

Introduction

We notice that many people, including those in faith communities, can struggle to find helpful ways to respond to change, transition, tension, and difference. Some structures, cultures, systems, and habits can make it difficult for people to hear each other well, resulting in relationships breaking down, leading to divisions and latent unresolved issues, inhibiting our potential, and that of others, to live our lives to our fullest and most loving potential.

At Place for Hope, we know conflict is part of life and can be both creative and destructive. Knowing there is help and support available can be a great source of hope for those experiencing difficulties and divisions within their work settings, congregations, and communities. This course provides a space for those in leadership, management, and church ministry roles to consider the transformational potential in conflict and the accompanying knowledge, skills, and confidence to deal with situations effectively and compassionately, enabling all people to flourish.

Purpose

This course equips church leaders and managers to work with the potential in conflict and change, by deepening our understanding and resilience in situations of relational and faith-based contexts, enabling a sustainable vision of reconciliation and peace. It provides a mutually supportive environment which enhances the breadth and depth of learning, by being both a safe and courageous space to grow.

Learning Objectives

1. To reflect on your personal life journey and how that shapes your understanding, responses to and role in conflict situations.
2. To understand the importance of communication skills and practice tools that help your responses to conflict.
3. To learn tools and skills to help you facilitate difficult conversations and situations of deepening conflict, in both small and large group settings.
4. To learn the stages in a mediation process and have an opportunity to practice skills.
5. To identify defining aspects of conflict in churches and faith communities, drawing on biblical literature and church life to sharpen understanding and practice.
6. To consider your role and ministry in peace and reconciliation as facilitators and mediators.

Learning Outcomes

The course provides the opportunity and learning for you to:

- Understand the difference between conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation and the importance of transforming conflict for long term sustainable change of relationships, culture and contexts.
- Articulate reflectively how your life experience to date has shaped you, including the gifts and wounds that may impact on your work with conflict transformation and reconciliation.
- Identify your personal communication characteristics and reflect on your role in conflict and conflict transformation, including identifying your gifts and areas for growth for your ability to respond to conflict and change.
- Understand behaviours and attitudes of others in situations of conflict, in particular recognising signs of high conflict or challenging behaviours.
- Understand, describe and know when and how to deploy specific strategies for working with small and large groups in facilitating conversations with a purpose, particularly those that may present as a conflict.
- Identify the defining aspects of the experience of conflict in churches and faith communities and be able to relate these to biblical literature.
- Articulate an understanding of what facilitation of difficult conversations and mediation is, including: the stages in a mediation process, the role of a mediation practitioner and the role of a facilitator and change agent.

Unit 1: Introduction to Conflict Transformation and Personal Development

We understand how conflict, change and transition operate in others, when we understand how it operates in ourselves. Unit 1 guides us through this journey, and introduces us to the course, and to the context in which we will be applying our learning.

Unit 2: Communication and Facilitation Skills

Honing facilitation and communication skills is essential as we lead others through times of change and transition. This unit offers a bedrock of learning for the following units.

Unit 3: Conflict and Mediation Skills

In this unit we dig deeply into some of the skills needed for transforming conflict, for hosting difficult conversations, and for working together to transform the culture of our work settings, churches, and communities.

Unit 4: Conflict in the Context of Faith

What are the specific dynamics at play in church contexts when we encounter change and difference? What does the bible teach us about conflict and change? How do we apply our learning in our own faith context?

Quotes from previous participants:

“There is no doubt that this lively and engaging short course will inspire and challenge you to think about how conflict transformation can change the landscape wherever people are working together. A truly positive experience!”

“My experience of the Faith in Change and Conflict Course was one of insight, reflection and learning about ways to respond through my faith to those situations in which I find myself in my life and work. The course enabled me to reflect on my own style of leadership and learn new methods of living out that leadership in my everyday life. I would recommend this course to anyone!”