



Managing Conflict in the Church

SOLT COM/CPM Gathering

March 5-7, 2023



Agenda

- Trends in church conflict
- Preventing conflict
- Managing conflict when it happens
- Opportunities for presbyteries
- Resources
- Questions and discussion



Case Study



Why we need to talk about conflict

- Congregations are facing tough challenges
 - Membership is down
 - Finances are tight
 - Programs and mission reduced
 - Divisiveness is more pronounced
- Pastors are burning out
- Anxiety often leads to need to blame
- Stats from one presbytery



Conflict management vs transformation

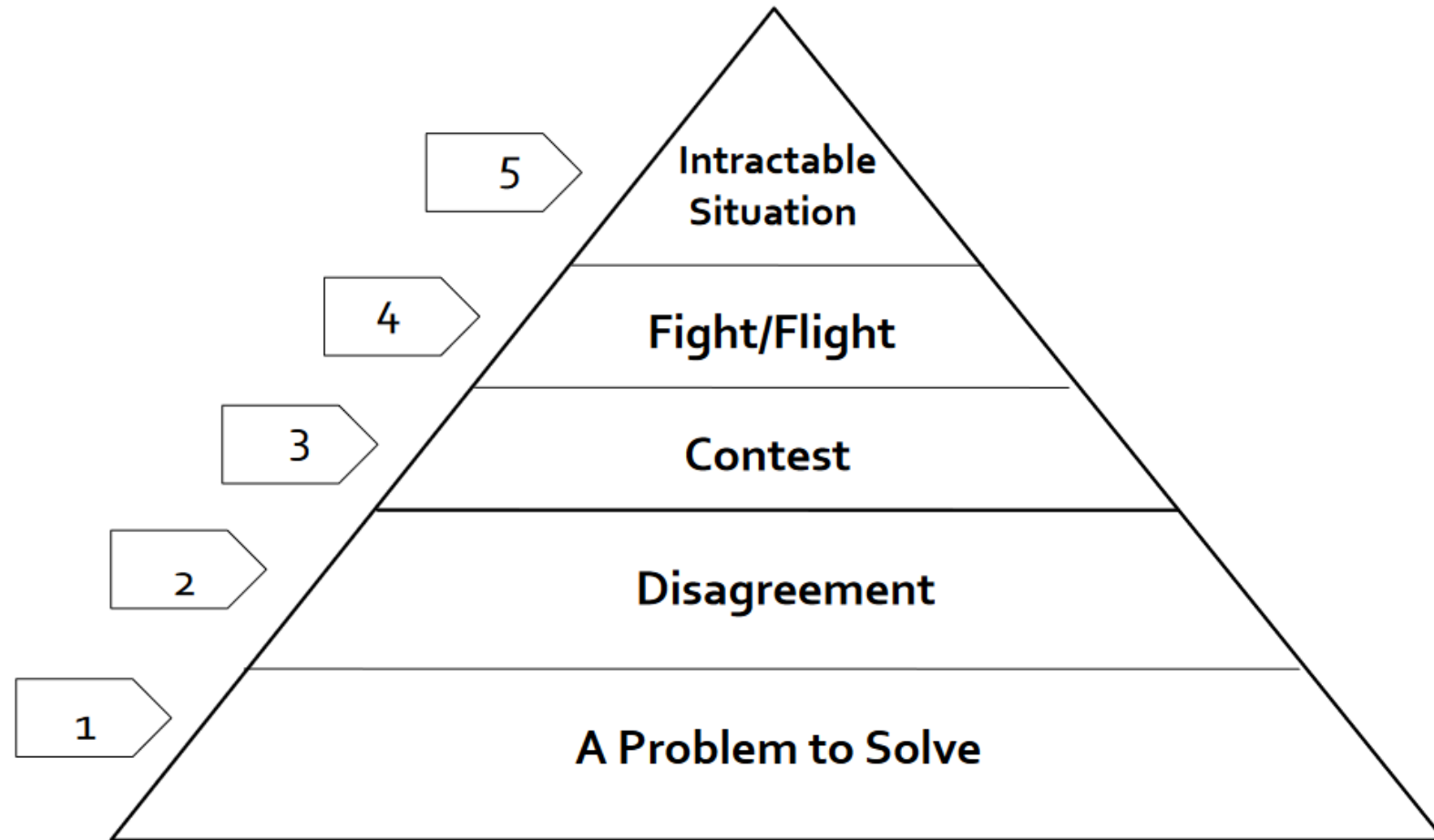
- Conflict is real and must be addressed
- Left unchecked can have catastrophic impacts
- Too often ignored or accepted
- Goal is prevention and transformation



Types of conflict

1. Intrapersonal
2. Interpersonal
3. Intragroup
4. Intergroup
5. Structural
6. External

LEVELS OF CONFLICT





Healthy systems value prevention

- ▶ Understand and talk about conflict in your context
- ▶ Set and live out expectations
- ▶ Allow space for conflict

What does your COM do to regularly assess church health?



Steps to manage/transform conflict

1. Assess source of tension
2. Mediate relationships
3. Negotiate issues
4. Prevent exchanges
5. Change context
6. Coach those involved



Managing the process

- Critical to clarify roles
 - Be clear on who manages the conflict
 - Pastor, session, team, presbytery
- What is role of presbytery in conflict situations?
 - How is your COM involved?

Who do you call if you need outside help?



What can your presbytery do?

- Be prepared and get training
- We have reorganized COM into 5 teams
 - One team is conflict management / reconciliation
- Provide sample process and documents
 - Personnel manual
 - Job descriptions
 - Pastor review process



Resources

- ▶ Books
- ▶ Consultants

Questions?