

# Shepherds Service Team Addresses Conflict Resolution

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11 service teams serve the International Churches of Christ around the world. The Shepherding Service Team reports on their efforts to address godly conflict resolution.

Our service team began meeting in January of 2008. The first question that came to our minds was, "How do we envision God using this group to glorify Him?" As we prayed and talked it became clear that we desired to be used for purposes of unity in the kingdom and to bring about a place where relationships can be built based on security, encouragement and communication.

## Purpose of Shepherding Service Team

- a. Providing a safe place for group members to get input and encouragement as shepherds.
- b. Building relationships and ongoing communication between elders and churches in the brotherhood.
- c. Providing assistance, counsel and teaching to help churches raise up, prepare and equip more elders for works of service.
- d. Providing an objective and unbiased resource for conflict resolution in relationships within and between churches.

As we have worked together and been molded by God, His Word and each other, it is exciting to see what God has done and over the past several months to guide us and help us produce fruit in the fellowship. Three points of our stated purpose are related to bringing unity, safe place and building relationships. As we look back on the past meetings we have taken very seriously the need to bring people together.

As we have faced different situations of conflict, we decided to reread and discuss the book Firestorm. (A written review of this book will be published soon). This book provided a sobering reminder of what can happen in our churches when we neglect to resolve differences on an ongoing basis. We came away from our reading with a renewed vision of being prepared for conflict by dealing with matters proactively, and by creating a safe and nurturing environment for disciples in our churches to effectively work through their individual issues and difficulties. Other articles from our team are currently being written with a view to providing needed teaching and understanding of the elder's role, authority and leadership in the church.

As we have worked together, we have discussed several matters of conflict in our fellowship of which we were made aware. One of those was in Detroit, a situation in which the church leadership group formally asked for our assistance in resolving a conflict they were experiencing. We are happy to report that over the period of several months, with the help of outside mediators, matters were successfully addressed and unity was forged. The solutions that were suggested are

being followed through to bring unity within the congregation and a restored sense of mission to a great city.

Our group was formed not to just meet and talk, but to form a sense of camaraderie with one another. Our desire is to help bring greater maturity and spirituality to our churches, and give the elder's perspective to situations in congregational life. We pray that our efforts can be felt by all, and that there will be a greater sense of family in the church with the unifying love of God among us.

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