

CONFLICT RESOLUTION and HARMONIUS RELATIONS

Nairobi - February 2008

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Generally speaking, human beings cannot live and thrive alone. We need to *belong*. Always we belong to a family, a tribal or ethnic group, a cultural group, a village community and a nation, and of course, we belong to the world-wide human family. *Belonging* means that we are *in relationship with others*. It is said, and we know this from personal experience, that being in *right/harmonious relationships* with others is one of the most rigorous aspects of our spiritual growth and development.

Conflict is an inherent part of human nature. In today's stressful world, conflict and disagreement are inevitable. We cannot avoid it or pretend it doesn't exist.

In order to succeed in the work we do with other people, it is essential that we learn to understand the nature of conflict, its benefits as well as the damage it can do. We therefore need to learn how to *manage* conflict in our *relations with others*. This applies to us as we relate on a one-to-one basis with another person as well as working in groups, communities and congregations.

Conflict can be unnecessary and therefore debilitating or destructive, or it can be positive and beneficial. One of the requirements for being a good leader is the understanding and managing of conflict so that it results in good rather than harm.

In the module on **Conflict Resolution and Harmonious Relations** we will have look at

- Cultural aspects of conflict resolution
- ways to understand conflict, its negative and positive aspects
- styles of handling conflict
- methods of conflict resolution
- communication skills necessary for conflict resolution specifically and right relations generally
- the process of mediation

Some points for reflection, prior to the Leadership Conference:

- How do you *feel* about conflict in general?
- Think about and write down some specific examples of conflict you have experienced. How did you *feel* about each of those situations?
- How did you handle those conflict situations? What were the factors that helped you handle those situations successfully? Or hindered your ability to handle those situations successfully? Write your answers.
- **Draw a picture or a symbol and bring it or an object to the conference** that represents how you understand and relate to conflict in your life.

*** Introduction to Leigh:**

Leigh Meinert serves on the Council of the Unitarian Church, Cape Town and leads the Congregation's Religious Education Department. Leigh played an important part in organising the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town in 1999 as the leader of "The Next Generation" project. She is the co-founder and managing director of a free-to-student university called TSIBA. She holds a BA degree in Value and Policy Studies from Stellenbosch University and a post-graduate qualification in Coaching from Middlesex University in the UK.