



Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management CEAM8302/PMLS8304

A Professional Doctoral Seminar
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Fall Semester: November 3-5, 2025

Monday, 1:00 – 7:00 pm.; Tuesday/Wednesday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm,
All times Central Time

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Mission Statement

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College prepare servants to walk with Christ, proclaim His truth, and fulfill His mission.

Course Description

The purpose of this seminar is to address the issues and implications of conflict resolution and crisis management in congregations and ministry organizations. Utilizing biblical principles, textbook analyses, case studies, and role plays, students will examine conflict intensity levels, determine best practices, enhance leadership skills, and develop strategic actions related to conflict resolution and crisis management in churches and ministry contexts.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the seminar students should be able to:

1. Appreciate the value of resolving church conflict.
2. Identify levels of intensity in the church.
3. Explore what scripture says concerning conflict resolution.
4. Demonstrate basic skills in conflict resolution and crisis management.
5. Evaluate appropriate strategies for conflict resolution and crisis management.
6. Develop a personal philosophy of confronting conflict.
7. Commit themselves to being ministers of reconciliation.

Textbooks

Bullard, George W. *Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2008.

Hare, Michael. *When Church Conflict Happens: A Proven Process for Resolving Unhealthy Disagreements and Embracing Healthy Ones*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019.

Haugk, Kenneth C. Second Edition. *Antagonists in the Church: How to Identify and Deal with Destructive Conflict*. St. Louis, MO: Tebunah Ministries, 2013. **(Note: This book can be ordered ONLY through the StephenMinistries.org website, books and courses. Be sure to differentiate between the book and the study guide)**

Osborn, Brooke and Karen Roudkovski. *Counseling Through the Storm*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2025.

Course Teaching Methodology

The seminar will focus on the assignments and presentations by the students. The Professors will facilitate discussions and dialogue regarding the textbooks, case studies, and issues of congregational conflict. Small group interaction will also be employed.

Seminar Requirements

Before the Seminar

1. Develop a **Synthesis Paper**, utilizing both *Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict* and *When Church Conflict Happens* textbooks. Synthesis involves combining the constituent elements of separate material. The Synthesis Paper should be divided into the following sections:

Section 1: Five (5) Areas of Agreement re: church conflict resolution – one paragraph discussion for each area of agreement.

Section 2: Five (5) Critical Issues of church conflict resolution – one paragraph discussion for each critical issue.

Section 3: Five (5) Best Practices of church conflict resolution – one paragraph discussion for each best practice.

Section 4: Coaching Insights from Chapters 10 and 11 in *Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict*. Answer all the questions in the “Coaching Insights” feature at the end of each chapter. [Note: Do not confuse the “Coaching Insights” sections with the “Coaching Breaks” sections. The Coaching Insights sections consist of “squares”. Provide your answers in complete sentences – one paragraph for each “square,” even if the “square” involves several questions].

Section 5: Conflict Management Style Survey, Appendix G, in *When Church Conflict Happens*. Complete the Survey and a summary and response/reaction to the survey results, not to exceed two pages.

NOTE: The format for the Synthesis Paper must include: (1) A Cover Page, (2) A bibliographic entry for each book at the top of the first page, (3) Use each section as a main heading, not chapter heading, (4) Footnotes for any referenced quotes and (5) Pagination according to Turabian. The Synthesis Paper is to be double-spaced. First person allowed is allowed. WORD document, not PDF.

2. Compose an **Executive Summary** for each of these two books: *Antagonists in the Church* and *Counseling Through the Storm*. An Executive Summary is a short document which summarizes a book in such a way that readers can become rapidly acquainted with it without having to read it all. The Executive Summary for each book should include the following components, in this order.
 - a. A Cover Page.
 - b. An Annotated Bibliographic entry of the book (3 paragraphs).
 - c. Strengths and Weaknesses of the book (3-4 paragraphs).
 - d. The Value of the book to the student’s ministry context (3-4 paragraphs).
 - e. Select any six (6) of the chapters and compose the following for EACH selected chapter: identify two (2) insights (takeaways) from the chapter and write a one-paragraph application of the significance of the insight/takeaway to conflict resolution in a church/ministry setting.
3. **Case Studies:** Seminar participants will submit two (2) case studies, each one single-spaced on one page. Case Study #1 will focus on a situation of congregational conflict. This Case Study can be real or fictitious. (Students whose vocation involves a ministry context other than a congregation may submit a case study from their vocational context). Case Study #2 will focus on a congregation or ministry’s response to a sex abuse accusation involving the pastor, church staff member, or ministry leader. This Case Study should reference the actions taken by the 2022, 2023, 2024 SBC regarding the recommendations from the Sex Abuse Task Force.

Note #1: Case Studies are presented in the Bullard and Hare textbooks. It is acceptable for your case studies to be similar to one of the textbook case studies. However, indicate the differences of your case study from the textbook case study, especially if the outcome is dissimilar.

Note #2: Case Studies must be a Level Three or higher intensity, according to Bullard’s seven levels of congregational conflict intensity.

Note #3: Please do not use the real names of the personalities in your case studies, for confidentiality reasons.

Note #4: Two case studies samples are provided following the bibliography in the syllabus.

Note #5: Case studies will be discussed during the seminar.

Assignments Due Date: Assignments 1, 2, & 3 are to be uploaded to CANVAS no later than 11:30 pm Sunday, November 2, 2025.

During the Seminar

4. **Seminar Presentations and Participation:** Each student will be involved in seminar presentations and discussions involving Assignments 1 – 3. Students are expected to be active participants in all sessions of the seminar.

Following the Seminar

5. **Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management Proposal:** Seminar participants will develop a Conflict Management/Resolution Proposal for their ministry context. The Proposal should involve the following:
- A. A comprehensive definition of conflict resolution and crisis management, delineated from textbook readings, seminar discussions, and further research. The comprehensive definition should be approximately one-page and should cite/reference at least six sources.
 - B. A discussion of three or four critical issues regarding conflict resolution and crisis management which need to be addressed in the student's ministry context (this discussion not to exceed six pages).
 - C. An evaluation of the student's attitude toward conflict resolution and crisis management and how this seminar has influenced that attitude (this evaluation not to exceed two pages).
 - D. Choose **ONE (1)** of the following components to include in the proposal:
 - a. A series of five Sermons dealing with conflict resolution and crisis management, involving a one-page sermon brief for each sermon, with the briefs to include sermon titles, sermon texts, sermon propositions/objectives, sermon outlines, a one-paragraph Introduction and a one-paragraph Conclusion.
 - b. A series of five Bible Studies, involving a one-page lesson plan for each Bible Study, with the lesson plans to include topics, biblical texts, lesson objectives, and teaching outlines.

Assignment Due Date: Upload the Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management Proposal into CANVAS, no later than midnight, Monday, December 1, 2025.

Directed Study Students:

Modification of Primary Assignments:

1. Complete Assignment 1 (Synthesis Paper) as stated in the syllabus, **with one modification: For Section 4, complete the "Coaching Insights" for all 12 chapters.** Due date the same as the post-seminar assignment.
2. Complete Assignment 2, (Executive Summary) as stated in the syllabus. Due date as listed in the syllabus.
3. Complete four (4) Case Studies, two (2) conflict resolution case studies and two (2) crisis management case studies. Due date as listed in the syllabus.
4. Complete the post-seminar assignment (Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management Proposal) as stated in the syllabus. Due date as listed in the syllabus.

Additional Assignment for Directed Study Students:

Annotative Bibliography: Students will compile an annotative bibliography of at least thirty (30) sources addressing the subject of conflict resolution and crisis management, to include books (excluding the seminar textbooks), journal articles, and Ph.D. dissertations/D.Min. projects. (Due date: same as #3 above).

Evaluation of Grade

Synthesis Paper	30%
Executive Summaries	20%
Case Studies	20%
Resolution/Management Proposal	30%

Directed Study:

Synthesis Paper	25%
Executive Summary	15%
Case Studies	15%
Resolution/Management Proposal	30%
Annotated Bibliography	15%

Technical Assistance

For assistance regarding technology, consult ITC (504-816-8180) or the following websites:

1. Selfserve@nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the Selfserve.nobts.edu site (Access to online registration, financial account, online transcript, etc.)
2. Canvas.nobts.edu - Email for technical questions/support requests with the NOBTS Canvas Learning Management System
3. ITCSupport@nobts.edu - Email for general technical questions/support requests.
4. www.NOBTS.edu/itc/ - General NOBTS technical help information is provided on this website.

Plagiarism on Written Assignments

NOBTS has a no tolerance policy for plagiarism. Plagiarism in certain cases may result in expulsion from the seminary. See the NOBTS Student Handbook for definition, penalties, and policies associated with plagiarism.

Selected Bibliography

Augsburger, David. *Caring Enough to Confront*. Ventura, CA: Regals Books, 1986.

Barthel, Tara Klena and David V. Edling. *Redeeming Church Conflicts: Turning Crisis into Compassion and Care*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012.

Brubaker, David R. *Promise and Peril: Understanding and Managing Change and Conflict in Congregations*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2009.

Bullard, George W. *Every Congregation Needs a Little Conflict*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2008.

Bowling, Daniel and David Hoffman (eds.) *Bring Peace in the Room: How the Personal Qualities of the Mediator impact the Process of Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Cosgrove, Charles H. and Dennis D. Hatfield. *Church Conflict: the Hidden Systems Behind the Fights*. Abingdon Press, 1994.

Crandall, William Rick, John A. Parnell, John E. Spillan. *Crisis Management: Leading in the New Strategy Landscape*. Second Edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014.

Echols, Steven F. and Allen England. *Catastrophic Crisis: Ministry Leadership in the Midst of Trial and Tragedy*. Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2011.

Everist, Norma Cook. *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004.

Fisher, Roger and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Friedman, Edwin. *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*. The Guilford Press, 1985.

Furlong, Gary T. *The Conflict Resolution Toolbox*. Ontario, Canada: John Wiley and Sons, 2005.

Gangel, Kenneth O. and Samuel L. Canine. *Communication and Conflict Management in Churches and Christian Organizations*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002.

- Gramson, Robert M. *Coping With Difficult People*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1981.
- Hare, Michael. *When Church Conflict Happens: A Proven Process for Resolving Unhealthy Disagreements and Embracing Healthy Ones*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019.
- Haverstadt, Hugh F. *Managing Church Conflict*. Louisville, KY: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1991.
- Haugk, Kenneth C. Second Edition. *Antagonists in the Church: How to Identify and Deal with Destructive Conflict*. St. Louis, MO: Tebunah Ministries, 2013.
- Hunt, Gregory L. *Leading Congregations Through Crisis*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2012.
- Jaech, Richard E. *Transforming Church Conflict: A Guide for Pastors and Leaders*. Camas, WA: Aachen Press, 2011.
- Kale, David W. *Managing Conflict in the Church*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2003.
- Kliwer, Stephen. *How to Live With Diversity in the Local Church*. Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1987.
- Leas, Speed B. *Church Fights*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973.
- _____. *Discover Your Conflict Management Style*. New York: Alban Institute Publishing, 1984.
- _____. *Leadership and Conflict*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982.
- Lerbinger, Otto. *The Crisis Manager: Facing Disasters, Conflicts, and Failures*. Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Lester, Andrew D. *Coping With Your Anger*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983.
- Lott, David P., ed. *Conflict Management in Congregations*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2001.
- Lyon, K. Brynolf and Dan P. Moseley. *How to Lead in Church Conflict: Healing Ungrieved Loss*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2012.
- Mayer, Bernard S. *Beyond Neutrality: Confronting the Crisis in Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- _____. *The Dynamics of Conflict: A Guide to Engagement and Intervention*. Second Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.
- McSwain, Larry L. and William C. Treadwell, Jr. *Conflict Ministry in the Church*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1981.
- Moore, Christopher W. *The Mediation Process: Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflict*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996.
- Newberger, Kenneth. *Hope in the Face of Conflict: Making Peace With Others the Way God Makes Peace With Us*. Three Sons Publishing, 2009.
- Noble, David. *Church Conflict by the Book: Discover Inner Healing, Renewed Hope and Powerful Fellowship Through Challenging Times*. Kansas City: BHC Publishing, 2013.
- Poirier, Alfred. *The Peacemaking Pastor: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Church Conflict*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.
- Saarinén, Martin F. *Life Cycle of a Congregation*. Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1986.
- Sande, Ken. *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 3rd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2004.
- Sawyer, David R. *Hope in Conflict: Discovering Wisdom in Congregational Turmoil*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007.

Schaller, Lyle E. *Survival Tactics in the Parish*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1977.

Shelley, Marshall. *Well-intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1994.

Steinke, Peter L. *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006.

_____. *Healthy Congregations*. Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, 1993.

_____. *How Your Church Family Works*. Washington, DC: The Alban Institute, 1993.

Susek, Ron. *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflicts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999.

Ury, William L. *Getting Past No*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Ury, William L., Jeanne M. Brett, and Stephen B. Goldberg. *Getting Disputes Resolved*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.

Van Yperen, Jim. *Making Peace: A Guide to Overcoming Church Conflict*. Chicago: Moody, 2002.

Wagner, C. Peter. *Your Church Can be Healthy*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1979.

Welch, Robert. *Serving by Safeguarding Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishers, Part of the Zondervan Practical Ministry Guides, Paul Engle general editor, 2002.

White, James E. and Robert L. Sheffield. *Equipping Deacons to Confront Conflict*. Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1987.

Woods, C. Jeff. *We've Never Done it Like This Before*. Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1994.

SAMPLE CASE STUDY ONE: The Associate Pastor Who Desires to be Pastor Case Study

First Baptist Placeville (FBP) experienced consistent growth during the 40-year pastoral tenure of Rev. John Steady. Attendance averages 600 in Sunday School and 800 in Worship. Leadership consists of five full-time ministerial staff members, in addition to the pastor, a strong deacon body, and well-trained, functioning committees. Rev. Steady retires as pastor of FBP, but remains as Pastor Emeritus. During the pastoral transition period, the ministerial staff, led by the Associate Pastor (AP), convince church leaders that they can lead the church without the employ of an Interim Pastor. In less than 12 months, a former Youth Minister at the church, Rev. Youthful, is called to be the next pastor of FBP. Rev. Youthful has been serving as pastor of a church since leaving FBP.

Eighteen months later, Rev. Youthful is caught having an affair with the financial secretary. When confronted, he refuses to resign. The deacons and personnel committee terminate him, but he stays in the community, divorces his wife, and marries the financial secretary. Again, the ministerial staff, led by the AP, offer to lead the church without the employ of an Interim Pastor. After an eight-month period of turmoil and chaos in the church, the pastor search committee and the deacons decide to employ Dr. Veteran as Interim Pastor. Dr. Veteran is an experienced denominational leader, who brokers a contractual understanding, affirmed by the church, defining his leadership role and responsibility to involve preaching, staff direction, and consultant to the deacons and the pastor search committee.

Dr. Veteran encounters and uncovers several issues of conflict early in the interim tenure:

1. Unresolved and unsettled emotions from Rev. Youthful's infidelity and termination.
2. Tension and resistance from the Associate Pastor.
3. Confusion and competition within the ministerial staff.
4. Hesitancy and tentativeness within the pastor search committee.

Less than three months into Dr. Veteran's tenure as Interim Pastor, he begins to hear rumbles of the AP's "behind the scenes" strategy to be the next pastor. Dr. Veteran immediately consults with several key leaders of the church, including the Chairpersons of the Deacons, Personnel Committee, and Pastor Search Committee. Their consensus of agreement informs Dr. Veteran that: a) the AP should not be a pastoral candidate, b) but the AP, and particularly his wife, have developed strong group constituency with divisive potential within the congregation, and c) the AP will continue to leverage intentionally his pastoral candidacy within the congregation.

What plan of action should Dr. Veteran utilize in resolving this conflict?

SAMPLE CASE STUDY TWO: The Oldest Baptist Church

Oldest Baptist Church (OBC) is the oldest church in Central County Baptist Association, and one of the oldest in the State Convention. The community surrounding the church remains a rural area, but is situated in one of the fastest growing areas of Central County. The most recent demographic data validates 7,395 people living within an 8-mile ring of OBC. The Associational Church Profile reveals:

- Church membership increased from 250 in 1980 to 650 in 2014
- Sunday School attendance increased from 50 in 1980 to 125 in 2010-2011. Since then, S.S. attendance has declined to 70 in 2016.
- In 1990, worship attendance averaged 150. A steady decline produced an average worship attendance of 90 in 2002. Between 2002 and 2010, worship attendance increased to 250. Much of this was due to the solid pastoral leadership of two seasoned veteran pastors. However, beginning in 2010, worship attendance began a steady decline to an average of 90 in 2016.
- Baptisms fluctuated between 5 and 10 from 1980 to 2001. Baptisms then spiked upward from 2002 – 2010, peaking at 32 in 2010. From 2010 – 2013, baptisms declined sharply from 32 to 6. An unusual spike occurred in 2013-2014 back to 21.
- Budget receipts increased from \$50,000 in 1980 to \$280,000 in 2014, with a high of \$330,000 in 2011.

OBC profited from a long-tenured pastor in the 1980s and early 1990s. Except for a short-tenure pastor (1999 – 2001), from 1980 to 2014, OBC's pastors were experienced leaders who led the church to its "glory days."

The sharp decline in Sunday School attendance, Worship attendance, and baptisms, can be attributed to two church decisions. In 2010, when worship attendance peaked at 250, the church voted down a plan to move to two Sunday morning worship services. Two years later, the pastor left for a church in another state, and in 2014, after a two-year interim period, the church called a pastor who had no prior pastoral experience (to say it another way, after serving as youth minister, this was his first pastorate).

After an 18-month pastoral tenure, measured by numerous conflicts and crises, the pastor resigned suddenly in March 2016, triggered when Pete, one of the former key deacon leaders (who had resigned as a deacon one year earlier) threatened to bring a motion to call for the pastor's resignation. On the day before the Business Meeting, the pastor submitted a letter of immediate resignation to the Chairman of Deacons. At the Business Meeting the next night, Pete never got to make his motion because the Chairman of Deacons called the Business Meeting to order, and then proceeded to read the Pastor's letter of immediate resignation. Chaos and division erupted as members began to ask questions and express emotions of confusion and hurt. When the intent of Pete and his "counterparts" was revealed, chaos and conflict immediately escalated. The Chairman of Deacons, not an experienced Moderator, did his best to maintain order. However, when the meeting dismissed, anger, hurt, and divisiveness permeated the congregation.

After consultation with the Associational Missions Director, OBC contracted with and called an experienced Interim Pastor, with the purpose stated in the call that the Interim Pastor would counsel and advise the deacons through an intentional conflict resolution process, followed by an intentional plan of pastoral transition.

What steps should the Interim Pastor take in resolving this congregational conflict so that a healthy pastoral transition can occur?