

Grievance and Reconciliation Procedure  
for  
St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

*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 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. 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."*

As in any organization, from time to time problems or disagreements arise and need resolution. While St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church is no exception to this, it is always incumbent upon the members of the church 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 "just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). If grievances arise Jesus' directive set forth in Matthew 18:15 needs to be followed.

- First, try to resolve the grievance between yourselves to include prayer and love for your neighbor.
- Second, if this does not resolve the grievance, take one or two others with you as you try again to resolve the issue.

- If none of this works, then seek guidance by making an appointment with the pastor.
- If the issue still exists after seeking the pastor's counsel and help, present the concern and/or difference in writing to the Congregation Council through the president of the Congregational Council.
- If the Congregational Council cannot resolve the issue to their satisfaction, then the Congregational Council may approach the Bishop of the Synod or the Bishop's representative for advice or resources.
- In the case of a difference or problem with the pastor:
  - First meet with the pastor to see if the concern can be resolved.
  - If this does not resolve the concern, then contact the chair of the mutual ministry committee with the issue. The mutual ministry committee will work with the pastor and the concerned person or persons to seek resolution.
  - If the issue cannot be resolved by the mutual ministry committee, the next step is for the concerned person or persons to present the issue to the Congregational Council in writing at least ten (10) days before the monthly meeting at which it is to be considered. Those raising the concern are given a chance to speak if they so desire.
  - If the Congregational Council is unable to resolve the problem to their satisfaction, the Council may approach the Bishop or the Bishop's representative for advice and resources.

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

## Holy Manners

1. We are all responsible for success – everyone’s participation is needed and **expected**.
2. Start off believing that everyone is trying his or her best to have this church serve God faithfully and well.
3. If it becomes obvious that behaviors are non-productive, disruptive, or destructive – confront the behaviors **without bringing dishonor to anyone**.
4. Speak only for yourself, using “I” statements: “I believe...” vs. “Lutherans believe...”; “I think...” vs. “Some people think...”
5. Ask questions to clarify your understanding or to check out assumptions (be a good researcher!).
6. Avoid defensive reactions.
7. Be open to new ideas.
8. Feel free to disagree with issues or methods, but **restate** what you are disagreeing with **first**.
9. Participate fully--but don’t try to “win,” prove your point, or prove someone wrong.
10. Say what is on your mind without blaming or shaming others.
11. Remember that hidden agendas are **always destructive**.
12. We all need to work at staying fully engaged in this process in order that, together, we can achieve our purpose (which is to serve God).

## **Remember—**

- This is Christ's church. We are here to discern and **do God's will**.
- We are servants of God and stewards of God's Holy Church. Our words and our behaviors communicate many things; what we see and hear passes through many internal filters. Some of these include our faith, our fears, our visible and invisible loyalties, our sense of self and sense of others, our past experiences. What I intend to say is not always what you hear and vice versa, so please be patient. God willing, **together**, in some way for Jesus' sake, we will succeed and thereby build up God's kingdom here on earth.
- Remember that understanding people is more important than trying to do something to fix them!

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St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
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