



Levels of Conflict

Church and Synagogue consulting in the Alban Institute tradition

based on Speed Leas, *Moving Your Church Through Conflict*, © 1985-2002 The Alban Institute

Level	Goal	Behavior
I. Problems to Solve	To work this through together.	Clear, specific communication. Differences are real. Participants stay focused on the problem. Some risk taking. Mostly open with each other.
II. Disagreement	To protect myself & come out looking good.	“Zapping” jokes and point-scoring. Seeking allies. Generalized language; higher emotional content. Some data kept secret. Willingness to talk informally.
III. Contest	To win.	Distorted statements: exaggerating, dichotomizing, universalizing. Discomfort prevents social talk. Assuming I know other’s “real” motives. Parties confront each other with their own statements.
IV. Fight/flight	To get the other party to leave, or else to leave oneself.	Hurting & humiliating statements. Clear factions, strong leaders. Followers willing to conform. Parties impugn each other’s integrity. Much talk of “principles.”
V. Intractable situation	To hurt or destroy the other party.	Parties portray selves as larger than life, part of eternal causes. Principles stated as unambiguous. Ends justify any means. Parties feel they cannot choose to withdraw or stop fighting.