

BULLETIN

UNION UNIVERSITY

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EDITOR'S NOTE

BULLETIN

UNION UNIVERSITY

The Union University *Bulletin* is a bi-monthly publication designed to equip church leaders.

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WORSHIPPING



We Don't Like That Music!

Richard Joiner, Ph.D.

Chair of Music Department and Professor of Music

The article in a worship journal was bold in title: "What To Do About the Worship Wars." How strange! How could Christ's Church ever allow disagreements in worship styles to become "wars"? Then I remembered a Sunday service in which a youth team from a Baptist college led our young people to introduce Jesus cheers between traditional hymns and sophisticated anthems. Now that I recall that 1960's event, "war" may actually be too mild a description of our congregation's response! Frightful? Certainly, but controversies surrounding worship and musical styles need not be traumatic, if we remember that God has allowed us to develop various means of addressing our praise to Him. It remains for us to understand each other and unite around the focus of worship in our lives.

It cannot be our purpose in this brief article to discuss the appropriateness of current musical media to the worship of God. Those factors have been argued in longer studies and in volumes of opinions. While some issues of quality and appropriateness can be determined, two realities remain:

- 1) Opinions and affection for varying types of music and worship procedures will always be held dear by certain groups in church, and for good reason.
- 2) Worship and music styles have undergone periodic changes since the dawn of Christendom, and will continue to do so.

When such changes are introduced into local church services, some will feel threatened or uncomfortable, while others will proclaim the new ways as "innovative," or "the church of today." Neither the resistance of the traditionalists nor the enthusiasm of the innovators is going to correct the divisions which are possible in this situation. Our purpose here will be to examine some Biblical principles that should be observed in leading the people of God to accept, forgive, and worship together with one mind and heart. God's word is an effective guide for some principles that can shape our attitudes.

1. *The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.*
(Habbakuk 2:20)

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Tremble before Him all the earth.
(Psalm 96:9)


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*Getting Marriage Right:
Realistic Counsel for Saving and
Strengthening Relationships*

By Dr. David P. Gushee
Baker, 2004

What in the world has happened to marriage? Most of us find the frailty of this sacred institution baffling. Christians seem more prone to divorce than ever, and the children of divorce are suffering.

So with the heart of a teacher, David Gushee advises the church to rethink marriage and divorce. An excellent resource for starting a ministry in your local church, this passionate and concrete treatment of how churches can strengthen marriage and prevent divorce will provide clarity amidst confusion and help men and women keep faith with one another and with their children. 



Harmony: A Name or a Reality?

R. Kelvin Moore, Th.D.
Professor of Christian Studies

During times of traveling, I have noticed numerous churches named “Harmony.” In many of the same communities I observed an “Old Harmony” Church, a “New Harmony” Church and a “Greater Harmony” Church. Humorously, I wondered how much harmony existed with the establishment of “Old Harmony,” “New Harmony,” and “Greater Harmony” churches! Unfortunately, churches experience conflict all too often.

Paul understood church conflict. One reason for penning what we now know as First Corinthians was to deal with conflicts in the church at Corinth. Paul knew of party strife, immorality, legal arguments, disorder during the Lord’s Supper, misunderstanding about the resurrection, and quarrellings within the church. One can sense Paul’s disappointment, frustration, and perhaps even relief when he wrote: “*I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you . . .*” (1 Cor. 1:14).

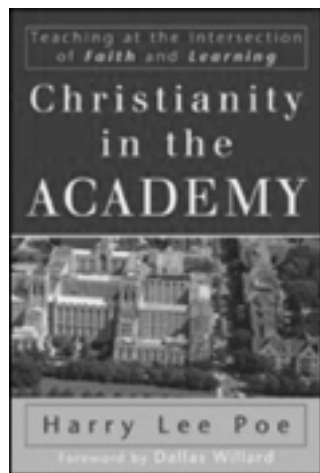
The issue is not whether church conflict will exist. Because imperfect people make up the church, church conflicts will be inevitable. Rather, the issue is how conflict will be managed. I wish to offer practical suggestions as to how conflict can be managed. Better yet, I wish to offer suggestions as to how church conflicts might be avoided.

Learn to recognize the difference between negotiables and non-negotiables. In short, pick your fights carefully. Whether to start Vacation Bible School at 6:00 pm or 6:15 pm wasn’t an issue for

which I was willing to wage World War III. Nor was the issue of whether to place pens or pencils in the pew racks. While many issues remain non-negotiable, other issues just aren’t worth the effort and potential repercussions. One should question whether or not conflicts which have short-term significance should be fought at all.

Learn to recognize the difference between people and problems. In short, depersonalize problems. Often times, when we think of a problem, we have a tendency to put a face with that problem. Of course, there are times when ministers must deal with quarrelsome individuals. But, on occasions, ministers could provide more effective leadership by differentiating between issues and individuals. The church I pastored in West Virginia ministered to our community annually with a “fall festival.” Because it coincided with Halloween, one particular church member felt the fall festival compromised our Christian witness. She and I disagreed on the fall festival but it never became a personal issue between us.


Learn to recognize the difference between friend and foe. For years an Alabama church cancelled normal Bible study and “preachin’” on Mother’s Day in lieu of a gospel singing and “dinner on the ground.” When the church vetoed the pastor’s effort to change the Mother’s Day worship format the pastor resigned. The church’s perspective toward their pastor had not changed. The church continued to accept and support him. The church did not view their pastor as foe even



*Christianity in the Academy:
Teaching at the Intersection of
Faith and Learning*

By Harry Lee Poe
Baker, 2004

Christianity in the Academy demonstrates how Christian professors can "think Christianly" about their chosen subjects. Poe invites his readers to recognize the religious dimensions of everyday life, understand the postmodern mindset, assess the underlying philosophical assumptions of various disciplines, and construct thoroughly Christ-centered paradigms.

This book will be beneficial to Christian teachers at both Christian and secular schools, as well as administrators at church-related colleges. 



When Conflict Occurs Acts 15:1-21

Todd E. Brady, M.Div.

Minister to the University and Instructor of Christian Studies

When truth is on the line, conflict often erupts. While most people normally shy away from confrontation and usually avoid walking right into discord, such reaction is only natural. However, sometimes the stakes are so high that conflict is not only unavoidable, but entirely necessary. Ours is a society embroiled in ongoing conflict concerning truth issues. Recent developments in the Episcopal church and consequent reactions within and without that denomination have revealed how caustic ecclesiastical conflict can be. The ruling by Massachusetts's highest court on November 17 concerning gay marriages has further divided those on each side of this important issue. Dan Brown's latest novel, *The DaVinci Code*, which surreptitiously blurs the lines between fact and fiction, heightens the need for unequivocal truth. Throughout America, the non-religious and even the religious are often in conflict over such issues

Even among the faithful, conflict over important matters often occurs leaving good and well-intentioned people at odds over what is right or best. More than the color of the sanctuary carpet or the size of the church sign out front, disagreements concerning biblical and theological truth have caused serious and often heated debate throughout history. Eric Till's new film *Luther* is a vivid portrayal of Martin Luther's religious journey and the sixteenth-century conflict which ensued, resulting in the dramatic altering of the Christian faith's

global landscape.

Much earlier than the Protestant Reformation, another conflict recorded in Acts 15 took place that solidified the truth in the minds of believers and forever shaped the Christian church. The Council of Jerusalem was a result of conflict between followers of God. Prior to the council, certain unauthorized teachers had come among those living in Antioch teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised to experience God's salvation. They also had to obey the Law of Moses. This immediately aroused concern in the minds of the church, even bringing Paul and Barnabas into "*sharp dispute and debate with them.*" (v. 2)

The conflict arose over the issue of salvation. Christian leaders in Jerusalem were already aware that God was at work providing salvation to the Gentiles. This was evident through Peter's house-top vision in Joppa as well as through the missionary efforts of Paul and Barnabas. As the council convened in Acts 15, God's ability and desire to save the Gentiles was not in question. Rather it was the precise means of salvation which stirred such controversy in Antioch and eventually led to the official church council in Jerusalem. Were the Gentiles saved through faith in Christ alone or was circumcision and obedience to Mosaic Law a prerequisite to salvation? They disagreed over the doctrine of salvation and they needed resolution.

When conflict arises in the church, how should believers respond? How are Christian brothers and sisters to respond



The Holman Guide to Interpreting the Bible


By David S. Dockery and
George H. Guthrie

Broadman and Holman, 2004

Not all roads are equal. You've been there. You're headed for a certain destination. At some point you make a wrong turn. After a time, you realize that you're further from your destination than you were when you began the journey. A small mistake becomes magnified over time. Not all ways of interpreting the Bible are equal.

In his book *Exegetical Fallacies*, D. A. Carson tells why, "Make a mistake in the interpretation of one of Shakespeare's plays, falsely scan a piece of Spenserian verse, and there is unlikely to be an entailment of eternal consequence; but we cannot accept the similar laxity in the interpretation of Scripture. we are dealing with God's thoughts: we are obligated to take the greatest pains to understand them truly and to explain them clearly."

In *The Holman Guide to Interpreting the Bible*, David S. Dockery and George H. Guthrie set forth the basics of interpreting, applying, and communicating the Word of God in teaching and preaching.

The heart of the book is a mentoring session with Dockery and Guthrie. It is as if they are at the table with you showing you the steps to interpretation, applying it to Philippians 2:5-11. They have summarized the steps to interpretation and presentation in a chart that will be useful every time you prepare a lesson or sermon. 



Choose Ye This Day Between Jesus and Nietzsche

Gregory A. Thornbury, Ph.D.

Director of the Carl F. H. Henry Center
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Associate Professor of Christian Studies

A fault line regarding morality runs through the heart of Western culture. On one side of the divide stands theism with its universal norms and moral demands. In particular, those who follow the teachings of Christ regarding neighbor love thus feed the poor, clothe the naked, and protect the weak and innocent as a way of glorifying God. "*Inasmuch as you did [these things] to the least of these my brethren,*" Jesus told his disciples, "*you did it to me.*" He uttered these words to define the behavior of those who will escape the wrath of God at the final judgment. Christianity, consequently, is a religion that aids the helpless.

Nihilism lurks on the other side of the cultural chasm. Popularizing the slogan, "God is dead," German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche updated nihilism by suggesting that the universe is bereft of an objective and knowable truth. Only those who possess the "will to power" can insert their arbitrary values into the vacuum that is the cosmos. He reserved special contempt for Christianity, whose ethics he deemed a morality for the weak, not the strong. In Nietzsche's most famous work, the protagonist comes to hate the notion of the shepherd who cares for the

sheep – the vulnerable of the world. According to nihilism, worship of Jesus therefore is a "slave" religion not fit for a master race of human beings. It is little wonder, then, that Hitler handed out copies of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to his Nazi party associates like an evangelist.

In the debate over abortion, one must choose: Jesus or Nietzsche. This is because at its root, the dispute centers around whether society should protect the most helpless persons of all—the unborn. The alternatives are stark. Either the universe is an orderly place with boundaries set by an Almighty Creator, or the things which we call "good" are merely artifacts of human convenience. One prophet claims to be the Lord of the universe whose own earthly suffering provides hope for the downtrodden and weak. The other advocates a world in which values are merely contrived by men, thereby leaving the weak at the mercy of the unmerciful. The nihilistic landscape is a terrifying place to live indeed.

Most persons would intuitively agree that rescuing the weak is inherently virtuous. As a case in point, for example, both major political parties in America have embraced

WORSHIPPING . . . continued from page 1

The truth of these rich stanzas is that all of the earth is silent in awe before God, who is completely holy. Those portions of our worship that are directed God-ward, then, must acknowledge his creative, loving Lordship. Worshipful acknowledgment of God's greatness can span differences in worship styles. This great God poured forth grace for all of us, no matter our station in life, or preference for the way worship happens. Both new and traditional musical styles contain objective moments of praise toward God.

2. *Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I with them.* (Matthew 18:20)

Among those gathered in the Lord's name, what if there are radically different concepts of what is appropriate in His worship? For instance, those who love traditional worship may regard praise and worship choruses as too shallow and too "chummy" with the omnipotent God, while those who favor praise and worship styles sometimes accuse traditional worshippers of being selfish about their old way, and too old-fashioned for a Church that requires spontaneity and energy for growth. All of these viewpoints must face the truth in our understanding of God: Does God not rejoice when His children employ the talents He has given them to not only create eloquent art works in His honor, but to establish traditions of their use that span generations? Surely, the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) is applicable to musicians who offer their finest performance and most artistic creations to God! On the other hand, is God not delighted at the joy his children express when some worship styles are so accessible that all of the people are caught up in the spontaneous, joyful expressions that ring from His temple? Augustine (354-430) said it this way: "A Christian should be an Alleluia, from head to foot!" That ultimate expression of praise, "Alleluia!", can be uttered in thousands of ways, but it must be fervent and descriptive of the God of our lives!

3. *I love the house where you live, O Lord, the place where your glory dwells.* (Psalm 26:8)

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than live in the tents of wickedness. O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you. (Psalm 84: 1, 4, 10, 12.)

God's dwelling place is not only the place of the congregational meeting, nor the meeting alone, but the life that we live in His praise. If God's people will regard as praise what happens in their daily living as well as what happens on Sunday morning, they should find a common denominator. Praising God and living lives that are expressive of His presence are both acts of worship that supersede personal opinions concerning how we praise Him.

4. *This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.* (John 13:34)

Peterson's translation of I Corinthians 13 provides concise

earmarks of agape love which are applicable:


Love cares more for others than for self...Love doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first"...Puts up with anything...Always looks for the best...Never looks back...Keeps going to the end.

To love a brother or sister as Christ loves us obligates us to listen to the other's side and understand the other's needs. People build affection for certain types of music and worship styles because worship is important to them. This fact alone should command our respect for others' positions, understanding that both sides of the question share a realization of the centrality of worship. Walking in the shoes of our brothers, acknowledging that we share the belief that worship ranks first in our lives, and the very processes of worshiping and serving together are all actions that fulfill Christ's vision of the living Church. A hymn by Albert F. Bayly, speaks:

As we worship, grant us vision, till your love's revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness dawns upon our
quicken'd sight,
making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids
us bear,
stirring us to ardent service, your abundant life to share.

One final admonition: Augustine was one of the first Church fathers to note the danger of loving the elements of worship too much. In his *Confessions*, he admits to his struggle with the beauties of church song, which, when sung well, were so lovely and emotional as to distract him from his own worship of the very God to whom they were directed: "So oft as it befalls me to be more moved with the voice than with the song, I confess myself to have grievously offended my Lord....O Lord my God, look upon me, hearken, and behold, pity, and heal me, thou in whose eyes I am now become a problem to myself; and that is my infirmity." (St. Augustine's *Confessions*, II, Harvard: Harvard University Press)

The aesthetics of liturgy, the meaningfulness of symbols, favorite choruses, or the magnificence of great anthems can become distractions within themselves. We are probably capable of turning anything into an idol: a favorite song, a wonderful organ, an order of worship, even a set of drums or a sound system. One of history's greatest composers of church music, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), inscribed each of his church compositions with the phrase, *Soli Deo Gloria*, "To God Alone be Glory." God's instructions are very clear concerning such distractions: "*What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*" (Micah 6:8). William Cowper's hymn expresses it well:

"Restore the happiness I knew when first I saw the Lord;
Refresh me with the radiant view of Jesus and his Word!
From every idol I have known now set my spirit free;
O make me worship you alone, and reign supreme in me."
Soli Deo Gloria! 

REVIEWING . . . continued from page 2

though the church disagreed with their pastor on a particular issue. But the pastor's perception of the church changed. The pastor viewed as foe those previously he had viewed as friend. Many years later, the pastor admitted his resignation was a poor decision.

Spend time with supporters. During inevitable times of church conflict, I retreated to those supporters where I knew I could find encouragement. Years ago, they were Ralph and Inez Osborn for me. I knew I could retreat to their home for much needed rest and relaxation. Seldom did we talk "church" and never do I remember talking church conflicts. When I left their home, I felt rejuvenated and reenergized.

PREACHING . . . continued from page 3

when truth is in question? The nature and narrative of the events recorded in Acts 15 reveal three truths which believers should remember when conflict occurs.

I. God's Truth Warrants Our Concern. (Acts 15:1-4)

Puzzled looks surely surfaced on the faces of those who heard the supposedly-authoritative teachers from Jerusalem commanding believers to submit to physical circumcision. This is not what Paul and Barnabas had preached. Yet now a different avenue—instead of faith alone in Christ—was being prescribed for salvation. These agitating Jews insisted that salvation was impossible apart from the Mosaic regulations of circumcision. As the very foundation of the Gentile's newfound faith was being challenged and after what was obviously heated dialogue between the Jewish teachers and Paul and Barnabas, the church at Antioch decided to send a delegation to meet with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. Something had to be done. The church needed a definitive answer.

"Whatever" seems to be the byword of today's culture. Teenagers and adults alike take a "Whatever" attitude to much of life. We see "Whatever" on bumper stickers and hear this word frequently accompanied by rolling eyes and shrugging shoulders. The church at Antioch did not take a "Whatever" attitude about the issue at hand. Not only did they care—they cared deeply, going to the trouble to appeal to church leaders, seeking to define truth, and risking the possibility of public conflict.

Paul was passionately concerned about the issue of truth. He said God's wrath is revealed against "*men who suppress the truth.*" (Romans 1:18) He commanded the Ephesians to speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15) In I Timothy 1:3, he encouraged Timothy to stay in Ephesus so that he "*may command certain men not to teach false teachings.*" Jude's appeal "*to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*" is an inescapable call for the church to be passionately concerned about the truth of the gospel. (v. 3) Indeed, truth is worth our careful attention.

II. God's Kingdom Permeates Our Thinking. (Acts 15:5-11)

Church conflicts are as old as the church itself. Most church conflicts can be managed positively. Many church conflicts can be avoided altogether. With a little forethought and patience, the latter approach might prove to be more effective than the former.

Recommended reading:

Leas, Speed and Paul Kittlaus. *Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church.*

Faulkner, Brooks R. Compiler. *Stress in the Life of the Minister.* 

It seems that some of the Pharisees refused to acknowledge the work that God had been doing among the Gentiles through the missionary work of Paul and Silas. Instead, they immediately declared "*The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the Law of Moses.*" (v. 5) Their bold pronouncement seems to reflect a loyal commitment to their own religious traditions rather than to God's overarching kingdom agenda.

When conflict arises over matters of doctrinal truth, it is important that believers delineate biblical truth from human tradition. The Pharisees undoubtedly felt strongly about the issue of circumcision as it was prescribed by the Mosaic Law. As good Jews, it was all they had ever experienced. However, living obediently before God cannot be based solely on past experiences or personal preferences. Moreover, Jesus had commanded that believers be baptized, thus transferring the mark of belonging to God from the act of circumcision to that of baptism.

Countering their tradition-wrapped perspective of Jewish Christianity, Peter spoke up and called attention to the saving work that God had been doing among the Gentiles. Everyone knew that God had accepted the Gentiles, had given them the Holy Spirit, and now was making no distinction between them and other believers. These Pharisees were concerned about protecting the advancement of their own religious tradition. Peter looked beyond tradition to the essentials of Christian faith, allowing God's will to guide the way he thought about this issue. Peter summarized much of the council's discussion by stating that "*it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.*" (v. 11)

How easy it is during conflict for personal preferences to motivate our thinking. Real issues are often eclipsed by private aspirations. Peter's address reveals how important it is to think about conflict from God's perspective rather than mankind's.


III. God's Word Guides Our Thinking. (Acts 15:12-21)

After Paul and Barnabas related further accounts of God's working among the Gentiles, James confirmed Peter's words and authoritatively presented Holy Scripture as the ultimate

PREACHING . . . continued from page 6

standard by which they would make their final decision about this issue. Calling on Amos 9:11-12, James showed that it was God's plan from the beginning to bring salvation not only the people of Israel, but also to *"the remnant of men"* who *"seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name"* (v. 17) God's Word was the unifying authority that brought the council to consensus. The result was a letter sent to Gentile believers which outlined specific regulations and did not prescribe circumcision as essential for salvation. John Stott rightly summarizes their approach to this decision and affirms the importance of God's Word by stating that, "Councils have no authority in the church unless it can be shown that their conclusions are in accord with Scripture." (John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1990, page 247)

God has spoken clearly and finally through his Word. He has revealed himself to his people and has outlined expectations for Christian living. However, even in the church there sometimes seems a strong desire to allow contemporary culture to guide our thinking rather than God's Word. For instance, many today who are calling for same-sex marriages and abortion rights are undeniably elevating their personal preferences above the authority of God's Word.

Southern Baptists have long claimed to be people of the Book. Today conflicts are occurring everywhere concerning the definition, existence, importance, and relevance of truth. A gay bishop appointed to leadership within the church and the sacred institution of marriage challenged by legislative bodies are merely two evidences of how critical the issue of truth is today. Certainly, conflict is occurring. Truth is on the line, and God's truth is worth the conflict. As we engage, let us do so with biblical conviction and Christ-like character. 

PreachingPoints

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Dr. Al Jackson, Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn, AL
&

Dr. James Emery White, Mecklenburg Community
Church, Charlotte, NC

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ENGAGING . . . continued from page 4

language about "empowering the powerless" and having compassion on the needy in society. But such commitments are little more than empty platitudes if the principle cannot be extended to defenseless tiny humans in their mother's womb. The confessed concern for "the children" in our culture is laughable when resistance to a ban on partial birth abortion—a procedure in which a baby in the ninth month of life is partially delivered only to have his brains suctioned out by a surgeon with a powerful vacuum—currently exists in the United States Senate. We live in age when leaders desire the image of Jesus while practicing the ethics of Nietzsche. They cannot, however, have both.

James, the brother of Jesus, once wrote to the early Christians that *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, and the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world"* (James 1:27). He said this because he understood a foundational dictum from his Lord: that the Holy One of Israel considers injustices done to the most vulnerable ones in His creation an insurrection against the justice of God. For today's Christian, undefiled pure religion means making a clear defense on behalf the unborn. Any other response is a nod to nihilism. The cultural debate surrounding abortion is a conflict in which the people of God must be willing to take a stand against the prophets of the world. 

Senior Adult Extravaganza

August 5, 2004
Banquet at 6:00 p.m.
Concert at 7:30

Concert Guest: Anthony Burger

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Greetings from Union University! I trust all is well with you and your ministry. This spring, I am reminded that God renews those who serve Him faithfully. In Lamentations 3:22-23, we are reminded, *"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."*

This issue of the *Bulletin* is dedicated to a discussion on conflict in the Church.

As we are all aware, conflict can arise at any time and surround nearly any subject. These articles cover a broad range of types of conflict. When encountering conflict, we may take encouragement from the fact that we are not unique. Conflict is certain to come. Also, we must remember to be guided by two things: the Word of God and love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. In knowing this, the wise pastor equips himself to lead the church through times of conflict. He must draw guidance from two sources, faithfulness to the Word of God and a commitment to love others as Christ modeled love for us.

There is perhaps no more draining situation for a pastor than for his church to be embroiled in conflict. It is my hope and prayer that the thoughts contained herein will be used by God to challenge, encourage, and refresh you. God is gracious to allow you and me to serve as His instruments to lead and equip His Church.

For His Glory,

Charles A. Fowler, Ph.D.

Senior Vice President for University Relations