes according to Matthew 18:15-20. In fact, this is the only scriptural passage setting out a procedure to be followed in attempting to resolve disputes. Where necessary, it carries the responsibility of initiating peace by meeting face to face to communicate openly, discuss differences honestly and genuinely listen to one another's views. In so doing, it may be necessary to seek out counselors or mediators to assist in reconciliation. This should in most cases bring resolution.

Because conflict often involves some combination of obstacles that merit special attention, it's often defined as a problem. While we may think that conflict poses difficulty, it's not necessarily negative. There may be some level of "work" required in conflict situations, which does indeed lead to very positive outcomes

Wherever two or three or more are gathered, the potential for misunderstanding, disappointment, and conflict is always present. Jesus assures his followers in Matthew 18, however, that "Where two or three are gathered in my name 'I am there among them.'" Scriptural (and Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee) goals related to problem-solving and conflict resolutions include, but are not limited to:

1. Reconciliation between offended parties

2. Building a strong mutual ministry
3. Growth for all parties
4. Learning how to live in Christian community, where the people who comprise that community are diverse and imperfect.

Here are the words of Jesus on the matter of resolving conflicts (Matthew 18: 15-20)

*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 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 even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.*

Reconciliation and problem-solving are not always easy, but the following process and suggested helps are a Scriptural basis of achieving the goal of restored relationships. By handling conflict in the following way, the church sets a Christian example for people to use in their families, work place, and community relationships.

As a church develops numerically, it becomes essential for the Leader to plan for a system that will increase the effectiveness of the church as a whole. Such plans include developing and sharing responsibilities and recruitment of support pastors or staff. This increase leads to the church developing into a Multi Staff System.

Although it is good to prepare for this enlargement, it comes with its own problem of management and constant appraisal in order to avoid conflicts. In view of the aforementioned, effort should be tailored towards setting goals that is supported by all and sundry. Also, the focus of the leader must be towards spiritual development.

The strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) should be constantly evaluated as to improve on their area of success while working on area where failure

is noticed. Other suggestions are that prompt response should be available at all time by the Association, Conference as well as the Convention to avert the consequences of conflict. These authorities have been proved to be the most effective tool in resolving conflict when they are noticed. Their role should be more pronounced, not until conflict is noticed.