

Mediation Process

Mediation applying principles of Christian Conciliation is a process to assist two or more individuals resolve a disagreement or dispute between them. It addresses issues that are material in nature, and/or relational in nature. It can be used to address conflicts when legal or formal steps are not even considered, or as an alternative to resolving disputes through the courts and/or secular alternative dispute resolution services.

It provides a process for reconciling people **and** resolving the material or substantive disputes in a biblically faithful manner. The process is conciliatory rather than adversarial in nature—that is, it encourages honest communication and reasonable cooperation rather than unnecessary contention and advocacy. The parties retain control and input into the outcome or settlement of their dispute. The mediator facilitates discussion and assists parties in following a process but does not negotiate or advocate for a particular settlement.

The mediation is conducted according to the [Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation](#), Rules 1 – 24. The mediation process follows a schedule of six distinct steps. The acronym GOSPEL is used to describe the process:

Greeting and Ground Rules

This phase sets the tone for the mediation by covering the planned schedule and agenda of the mediation, along with explaining and agreeing to the ground rules for conduct during the mediation.

Opening Statements

Opening statements provide the parties with an opportunity to briefly summarize the issues, which they believe need to be addressed to resolve the dispute along with the results the hope to see.

Story Telling

This step gives each party the opportunity to explain and provide the details of their understanding of the issues and position in more detail. Often this is the first time a party has had an opportunity to tell their story in full and to be heard. Additionally, a party may explain and address issues and actions God has revealed and for which parties may need to take responsibility. Pursuant to Mathew 7: 3-5, we are called to start with our own wrongs or actions, before attempting to identify and address the wrongs of the other person.

The goal of this phase is to offer the parties, advisors and mediators an opportunity to gather and clarify information. The mediator and other parties will be able to ask questions to clarify their understanding.

Parties are encouraged to not ignore hurts that have occurred and which have damaged the relationship, unless those offenses can be overlooked without further discussion or clarification. Parties are asked to do more than speak in generalities, but to be specific with examples so that the underlying issues can be fully and clearly addressed.

Problem Identification

Following a sharing of information by the parties, and discussion of the same, the mediator will work with you to clearly define issues (the question(s) the parties want to have answered so they can resolve the dispute) and the interests (the reasons which motivate or underlie each party's desired position or outcome) of the parties.

Explore Solutions

The mediators work with the parties to brainstorm possible solutions to the problems identified, and to evaluate the suggested solutions reasonably and objectively.

Lead to Agreement

The mediators facilitate and help the parties arrive at an agreement that settles their dispute(s), focusing on both steps for reconciliation and resolving the material or substantive issues. If the parties desire a written document to memorialize their agreements, the mediator will facilitate the parties writing a final agreement. Parties are encouraged to consult with their attorneys regarding a written agreement.

The above steps in the mediation process are the general sequence for the mediation. Each step, however, may require different lengths of time, and there may be situations where new facts and additional story telling may be identified during the problem identification or exploring solutions steps, requiring a revisiting of a prior step.

During the course of the mediation, the mediator may meet with the parties separately in a private meeting (referred to as a caucus). These private meetings may occur before the mediation begins, as a time of coaching and helping the party prepare for the mediation, or during the course of the mediation.