

**Conflict Management Training for Local Church Leaders
In the Illinois District of the Assemblies of God**

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ABSTRACT

This project is an effort to equip local church leaders to better manage conflict through an understanding of a biblical foundation of conflict management, the importance of the leader in conflict management, and a process of conflict management.

The first major phase of this project was to present a biblical understanding of the source and nature of conflict, the importance of the local church as a community of faith, and a process of conflict management within this community.

The second phase reviewed conflict management literature that may be familiar to church leaders from their workplace leadership and management training with an emphasis on the transferable principles that are applicable in both the workplace and the local church.

In the third phase of the project a training manual was produced for the ministers and local church leaders of the Illinois District of the Assemblies of God. The manual described the biblical foundation for conflict management, the source and nature of conflict, the leadership characteristics of the conflict manager, conflict management styles, the predictable cycle of conflict, and a process of conflict management.

The last phase included a report of a presentation of the training manual in a local church with the results of a pre- and post-session evaluation of conflict management styles to measure the growth of each participant's skills.

An important goal of this project is to help district leaders, pastors, and local church leaders to disarm their fear of conflict through a better understanding of conflict and its management so they can implement and sustain their own healing process.

The findings of this project reveal that church leaders can be trained to understand the dynamics of conflict. They can also learn to adjust their conflict management styles to deal with specific conflict. Experienced pastors and church leaders may need to change their thought patterns. What worked in the past may not work now. The challenge is for leadership to allow God to reveal himself in the freshness of the Holy Spirit, be willing to be transformed, and be determined to confront destructive conflict constructively.