



## Statement on Conflicts, Disputes, and Lawsuits

*Revised 10/2020*

Though the church is populated with believers, they continue to wrestle with indwelling sin. The sins of one member will affect others. Oftentimes, this manifests in quarrels<sup>1</sup> and conflicts. Whenever these occur, we commit to overcome our offenses in a biblically<sup>2</sup> prescribed manner leading to resolution and peace. Bitterness, resentment, and broken relationships are not acceptable for the people of God. Instead, each offense and conflict is an opportunity to display the reconciling power of God through the gospel.

The church has adopted as its practice the principles taught in Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*, which provides wise biblical counsel for resolving disputes.<sup>3</sup>

When two church members cannot resolve a conflict privately, they should seek the help of other wise church members. The church's pastors are also equipped and desire to assist members in mediating disputes. If a dispute becomes long-standing without successful reconciliation, members should seek pastoral help.

In accordance with 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, church members should generally refrain from bringing a dispute among believers before a civil law court. Instead, the 1 Corinthians principle is to seek mediation through the ministry of the church.

If one or both parties refuse to turn from the sin that produces the conflict, church leadership may seek to apply the steps of church discipline to restore peace and order in the church. Church members agree to refrain from filing lawsuits between Christians and to seek means of reconciliation through the church, unless the pastoral team reviews their situation and confirms that litigation is biblically legitimate.

If a current or former church member has a dispute with a pastor or the pastoral team that they do not believe has been successfully resolved, they can appeal for assistance from our denomination as described in the Sovereign Grace Churches Book of Church Order sections 8.4 and 13.2.2.7.<sup>4</sup>

If a current or former church member wishes to file charges against a pastor or the pastoral team, they can follow the steps described in the Sovereign Grace Churches Book of Church Order section 24.

<sup>1</sup>Galatians 5:16-17 <sup>2</sup>James 4:1-2 <sup>3</sup>Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, 2nd Edition, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1997 <sup>4</sup>The most recent version of the Book of Church Order is available online here:

<https://www.sovereigngrace.com/governance>.



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## Notes Concerning the Use of this Statement

This document outlines the church's position on matters of interpersonal conflict between believers. Please note that this outline is not exhaustive and there are certain situations such as instances of suspected abuse or criminal activity in which members of the church are required or recommended to report directly to law enforcement before and in addition to contacting leadership. If leadership is made aware of any instance of abuse or known criminal activity involving a member or regular attendee of the church, it is required that they report it to law enforcement.<sup>5</sup>

The assumption undergirding this statement is for conflicts, disputes, and lawsuits which do not also constitute criminal activity in the eyes of civil authorities. If you or anyone you know has been affected by abuse or is aware of criminal activity, please contact and notify local law enforcement and then please notify the pastoral team.

<sup>5</sup>For more information on this topic, please refer to the "Mandated Reporting - Child Abuse", the "Statement on Counseling and Confidentiality", and the "Statement on Domestic Abuse."