

Introduction to This Issue

The *Reformed Review* is pleased to present this issue on “Congregational Conflict and Reconciliation.” Although conflict is a part of life, and can be a springboard to significant change, it can also be destructive. In many North American congregations today, conflict is an increasing problem.

The writers in this issue present helpful perspectives on congregational conflict and how church leaders, especially pastors, can deal with it. Curtis Birky, a psychotherapist and educator to many pastors, begins by outlining a process of dealing with conflict more effectively by anticipating and preparing for it. Next, Stan Rock, professor emeritus of pastoral care and counseling at Western Theological Seminary, looks back on his long career and draws intriguing lessons for pastors encountering congregational conflict. Then Norm Thomasma, on the staff of the Christian Reformed Church’s Pastor-Church Relations Office, gives a close examination and biblical-theological critique of Family Systems Theory as it is used by Christian pastors. Finally, Jonathan Tice, an RCA pastor and professional mediator, creatively describes the process of mediation as one possible way to deal with congregational conflict.

Although conflict in the “church militant” will never be ended, and may not even be manageable, it can be dealt with responsibly and effectively. We on the W.T.S. Publications Committee hope that this issue will empower steps in that direction.

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Editor